Submission on Defence Issues Paper 2014
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October 2014

The Issues Paper published to support the community consultation program for the Defence White Paper sets out ‘key areas of inquiry’ relating to Defence policy decisions. There are notable omissions in the Issues Paper which if replicated in the White Paper would leave Australia with a deficient strategy for guiding Defence planning for ‘decades to come’. This short submission complements and emphasizes some of the points made at the round table convened by the Green Institute on 3 September 2014. It identifies some critical issues that we consider should be addressed by the Defence White Paper.

1. Strategic context
The Issues Paper states that the White Paper will include a ‘comprehensive review of Australia’s strategic environment’ but the key questions and issues identified mostly address military issues and responses. We emphasize the importance of placing Defence policy within the larger strategic environment and of analysing the ways in which non-military options can mitigate threats and obviate the need for military responses.

2. Climate change
Climate change is not mentioned in the Issues Paper but is clearly a globally and regionally significant security challenge. Its omission appears to be politically motivated, which undermines the credibility of the White Paper process as a whole. Preliminary ‘Global Security Climate Defense Index’ results from 2013 indicate that 110 of 155 countries surveyed treat climate change as an explicit national security threat. The Pentagon takes climate change risks ‘very seriously’ and is integrating climate change considerations into planning, operations and training. So too should the Australian Defence Department and the Defence White Paper.

3. Nuclear disarmament
Nuclear disarmament is not mentioned in the Issues Paper; nor is the related issue of ‘extended nuclear deterrence’. Both issues were addressed, albeit inadequately, in the 2013 White Paper. Again this appears to be a politically motivated omission. Australia should commit to a world free of nuclear weapons and end its reliance on US extended nuclear deterrence.

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4. Vulnerable people outside Australia’s borders
The reasons for deploying peacekeepers and delivering humanitarian assistance outside Australia’s borders are both ethical and strategic. As a stable first world country and a global citizen Australia has a responsibility to help vulnerable people beyond its borders. The West African ebola crisis is a case in point. The demonisation of asylum-seekers is indefensible and the militarisation of Australia’s response misuses military power in an essentially humanitarian matter.

5. Civil-Military interface
We draw particular attention to the “Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security”. Despite the government’s stated commitment to implementing the plan, gender is mentioned in the Issues Paper only in the context of improving gender balance in the ADF. A gender perspective should be integrated into the White Paper, in accordance with the Plan. We regret that no women were appointed to the Expert Panel.