

The national gathering of Australian Quakers on 6-13 July 2024 agreed the following:

First Nations Concerns

Quakers grieve that the Referendum to enshrine a First Nations Voice in the Australian Constitution was not successful. Australian Quakers consider it essential that First Nations peoples have an effective say in laws and policies that affect them. We commit ourselves to learning from First Nations people, and practising truth telling, truth listening and truth acceptance, as well as decolonisation of our thinking, practices and institutions.

Original Australians have never ceded sovereignty. We call even more strongly on the Government to establish a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about their history. We also call on the Government to embed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People into Australian law.

The full implementation of the Statement from the Heart would provide the Australian people with an effective mechanism to confront the truth of our past and our present and to make way for abiding justice, healing, recovery and repair for Original Australians, and right relations between us all.

Climate Emergency and species extinction

Quakers acknowledge that this moment is our last chance to act decisively to avoid catastrophic climate breakdown - for all beings on the planet. Quakers have adopted an Action Plan to guide both our corporate and personal actions. We recognise that our world and its occupants are an entwined whole.

Quakers recognise and welcome the changes the Labor Government has made to a range of policies and programs including emission targets, vehicle efficiency standards and solar energy.

However, these actions are not enough. We call on the Government to urgently adopt policies that will:

- move rapidly to end any support for extracting any new gas and coal, including ending all subsidies for the fossil fuel industries;
- enact all parts of the proposed new Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and include a 'climate trigger' as the top priority;
- advocate strongly in support of Pacific Island nations in world forums, including joint convening of COP 31.

Palestine/Israel

Quakers grieve deeply the decades-long injustices inflicted on Palestinians by the policies of the State of Israel. Our hearts are breaking for the extreme suffering and loss of life currently being experienced in Gaza, inflicted by the Israeli military. We acknowledge that people in Palestine and Israel are currently living in extreme fear, intensifying historical collective traumas felt by many. We affirm that of God in all people, whether victims or perpetrators of violence, and seek justice, freedom and peace for all. We note the courage of Palestinians advocating for their freedom; and Israeli conscientious objectors and solidarity campaigners supporting this goal. We commit ourselves not just to speaking up for Palestinian self-determination, but to creative and courageous action to challenge our Government's complicity and to stand with all those suffering.

Quakers affirm our call for an immediate ceasefire, as well as the release of all hostages – both those kidnapped by Hamas; and Palestinians held by Israel without charge. These actions would be the first steps on a path towards justice and self-determination for Palestinians.

To prevent further loss of life, we urge the Australian government to take further steps, including

- recalling the Australian Ambassador to Israel for talks with the Australian Government,
- placing travel restrictions on Israeli Government officials involved in war making,
- Ending all military ties with Israel, including any direct arms sales to Israel or exports of weapons or weapons parts to Israel and divesting the Future Fund from any Israeli arms manufacturers (noting current investments in Elbit).

Militarism

Quakers have a strong tradition of opposing war and seeking to remove its causes. Quakers in Australia are deeply distressed by increased military spending by our Federal Government, which appears to be part of a renewed global arms race. We continue to have fundamental concerns about the AUKUS partnership, as it limits Australia's sovereignty in foreign policy, is against the wishes of our Pacific neighbours, wastes public funds, and sets our focus on preparations for war rather than peace.

We support growing calls for Australian foreign policy to embed the principle of Human Security, including by increasing our foreign aid commitment and by strengthening our diplomatic capability.

We are deeply concerned about infiltration of militarism in educational institutions, predominantly through STEM programs sponsored by the Department of Defence and Arms companies. These programs take place in primary, secondary and tertiary levels, legitimising war and the use of violence. We call for an end to the marketing of war to children in schools. We call instead for an increase in government funding at all levels of education and the orienting of schooling to peace building and saving the planet.

Australian Quakers recognise that a significant number of people around the world are suffering terrible violence. In particular, we recognise the climate violence that is being experienced by our Pacific neighbours.

Nuclear Weapons

Nuclear weapons are a threat to all life on earth. In line with international treaties Australia has signed, Quakers call on the Australian Government to show its commitment to nuclear disarmament by:

- signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), in accordance with agreed Labor policy.
- changing our defence policy to explicitly distance Australia from US extended nuclear deterrence;

Integrity

Quakers have a concern for integrity, both personal integrity and integrity in public office. Quakers ask all Governments to enact policies to ensure:

- grants are given according to merit, not in order to buy votes
- political donations are capped, and declared in real time;
- the influence of industry on political decision making is limited, especially when decisions affect the public good or the environment;
- real consequences for politicians/senior public servants/appointees who are proven to lack integrity; and
- the end of time-wasting personal attacks under 'parliamentary privilege'.