



4 September 2024

Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister of Australia  
Parliament House  
Canberra 2600

Dear Anthony Albanese

### **AUKUS and Australia's defence posture**

Australian Quakers are concerned at the commitment to increase the level of military activity in Northern Australia as part of the AUKUS partnership.

Recent statements by government ministers Richard Marles (Defence) and Pat Conroy (Defence Industry) emphasise the strategic importance of the north to the defence of Australia and the projection of power into the Indo-Pacific by America to meet potential threats (from China).

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that America is taking far too much for granted in its 'use' of Australian resources and bases, and that our government is assuming that it does not need to bring the people into its decisions in support of American strategic priorities.

In this regard we would like to seek clarification on these points:

1. Australia is a party to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which includes a provision that military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of Indigenous peoples unless agreed with or requested by them, and following appropriate consultation. How has the Government consulted the First Nations Communities in Northern Australia, and what were the results of such consultations?
2. A recent report by Richard Tanter and Vince Scappatura (published on 27 August by the Nautilus Institute) has raised deep concern about Australia joining America's policy of neither confirming or denying the presence of nuclear weapons on B-52 aircraft. We consider that it is essential that full details of the planned deployments to Tindal or other bases in Australia be given to the Australian people. Have agreements been made with AUKUS partners to explicitly forbid any nuclear weapons being on Australian soil or Australian airspace for any length of time?

We are aware that the Fraser Government in earlier years had a policy that it would inform the Australian public about the armament status of any B-52 operations in Australia. We regard this as a wise approach. The continued level of secrecy around the new military policies under AUKUS is at odds with Australia's endorsement of standards of integrity in public office and support for an international rules-based order.

In peace and justice,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Henry".

Bruce Henry  
Presiding Clerk  
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia