



8 September 2020

Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

I write on behalf of Australian Quakers following recent discussions at our national conference. We believe that the expansion of expenditure on military defence by the Australian Government is out of proportion to the basic security needs of Australia and its people.

The decision of the Australian Government to embark on a substantial increase in spending on military equipment and to adopt a more aggressive approach to defence is alarming. It is especially of concern that, at a time of international instability, Australia should be seen to be giving priority to military rather than other solutions, thereby adding to existing tensions.

We are in a time when the critical issues facing the country are climate change, education, health and welfare, and building our capacity as a nation for peacemaking within our region and beyond. Yet the following facts reveal different priorities altogether:

- The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates that global annual military spending is now at \$US1.8 trillion, and that Australia is 13th on the list of spenders, with our military spending set to pass 2% of GDP in 2020-21, a higher % than Canada, the UK, Germany, and China.
- Contracts for purchase of the joint strike fighter and a fleet of submarines at enormous expense have already raised serious questions as to their effectiveness. The planned addition of long-range anti-ship missile capacity adds a further dimension of threat to the security of our region.
- The annual budget for Defence is around \$26b, whereas the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade, which covers our diplomatic and trade programs, gets \$5.2b. Environment programs amount to \$880m. Our overseas aid funding has fallen to 0.23% of GDP (the UN target is 0.7%).
- Australia is becoming a significant contributor to the global arms trade. It is the second largest importer of weapons, and sells over \$2b of military exports each year (20th largest exporter). The government aims to raise our sales to within the top ten exporter nations.
- The bias of funding towards military-related programs tempts governments to rely on military solutions to such areas as disaster relief, rather than ensure proper funding for civilian responses.

Australia Yearly Meeting

The things that make the world and Australia more secure are much more based on people-to-people contacts, aid, education and health programs and engagement in international avenues for cooperation over human rights, environmental solutions, and peacebuilding

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The pandemic experience shows the potential for us as humans to create a kinder and more compassionate future, not having to resort to preparations for war. We must invest in more nonviolent means to build community at all levels. We need to train more mediators and negotiators, and support restorative approaches towards healing and reconciliation (including faith-based initiatives).

We urge you to review priorities, work for a reduction in military spending, and re-align budgetary expenditure on the real needs of our community and world.

Yours faithfully,



Ann Zubrick
Presiding Clerk, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

Cc: Anthony Albanese, Leader of the Opposition

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