

Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia)



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The Hon Kevin Rudd, MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: A consistent Australian approach to nuclear disarmament

I write on behalf of the Medical Association for Prevention of War, an organisation of doctors and other health professionals working to prevent war by addressing its causes and consequences.

I wish to applaud your government's engagement on nuclear disarmament matters, urge specific prompt action to advance this imperative and seek your intervention to eschew potentially regressive developments. We believe there is much that Australia can and should do to advance the pace of nuclear disarmament.

No First Use

The newly-elected Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada has signaled an important change in his government's support for the United States' adopting a policy of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons. This is a minimal position Australia should quickly and publicly support at this key time when the US Nuclear Posture Review is being undertaken.

The Australian government should immediately declare its support for a reduction in the role of nuclear weapons and adoption of *no first use* doctrine as necessary early steps towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. This would be the most powerful action that Australia could take in support and anticipation of a world free of nuclear weapons, and would be influential globally.

Extended Nuclear Deterrence

The notion that nuclear weapons can ensure anyone's security is fundamentally flawed. Nuclear weapons most threaten those who possess them, or claim protection from them, because they become the preferred targets for others' nuclear weapons. Deterrence is predicated on having the demonstrated capacity and will to unleash nuclear weapons, and relies on fallible systems, vulnerable to human error. Accepting that nuclear weapons can have a legitimate place, even if solely for 'deterrence', means being willing to countenance the incineration of tens of millions of fellow humans and the radioactive devastation of large areas.

The Australian Government must urgently address our reliance on the 'extended nuclear deterrence' provided by the United States. A clearly regressive development in this regard, at odds with your own stated support for a world free of nuclear weapons, was articulated in the recent Defence White Paper. The paper projects continued reliance on extended nuclear deterrence — in practice a willingness to support possible use of nuclear weapons — at least to 2030. Very substantial progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons — if not achieving it — is possible within this timeframe.



Reliance on 'extended nuclear deterrence' by countries without their own nuclear weapons — including NATO members, Australia and Japan — must not be allowed to become an obstacle to nuclear disarmament.

This security arrangement should be reviewed and modified, so that Australian facilities and personnel could not contribute to the use of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear Weapons Convention

The recent report of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties Inquiry into Australia's role in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament contains excellent recommendations. We particularly applaud recommendations 8 and 9, that the Australian Government make clear in international fora its support for the adoption of a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC), and allocate resources to the development of a NWC, with a clear legal framework and enforceable verification. This recommendation echoes the pledge of then Shadow Foreign Affairs minister Robert McClelland in November 2007, that an ALP government would be "committed to driving the international agenda for a nuclear weapons convention".

We must now take prompt steps to build and work with a coalition of countries to advance preparations for negotiations on a NWC. The Australian Government should start with governments which have already expressed their support, including Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Austria and Costa Rica.

In the lead up to next year's NPT Review Conference, we call on our government to build vigorously on the momentum generated by recent events, including President Obama's speech in Prague in April and the UN Security Council Resolution 1887. Bold leadership is crucial now to overcome the profound dangers facing humanity and seize the present historic opportunity to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Yours sincerely



Dr Bill Williams
President, Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia)

CC:
The Hon Malcolm Turnbull, MP; Leader of the Opposition

The Hon Stephen Smith, MP; Minister for Foreign Affairs

The Hon Julie Bishop, MP; Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs

Senator the Hon John Faulkner; Minister for Defence

Senator the Hon David Johnston; Shadow Minister for Defence