

# Trade deal threatens jobs: ACTU

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Australia's free trade agreement with the United States threatened jobs and labour standards here, a federal government committee has been told.

ACTU president Sharan Burrow told the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, sitting in Melbourne, that the Howard government had not provided convincing evidence to support the deal.

**"They should go back to the drawing board," she said.**

"The economic benefits are dubious while the threat to jobs and labour standards is very real."

The deal to lower trade barriers between Australia and the US was signed by both countries in February.

However, it still has to be approved by the US Congress, and Australia will have to enact legislation to support it.

**Ms Burrow said unions had serious concerns about the deal, which she said threatened jobs in the textile, clothing and footwear industry, and in vehicle components manufacturing.**

She said the deal also **failed to enforce core labour standards set down by the International Labour Organisation**, and its labour provisions fell short of those in other recent bilateral agreements involving the US.

National secretary of the powerful Australian Manufacturing Workers Union Doug Cameron told the committee in Sydney that the agreement was not in Australia's interest.

**Free trade advocate Alan Oxley, of ITS Global Consultants, said Mr Cameron's stance was based on ideology rather than a reasonable assessment of the agreement.**

"Doug Cameron has been opposed to this agreement since the day it was mentioned, he's as much opposed to free trade as anything," Mr Oxley told the committee.

"I think he would oppose any free trade agreement."

*This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/04/20/1082395841815.html>*