

Dr. Peter Thorn,

China Free Trade Task Force,
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,
John McEwen Crescent,
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Dear Task Force Members,

This letter is to express my concerns re. the proposed Australia-China FTA. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns with this proposed agreement with which I have serious reservations and I do not feel that this agreement should proceed and I would advise the Australian Government to proceed with great caution.

The Chinese Government has a very poor record on human rights and I find it incomprehensible that the Australian Government, my government, should enter into an agreement which would provide advantages to a government with such a poor record. It is extraordinary that the Australian Government which is prepared to take my country to war, as it turned out, over human rights abuses in Iraq sets an opposite standard in it's dealings with China.

Recent history confirms the Chinese government's disregard of basic human rights. It's as if the Australian Government had not heard of Tibet. It seems that the Australian government and business leaders with a vested interest in financial gain at all cost turn a blind eye to China's appalling record which shows no signs of wanting to enter the new millennium respecting human rights. Perhaps if the politicians and businessmen could internalise the on-going plight of the Tibetans their financial enthusiasm would be tempered. Would they be interested in a free trade agreement with a country that: invaded Australia; killed one in six of our population; destroyed over ninety five percent of our religious institutions and forced religious leaders to have intercourse in public; helped itself to our natural resources; used our land as a dumping ground for industrial and nuclear waste, and imported it's own population to dominate and to treat our citizens as second class in their own country. China's concept of equity and fairness is not contained in any dictionary with which I am familiar.

China's business acumen is based on gaining access to the natural resources ~~at any cost and under duress, if necessary, and processing these resources~~ using a labour force which has no voice and minimal economic justice. I was recently in Spain and since visiting that country regularly since the mid 1990's

I have noticed the same domination of products in their marketplace as is now seemingly entrenched in Australia. It is impossible under any Chinese government to date for any country to compete economically on a fair basis. I suspect that many governments are taking an extreme gamble that China, once drawn into the world economy, will acquire a social conscious. I do not believe this to be true based on successive Chinese governments' track record. Within twenty years China's world economic domination will result in world military domination. This is already occurring with escalating non-defensive military spending. And now, not only are we selling or iron ore, coal, gas and other raw materials to China, we are also planning to export our uranium to a country where we will have no practical control over how it is used. ~~It is extraordinary that Australian politicians and businessmen are~~ prepared to make agreements for short term gain without seriously considering the consequences for the generations of Australians which will replace them. These same politicians and greedy businesspeople will have died by the time future generations have to deal with their unfortunate legacy. I believe that my children have the right to a better future and not one in which the Peoples Republic of China dominates their life. They are their raw materials as well which their Australian government is proposing to sell to China to process and send back to Australia and their employment opportunities will be severely curtailed as a result. I think a great deal of thought should be given to leaving a significant amount of our natural resources where they are and deal only with countries with an honest, open and positive human rights record. Our natural resources which are not sold to China are better than the money in any bank in the world and are truly an investment for Australian generations to come.

The government of China has a long way to go to convince me that they have any intention of abiding by the charter of human rights and righting wrongs in ~~it's relatively recent past. The Chinese government's pervading interest~~ appears to be economic and military domination. Only this week have we seen China oppose expansion of the number of countries with United Nations veto powers to reflect a more real world situation in this new millennium. Also, in recent times we have seen the Chinese government incapable of accepting distant Japanese incursions into China and moving forward. At the same time there is not even the faintest recognition by the Chinese government of the plight of Tibetans and the extremes of suffering they have inflicted, and continue to inflict, on this once culturally distinct and unique country. If the Chinese government is incapable of learning from the past and correcting their mistakes then the Australian government and business leaders should learn from their inertia.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion re the proposed Australia-China FTA which I believe should not proceed in the current and prevailing environment.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Peter K. Thorn (M.B.,B.S.; F.A.F.P.H.M.; M.P.H.)
cc. file