



AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL ALLIANCE

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MEDIA RELEASE

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SECRET COPYRIGHT NEGOTIATIONS: NEW ZEALANDERS GET THEIR SAY – BUT WHAT ABOUT AUSTRALIA?

The New Zealand government has announced it will engage in public consultation over a controversial trade agreement currently being negotiated behind closed doors by a select group of developed countries. Negotiation of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) is being lead by the United States, the European Union, Japan and Switzerland, with countries such as New Zealand and Australia invited to participate, however the substance of the agreement is being kept under tight wraps.

The secrecy of the negotiations has lead to much speculation and rumour online, with many bloggers up-in-arms at suggestions that the ACTA will require stronger criminal and civil sanctions for copyright and trade mark infringement as well as increased search powers for customs officers.

However the Australian Digital Alliance (ADA) believes the real problem with this plurilateral agreement is the veil of secrecy that continues to shroud the negotiations. Aside from a vague outline paper released by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in November last year, the Australian Government has provided no further information about the issues under negotiation. While the DFAT site states it is open to public submissions, the total lack of concrete detail on the substance of the agreement leaves Australians with little real opportunity to respond to the proposed ACTA.

The ADA calls on the Australian Government to open the door on these negotiations and provide the Australian public with solid information about the issues under negotiation. If the Australian Government cannot provide Australians with this much needed information, to quell the rumours and speculation, and engage in genuine consultation with affected parties, then the ADA believes the Australian Government must withdraw from the ACTA negotiations.

Further information: ‘The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement: What's it all about?’ available at <http://works.bepress.com/kimweatherall/>.

This media release is made on behalf of the Australian Digital Alliance (ADA).

The ADA is a coalition of public and private sector interests formed to promote balanced copyright law. ADA members include universities, libraries, schools, museums, galleries and individuals.

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