SUBMISSION TO AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEFENCE WHITE PAPER - 2015

The Environment Centre of the Northern Territory is the peak environment non-government organisation for the NT.

ECNT welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Defence Whitepaper. In particular, we wish to respond to the priority question: Are Defence’s policy settings current and accurate?

ECNT recommend that Australia's ultimate reliance on the USA's growing nuclear WMD program is neither current nor accurate. Not current, because it is out of step with strongly held popular opinion, and not accurate because any 'peace' based on the threat of nuclear annihilation is neither stable nor secure. Our defence strategy needs to be amended to be consistent with our domestic ban on nuclear weapons, long held community ambitions for a world free of nuclear weapons, and our foreign policy efforts towards weapons control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Australians have long held popular hope for an end to the era of nuclear weapons. Australia's laws reflect that strong popular sentiment, and many Australians do not realise that this anti-nuclear position does not extend to our uranium export policy, or our defence strategy. For decades we have been told that our role as a uranium exporter gives us significant influence when it comes to the non-proliferation agenda. And our shared role (with Japan) establishing the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament was not the first time Australia has taken the lead on this important global challenge.

So it is entirely inconsistent then that our defence strategy is not aligned towards the goal of total global nuclear disarmament, and continues to explicitly endorse the USA's growing nuclear WMD program as a linchpin of the alliance, and Australia’s ultimate line of defence.

ECNT recommends that steps Australia should take towards ridding the world of the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons of mass destruction include:

- cease export of uranium to nuclear weapons states who:
  - refuse to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT);
  - refuse to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT); or
  - fail to make progress on the agreed steps towards disarmament (Article VI of NPT)
- explicitly disallow visits to Australia by nuclear armed vessels within the context of new USA bases in Australia, explicitly disallow the handling, storage or stockpiling of nuclear WMDs
- disavow any reliance upon the USA 'nuclear umbrella'
- resume a leadership role in inviting other signatories to begin progress on the agreed steps towards disarmament
- take a leadership role in progressing the draft international ban on production of fissile material for nuclear weapons
ECNT also recommends that Australia should support mounting UN resolutions condemning
the use of depleted uranium armaments and munitions, calling for international support to
decontaminate warzones littered with depleted uranium dust, and move towards an
international ban on DU munitions.

Australia’s policy against DU should be encoded in law that can also prohibit the import,
handling and storage of DU munitions by foreign forces.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important work,

Lauren Mellor

Nuclear-free Campaigner

Environment Centre NT