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23 MAR 2018

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Victoria Regional Meeting Inc.
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Victorian Friends' Centre, 484 William Street, West Melbourne
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PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE NETWORK

March 21, 2018

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
PO Box 6021
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Chairperson

re: **Bipartisan Australian Defence Agreement (BADA)**

The proposal for a Bipartisan Australian Defence Agreement (BADA) is an ill-founded idea and should be rejected.

Instead of increasing political debate and increasing democratic processes and the voice of civil society, such a proposal will make decision-making less transparent. There is already substantial agreement within the major political parties. What is needed is more robust, informed democratic debate, about how to provide security for this country, not less.

Such a proposal increases the likelihood of making poor decisions such as the ill-advised decision to purchase the problem-laden Lockheed-Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the most expensive weapons system in history.

The integration of the Australian Defence Force with the US military has led to a lack of independence in Australia's foreign policy and pressure on Australia to make purchases of military equipment that may not be in Australia's best interest. These factors increase the likelihood of continually involving Australia in wars at the behest of the USA.

The existing high degree of political party bipartisanship on the defence relationship to the United States combined with a restriction of citizen access to decisions involving Australian military operations significantly reduces public scrutiny of government policy. This in part explains the disconnect between Australian public opinion on the long running wars in which the ADF is involved and the lack of public pressure on government to address these deployments.

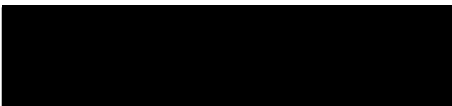
Currently, an Australian Prime Minister can send Australian troops into a conflict without democratic debate or public accountability, such as occurred with the invasion of Iraq, despite clear public protest against that action.

As a democratic country and a champion of democratic rights, more provision must be made for open, transparent public debate on foreign policy, national security and defence.

The community needs to have access to information concerning defence issues and open, transparent democratic processes of debate need to be encouraged. Regional and global security mechanisms through diplomacy and law and cooperation need to be promoted and enhanced.

In conclusion, because of these arguments we say that the proposal for a Bipartisan Australian Defence Agreement (BADA) is an ill-founded idea and should be rejected.

Your Friend,



Beverley Polzin, on behalf of the Peace and Social Justice, Victoria Regional Meeting