

Submission regarding the forthcoming Defence White Paper

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Australia should abandon its current aggressive "defence" philosophy; the use of military strength for economic leverage; the pursuit of advanced technology with reliance on the United States for systems and logistics support; the increasing militarisation of our society; and promotion of the arms trade. This path consumes scarce public resources, undermines security and provokes conflict.

Instead, we should rethink what we mean by security, develop different relationships with regional states, reassess the weapons systems required to satisfy our security interests, develop conversion programs and increase aid to our Asia-Pacific neighbours.

If Australia's security in the 21st Century is to be assured, the Australian Government must adopt a foreign policy commitment to friendly and mutually beneficial relations with all countries, particularly with non-aligned and independent nations. This must be combined with an independent and non-aligned defence policy which should be efficient, affordable and serve both the defence needs of our country and the need for peace and stability in our region. Australia's national security rests on pursuing a genuinely defensive, non-offensive, non-provocative defence stance.

Security is often interpreted to mean military security. However, human security also relies on addressing the causes of social disadvantage, political injustice and environmental degradation. The over-emphasis in casting the military as Australia's guarantee of "security" has not engendered a true culture of national security.

Security cannot be enforced by ever greater numbers of ever more sophisticated weapons. It is increasingly clear that real and enduring security comes with jobs, steady food supplies, homes, clean water, warmth, education and health care, democracy and human rights.

While defence of the state is necessary, the cost to our economy, environment and political rights cannot be too high or we will have little or nothing left worth protecting.

- 1.** At \$22 billion annually, Australia must reduce its military spending. Current budgets are excessive, diverting resources required for social needs. The Federal Government commitment to maintain a minimum annual three per cent real growth in military spending to 2016 is unacceptable. A non-offensive defence policy takes advantage of cheaper but efficient alternatives, contributing to national security without diminishing military capability.
- 2.** A key commitment should be for Australia to possess enough military force to defend our territory against likely military threats but not to have either the weapon systems or the military doctrine to be able to threaten the territory of other states.
- 3.** Imaginative programs for conversion of military bases and production facilities should be introduced. They should use many of the skills and resources at present tied up in military industry to create new jobs and produce socially useful and environmentally friendly products. Conversion can transform our economy and society, bringing a new level of public accountability and democratisation of decision making.
- 4.** The new approach should include breaking the US alliance, removing the US military bases from our soil, and developing confidence building processes in our region. Foreign warships and military aircraft should no longer call at Australian ports and airfields or transit through Australian territorial space.
- 5.** The Australian Government should support efforts to achieve total prohibition of the production and possession of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. An important contribution in this

area would be the re-establishment of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

- 6.** Any ADF overseas deployment must require Federal Parliamentary endorsement. There should be no overseas deployments of Australian armed forces unless under the control of the United Nations. Armed units explicitly intended for overseas service, like the Operational Deployment Force and the Special Air Service, should be reformed to fulfil peacekeeping roles.
- 7.** The Australian Government should work for a treaty which would prohibit the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat and use of nuclear weapons, pressure the existing nuclear weapons states to immediately stop upgrading, modernising and testing new nuclear weapons, demand that all nuclear weapons be taken off high alert, and insist that every nuclear weapon state pledge never to use nuclear weapons first.
- 8.** The Australian Government should work for the establishment of nuclear-free zones, in particular Northeast Asian (including de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula) and Southeast Asian nuclear-free zones.
- 9.** The government should withdraw from US missile defence programs and strictly control all research, testing and development with application to any components of space weapons.
- 10.** The supply of military equipment, military training programs and military exercises with repressive regimes in the region should be ended. The government should end its efforts to encourage and expand arms transfers.
- 11.** Australian Governments should not subsidise or otherwise support a local arms export trade. The hosting of international arms fairs should be banned.
- 12.** Australia should support the ban on cluster munitions, continue its opposition to landmines and its work to dismantle minefields.
- 13.** Australia's overseas sources of military equipment and military training should be diversified.
- 14.** A primary role of the Australian Defence Force should be to provide an effective natural catastrophe relief response.
- 15.** Working and training conditions for ADF personnel should be of a high standard. The ADF justice system should be improved and measures taken to reduce discriminatory practices. Personnel should be allowed to conscientiously object to particular deployments.
- 16.** Australia should develop a department or ministry of peace and allocate funds specifically to research and develop peace strategies and policies. It should examine developing a National Peaceforce. Peace studies should be included in school curriculae.
- 17.** Australia must uphold the international laws of war, including the UN Charter, the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Conventions. It must ensure that torture techniques are not used by Australian personnel and refuse to be allied with any country that uses and/or condones torture.

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