



Medical Association for Prevention of War

28th October 2014

Submission to the Defence White Paper 2015 Public Consultation

The Medical Association for the Prevention of War (MAPW) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this public consultation for the Defence White Paper (DWP) 2015. However, we note that this is the third defence white paper produced by the Australian government since 2009. In May 2010, MAPW published “*Vision 2030*, a response to the Australian Federal Government’s 2009 defence white paper – Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: force 2030”¹. The recommendations set out in *Vision 2030* are still as relevant today as they were in 2009. We therefore would like to resubmit this report, which forms a substantive part of our response to the current white paper.

MAPW attended the public consultation meeting held in Melbourne on Tuesday 5th August 2014 at Victoria Barracks. Representatives of the expert panel chaired the meeting. Unfortunately notification of the meeting only appeared on the Defence Department’s website 48 hours before it took place. The venue was not known until the day of the meeting itself. When MAPW members arrived for the meeting, they were told that they did not have the appropriate security clearance to attend, as they were not members of the Australian Defence Forces. Eventually this was resolved due to the persistence of MAPW representatives. This was a most unfortunate and unnecessary situation. The consultation meeting itself was poorly attended; this was disappointing and likely because of the poor communication and lack of notice given to the broader community to participate.

We would recommend that more effort be made by the Australian government to ensure that public consultations are indeed as public as possible. This would require providing adequate notice of public meetings, not holding those meetings at venues which require security clearance to gain entry and to advertise such meetings as widely and publicly as possible.

Please find following our submission and supporting documentation.

Yours sincerely,

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President
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Australian affiliate, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)

¹ Vision 2030: An alternative approach to Australian security by MAPW May 2010
<https://www.mapw.org.au/files/downloads/Vision%202030%20web%20version.pdf>

What are the main threats to, and opportunities for, Australia's security?

This submission will focus its comments in relation to threats to Australia's security on two aspects – nuclear weapons, and the extent of global military expenditure, including the global trade in arms.

1. Nuclear weapons

The continued existence of nuclear weapons remains the greatest security threat the world faces. Australia is both vulnerable to nuclear weapons attack and also complicit in the global nuclear weapons problem, by virtue of our active support for US nuclear weapons policy.

There are currently approximately 17,000 nuclear weapons in the world, the vast majority of them being in the US and Russia. Repeatedly, authoritative reports (such as that of the 1996 Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, and the 2006 Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission report 'Weapons of Terror') have warned of three things:

- While any nation has nuclear weapons, other nations will want them;
- Unless nuclear weapons are abolished, they will be used again;
- Any such use would be catastrophic.

Our ally the US, in common with the other nuclear armed states, has no plan in place to get rid of its arsenal. Meanwhile, nuclear abstinence is preached to other countries. This is unsustainable, and acts as a stimulus for nuclear weapons proliferation.

Notwithstanding the enormous responsibility of the nuclear armed states to get rid of their weapons, the barriers to disarmament go further than nine nations, and far beyond the usual suspects such as Iran. They include Australia, and the policy of "extended nuclear deterrence". Through our support for this flawed policy, Australia remains complicit with US threats to use weapons of mass destruction.

As long as any nations, including Australia, give military legitimacy to nuclear weapons, other nations will seek to acquire them. Australia's alleged need for a nuclear deterrent simply lends credibility to the possible aspirations of other nations, which may be more threatened militarily than Australia, to acquire these weapons. Deterrence advocates are left with the rather unconvincing line that deterrence works for "us" but not for "them".

The legal issues attached to deterrence also cast doubt on the legitimacy of Australia's position. In 1996 the International Court of Justice, in delivering its advisory opinion that nuclear weapons are generally illegal, treated the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons as a single indivisible concept. An illegal act must be neither committed nor threatened. Nuclear deterrence is a threat to use the weapons; the threat cannot be credible if there is no preparedness to carry it out.

In the event of a major war involving the United States, Australia could face a credible threat of a nuclear missile attack on the Joint Defence Facility at Pine Gap. The facility

contributes to US war fighting, including nuclear targeting, through the hosting of signals intelligence (SIGINT) and Overhead Persistent Infra-Red (OPIR) systems. This not only brings an unacceptable risk of a catastrophic attack on Australian soil, but it is inconsistent with Australia's stated goal of a nuclear weapons free world.

Australia needs to make an informed decision about whether or not Pine Gap remains in operation, based on open and transparent discussion about the role, the risks and benefits of the base. In the context of improved signalling and satellite technology, the need for this base to be located on Australian territory should be re-evaluated.

A nuclear weapons free defence for Australia would greatly strengthen our credibility in nuclear disarmament advocacy, strengthen consistency and integrity in government policy and apply probably the most effective possible political pressure on the US to begin to take seriously its NPT disarmament obligation.

MAPW strongly recommends that Australia renounces support for nuclear deterrence and ensures that no facilities on our soil can be used for any purpose associated with the use of nuclear weapons.

These ultimate weapons of mass destruction must be made illegal, by a treaty to ban their development, production, possession, use and threat of use. Similar treaties have been very effective in reducing the use and stockpiling of biological and chemical weapons, land mines and cluster munitions. Given the appalling human and environmental consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, any genuine attempt by Australia to improve security locally and globally needs to include actively working towards nuclear weapons abolition.

MAPW would like to draw the government's attention to the submission made by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to the Defence white paper. MAPW fully supports the recommendations made by ICAN in its submission to this process.

2. Military expenditure and the global arms trade

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates that 2013 global military expenditure was US\$1747 billion. In the region of Asia and Oceania, military spending was US\$407 billion, an increase of 3.6% from 2012.² . Aside from North America, global military expenditure has been increasing in every region. The Asia Pacific region has five of the fifteen countries with highest military expenditure in 2013- China, Japan, India, South Korea and Australia. Furthermore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Sri Lanka have all increased their military expenditure in 2013 (Perlo- Freeman et.al. Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2013, SIPRI Factsheet April 2014). Increased military expenditure can be used not just for defence but also for pursuit of foreign policy objectives, or control of and

² The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Year Book 2013

oppression of domestic social or ethnic groups. Historically, all of the above have been or continue to be realities in the Asia-Pacific region.

Global security would be enhanced by diverting much of the world's military spending to provision of adequate health care, clean water, food, sanitation, shelter and basic education for all people. The Millennium Development Goals, which would provide these basic needs for all people, are readily achievable for a small fraction of the cost of current global military budgets.

In addition, for the security of all nations, it is essential to implement far more effective controls on the global arms trade. When chairing the UN Security Council this year, Australia played an important role in promoting the need for nations to sign and ratify the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty (AAT) as a matter of priority; this advocacy should continue.

The arms trade must become regulated to prevent the provision of weapons through sale or aid to fragile states or indirectly to unintended recipients. The trade should be transparent and should be policed by an independent multilateral body. Furthermore, the arms trade must become accountable. Individuals, organisations, corporations or countries responsible for the transfer of weapons used against civilian populations or in crimes against humanity should be held accountable for their actions in domestic and international courts. Australia could support this goal via the UN and other multilateral forums. Such policies would highlight the unacceptable role of the arms trade in contributing to conflict, suffering and destabilisation.

What can Australia do to strengthen peace and stability in the region?

1. The first point to be made is that many of the greatest destabilising features in our region are non-military: climate change, environmental disasters and resource depletion in its many forms. These worsening risks are already leading to the displacement of communities in the Pacific and that trend is likely to worsen. As communities and populations are forced to move, the risks of armed conflict can increase. Unless further major climate change and rising sea levels are prevented, some Pacific Island nations, as well as large low-lying areas in Asia, are at risk of literally disappearing. As a result there will be large-scale movements of refugees and resultant tensions within the areas to which they move. Movement of populations coupled with cultural clashes can be a particularly unstable combination.

MAPW strongly urges that Australia start to take concerted, real and effective action to reduce our carbon emissions. Without such action globally, including by Australia, which contributes disproportionately to carbon emissions, armed conflicts are very likely to increase, including in our region.

2. The second important point is that diplomatic interventions to reduce tensions are cost-effective. Funding for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade should be increased to reflect this essential role. It is false economy to be reducing the funding of DFAT when we

know “peacemaking” (using diplomacy to end wars) is increasingly successful and cost effective.

3. Thirdly, the global arms trade, discussed above, has a destabilising impact specifically in our region, which must be addressed. As a member of the Pacific Small Arms Action Group (PSAAG), MAPW supports the recommendations set out in PSAAG’s submission to the defence white paper.

4. Fourthly, Australia’s foreign aid budget should be increased to the UN standard of 0.7% of GDP; it currently falls far short of this. Australia could play a much stronger role in promoting regional and global security by allocating such funding, which could be achieved by a very small reallocation of some of Australia’s military budget.

Directly and materially addressing problems of extreme disadvantage and economic insecurity can reduce civil instability. Health interventions, such as vaccination programs, can be effective in promoting peace (Human Security Report 2009). Funds spent stabilising health and other social outcomes cost a fraction of what is spent on modern weaponry, e.g. one F-35 joint strike fighter costs US\$ 207.6 million³, whilst the construction of schools and hospitals in a city such as Kabul requires vastly smaller sums.

³ United States Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Request, Feb 2011