



# Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

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## **Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement: Health issues**

The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) poses risks to the health of Australians in areas such as provision of affordable medicines, tobacco and alcohol policies and nutrition labelling.

Many public health organisations and experts have expressed concerns about the potential health impacts of the agreement and the lack of transparency in the negotiation processes.

The four main areas in which negative health impacts are most likely are summarised below.

### **Medicines**

The TPP risks increasing the cost of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) leading to increased co-payments for medicines. This may mean that some people are not able to afford to pay for the prescription medication they need or may sacrifice other necessities, such as food, in order to do so. This is likely to impact particularly on vulnerable groups, including those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, people with chronic conditions, younger populations, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Potential risks to health outcomes include declining health status in the community, increased hospitalisations and increased mortality.

### **Tobacco**

The TPP provisions pose risks to the ability of Government to regulate and restrict tobacco advertising. This could potentially lead to increased tobacco use and smoking prevalence, resulting in increases in tobacco related health harms across the community but particularly for existing vulnerable groups, such as youth and people with low socioeconomic status.

### **Alcohol**

Some provisions proposed for the TPP have the potential to limit regulation of alcohol availability and alcohol marketing, and restrict alcohol control measures such as pregnancy warning labels. This risks increasing alcohol consumption rates and abuse, especially amongst young members of the community. This may lead to increased alcohol related disorders, worsening mental health and social disruption in the community.

### **Food**

There is the potential for TPP provisions to restrict the ability of Government to implement new food labelling policies, limiting reductions in consumption of unhealthy foods. This is associated with rates of overweight/obesity and related health outcomes.

## Recommendations

There are a number of ways to minimise the potential for negative health impacts of the TPP. These include the following:

- conducting a comprehensive health impact assessment on the final agreement before it gets signed by Cabinet;
- excluding an investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism, and ensuring that public health takes priority where there is a conflict with trade concerns;
- increasing transparency of the negotiating process, including publishing draft texts and negotiating positions on issues of public interest;
- ensuring that public health concerns override economic or trade concerns;
- applying a public interest test to anti-competitive practices; and
- excluding tobacco and alcohol products from the terms of the agreement.

For more information see the report [Negotiating Healthy Trade in Australia](#) ([http://hiaconnect.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/TPP\\_HIA.pdf](http://hiaconnect.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/TPP_HIA.pdf)) or [www.phaa.net.au](http://www.phaa.net.au)