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Submission: [Numbers in parantheses refer to endnotes.]

DEFENCE WHITE PAPER

Everyone wants peace and security. The Federal Government seeks to achieve this by guaranteeing an annual 3% real growth rate in defence spending until 2017-18 and by quarantining the Department of Defence from budget cuts. On 10 September the Prime Minister foreshadowed a dramatic expansion of the Royal Australian Navy.

There are a number of objections to this proposed strategy:

1. As Prof. Kevin Clements (1) of the University of Queensland points out, it is ineffective. A preferable defence strategy would be based on regional cooperative security. It would be better to spend the extra 3% on diplomacy and enhancing regional security cooperative mechanisms including China, India, Japan, Russia and South East Asian countries. Our first priority should be prevention and conflict transformation. This effort would determine common threats and would devise common and inclusive responses to them. It would initiate and develop sustained Confidence Building Measures. Other nonviolent alternatives, such as implementing a nonviolent peace force (2), should be explored.
 2. The Federal Government's proposed strategy might actually diminish Australia's defence position and start an arms race. Mr. Rudd's ambitious military plans to add 15 new-generation Collins Class submarines will be seen by our Asia neighbours as offensive, rather than defensive. Defence analyst Sam Bateman (3), who is a retired Commodore with the Royal Australian Navy, has stated that these plans are likely to fuel an arms race with Asia. The Government's proposal will do nothing to prevent terrorism.
 3. Australia is already spending too much on defence compared to other states of a comparable size. According to Jane's Industry Quarterly (4), Australia's military spending is greater than Canada's spending and that of all but four of the European Union countries. Australia is the 13th largest military spender in the world.
 4. This proposed explosive military build-up appears to owe more to a Washington threat analysis than to a nationally-based assessment and pre-empts the current Defence White Paper consultative process. In a survey conducted after the last federal election in 2007 the Australian people rated increased military spending a very low priority (2.7%) compared to the environment (21.7%), health (20.5%) and other concerns (5).
 5. What are the most serious threats we face? They are the threats of nuclear weapons and climate change. We commend the Rudd Government's initiative to convene an International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament as a first step. But more is needed.
- The Government needs to take the lead to raise these issues in multilateral fora and to lobby nuclear-weapons states directly. These issues include de-alerting nuclear weapons (6), which will greatly reduce the risk of accidental nuclear war by taking nuclear weapons off of a hair-trigger; a pledge by nuclear weapons states of no first-use; a ban on new nuclear weapons; a ban on nuclear weapons testing; a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (7); and a Nuclear Weapons Convention (8) which would prohibit the development, production, stockpiling, testing, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons.

- Australia should not sell uranium to nuclear weapon states, because of their failure to comply with their nuclear disarmament obligations under the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT)(9).
- Australia needs to promote a global, legally binding Arms Control Treaty (10) to prevent the transfer of conventional arms likely to be used for serious human rights violations, and fuel conflict and poverty.

A major expansion of the Royal Australian Navy does nothing to promote disarmament.

6. Climate change will create severe economic and social impacts on our neighbours from climatic extreme events, sea-level rise and displacement of coastal populations. The poor will be affected most (11). Such events will give rise to problems of political instability and conflict. Australia should be taking a leading role in developing programs of international cooperation to help mitigate these effects and adapt to climate change. This will involve:

- putting resources into aid programs, emergency relief, accommodation of environmental refugees,
- in addition to reducing carbon emissions.

It will involve:

- programs for economic development, food security, livelihood security and
- security of access to resources such as water and energy.

Increased military spending and adding 15 new-generation Collins Class submarines does nothing to prevent climate change, nor provide food, water and energy security.

Our security is bound up with the security of our neighbours. Climate change offers the opportunity to be proactive rather than reactive, and to work in cooperation with our neighbours, rather than in competition.

We need to change the type of thinking that led to World War I.

Dale Hess
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The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Australia Yearly Meeting Peace and Social Justice (Testimonies) Committee

The Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee of Australia Yearly Meeting will be making a separate submission.

Endnotes:

- (1) <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/australiatalks/stories/2008/2362183.htm>
- (2) <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/feasibilitystudy>
- (3) <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/10/2361291.htm>
- (4) http://www.janes.com/media/releases/pc080903_1.shtml
- (5) <http://newmatilda.com/2008/09/22/what-are-our-external-threats>
- (6) http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/2001/01/00_ong_de-alerting.htm
- (7) <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/books/fmcthandbook.php>
- (8) <http://www.icanw.org/nuclear-weapons-convention>
- (9) <http://www.un.org/events/npt2005/npttreaty.html>
- (10) <http://www.controlarms.org/en/arms-trade-treaty>
- (11) <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22832173-30417,00.html>

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I agree to my submission being quoted in the Community Consultation Report