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## **– Protecting the Health of Australians in the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement Negotiations**

A group of academics and non-government organisations has today released a policy brief highlighting the potential effects of the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) on the health of Australians.

The document is a preliminary output from a Health Impact Assessment of the controversial trade agreement, which is in the final stages of negotiation. Chief negotiators from the 12 countries are meeting this week in Singapore in an attempt to finalise the agreement, with a meeting of ministers to follow, starting on 22 February.

The brief examines the potential impact of provisions proposed for the TPPA on the health of Australians, focusing on two specific issues: the cost of medicines, and the ability of government to take major steps to improve the health of Australians by regulating tobacco and alcohol.

“The brief highlights the ways in which some of the expected economic gains from the TPPA may be undermined by poor health outcomes, and the economic costs associated with these poor health outcomes,” said Michael Moore, CEO of the Public Health Association.

Dr Deborah Gleeson, one of the authors of the brief, added: “Some of the provisions proposed for the TPPA would increase the cost of the PBS for the government and taxpayers. These costs could be passed on to patients through higher costs for prescriptions. The brief shows how increased medicine costs can lead to adverse outcomes such as poor health outcomes, financial burdens and higher rates of hospitalisation. Disadvantaged population groups and people with chronic illnesses bear the brunt of these poor health outcomes.”

“Many provisions in the TPPA could also affect the ability of the Australian Government to effectively tackle the harm caused by tobacco and alcohol” said Dr Gleeson. “For example, the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism, which the Government has said it is prepared to negotiate for the TPPA, could result in more legal challenges like the case already brought by Philip Morris Asia against Australia’s tobacco plain packaging laws.”

“The PHAA, together with many other NGOs, urges the Government to ensure that no provisions are adopted in the TPPA that would negatively impact the health of Australians” said Mr Moore.

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