

# NZ AT THE GATS

**Few NZers knew anything about the Uruguay Round of the GATT. Most who did thought it was about agriculture & held the key to NZ's prosperity.**

**That's how the free traders in Labour, National and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) negotiators wanted it seen. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) was simply a trade-off for any concessions they might claim for agriculture, however illusory these might be.**

There was no public discussion about GATS, just private talks with a handful of services 'exporters'. There was no analysis of the impact on future policy and regulation, except for local content in broadcasting.

This was the era of Rogernomics/Ruthenasia. The free trade strategy mirrored the goals of deregulation, privatisation and globalisation and offered a way to lock them in. **Not surprisingly, NZ's GATS commitments are amongst the most extensive of any.**

The government made a few across-the board reservations that allowed NZ governments to retain certain restrictions:

**Overseas Investment Commission vetting of foreign investments** valued at \$10 million or 25% of such an enterprise, and all land;

**The right to discriminate against foreign companies in relation to enterprises owned by the state in 1994**

**Conditions on temporary visits** by executives, senior managers, specialist personnel, installers and servicers, services sellers for between 3 months to 3 years.

The right for any level of government to adopt measures that give 'more favourable treatment to any Maori person or organisation in relation to the acquisition, establishment or operation of any commercial or industrial undertaking'.

**Specific services in which NZ made commitments include:**

Production, distribution, exhibition & broadcasting of audiovisual works	Primary, secondary & tertiary education in private institutions . . .
Hotels & restaurants	General construction
Cleaning of buildings	Advertising
Wholesale distribution	Retail distribution
Maritime transport services	Road transport
Rail transport	Banking services
Taxation services	Architecture
Engineering	Veterinary services
Data processing & data base services	Real estate
Insurance related services	Accounting and auditing
Travel agencies & tour operators	Legal services
Air transport sales & marketing	Pipeline transport
Services incidental to agriculture, fishing, forestry	Electronic, voicemail & on line telecommunications

These are not unlimited. Sometimes only certain aspects of a service has been included, and very occasionally some exceptions are noted. The main areas left out were health services and environmental services. But the government has included aspects of both in its commitments to Singapore under the free trade deal signed in 2001.

**The negotiations that began in 2001 aim to get governments to expand the list of services in their schedule. The NZ government claims it wants other countries to match its 1994 schedule before making new concessions itself. But it hasn't ruled out doing so, and it is clear that other governments will be demanding more.**

Arena says:

**We've already gone too far!  
Stop the SECRECY! Stop the INVASION! Stop the GATS!**