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26 September 2021

## AUSTRALIA, AUKUS AND SUBMARINES: AN OVERVIEW

Tensions between Australia and China have escalated dramatically with the announcement of a new military pact, AUKUS, between Australia, the UK and the US, and the proposed acquisition by Australia of nuclear-powered submarines. Armed violence and the threat of it, compounded by bellicose and divisive language from government ministers, have become virtually our only tools in addressing tensions. This has huge impacts for our health.

**War with China must not occur.** It would bring death, injury, loss, and displacement on a huge scale, targeting of military bases on Australian soil, and further diversion of critically-needed financial resources from healthcare to warfare. Nuclear war would be a distinct possibility, with unprecedented human and environmental consequences.

**Nuclear submarines multiply the risks.** They would be an integral part of US nuclear war fighting and therefore trigger further nuclear arming by China. They would be fuelled by highly-enriched uranium, which is used in nuclear weapons. The spread of the fuel and the technology that is needed to make nuclear weapons is a dangerous global precedent that other nations are likely to follow.

To reassure other nations that Australia will not develop nuclear weapons, Australia should take the obvious step – sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

**War preparations are causing harm already.** Many Chinese Australians are beginning to feel unwelcome and hold fears for their future. Health care workers are stretched beyond their limits because of inadequate resources, while hundreds of billions of dollars are earmarked for warfare.

A preoccupation with confrontation rather than cooperation precludes desperately needed global action on our real threats, especially global warming and COVID. Australia's actions are creating fear among our South East Asian neighbours of a new arms race, and our inactions on climate are undermining our relationships with Pacific Island nations. These factors reinforce China's narrative that Australia does not care about the region.

**Listen, negotiate and scrutinise:** Australia must begin investing in diplomacy, listening to other nations' concerns, and skilfully negotiating tense relationships. The newly announced defence pact and submarine plans must receive exhaustive scrutiny in the Australian community and parliament, in the spirit of the democracy that we preach to others.

**These issues demand responses from every Australian parliamentarian.**

AFFILIATE



FOUNDER

