



WILPF | AUSTRALIA

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE & FREEDOM

27 August 2024

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
jsct@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties concerning the *Agreement among the Government of Australia, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Government of the United States of America for Cooperation Related to Naval Nuclear Propulsion*.

In contributing to this inquiry, the WILPF Australia Board will:

- Introduce WILPF Australia.
- Note that the National Interest Analysis is negligent in that it makes no serious attempt to assess the public interest of the proposed Agreement
- Highlight the significant national interest arguments against acceding to the terms of the agreement which need to be given proper consideration
- Recommend a complete rejection of the Agreement as it would serve to implement decisions previously made without proper consideration of the national interest.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

WILPF Australia is a feminist peace-building organisation of volunteer activists which is anti-war, anti-violence, non-profit, and non-aligned, bringing civil society together to bring about a sustainable peace. WILPF staff, sections and members have been active and vocal supporters of the international treaty to ban nuclear weapons for over a decade, following consistent antinuclear organising and advocacy since the dawn of the nuclear age.

The National Interest Analysis is negligent

The National Interest Analysis is predominantly a summary of what appears in the draft Agreement. There are only two direct references to the National Interest:

- at item 6, referring to allowing access to information and material necessary to implement a nuclear-powered submarine program

- at item 10, referring to the need to achieve the “Optimal Pathway”

Other issues directly relating to the draft Agreement which would appear to be contrary to the National Interest are not considered, including:

- Article IV (C) – the agreement commits Australia to paying whatever price the US or the UK wish to charge for the “Special Nuclear Material contained in complete, welded Power Units, and other Material as needed for such Naval Nuclear Propulsion Plants”. The statement that the prices will be “based on the fair market price of comparable enriched uranium” at IV(B) neglects to consider that there will be no market price for the goods under consideration. Committing Australia to paying whatever the UK and the US wish to charge is not in the national interest
- Article XI – Intellectual Property – commits Australia to handing over any intellectual property and patents developed by Australians to the US and/or the UK where it derives from “information, Material, or Equipment” that they have provided. This applies to both Classified and non-Classified information. Such a sweeping commitment will ensure that Australia does not benefit from any innovations developed here for fifty years (to 2075). It is clearly not in the National Interest.

The cursory nature of the National Interest Analysis does not inspire confidence that the national interest is foremost in the minds of the government.

More importantly, however, is the fact that the National Interest Statement takes the commitment to embark on a nuclear-powered submarine program and the so-called “Optimal Pathway” to implement this commitment, as given. Neither of these have been subjected to National Interest assessment. The legitimacy of all these agreements and arrangements hinges on the legitimacy of that original decision. In the following section we set out some of the National Interest arguments that WILPF suggests should be considered.

National Interest arguments that should have been considered

Firstly, for years, WILPF has debunked the myth that militarisation creates a safer world, showing that more **weapons and arms invariably lead to more violence, instability, and gender inequality**. The masculinist, militarist nuclear deal proposed by the US and UK is not in the National Interest because it will not make Australia safer. On the contrary, changing Australia’s defence policy to be more assertive towards our major trading partner in the region threatens our economic well-being, our regional alliances and exposes us to additional threats.

Secondly, the National Interest arguments concerning the **nuclear waste** that will result from implementing the draft Agreement have not been considered. Disposal of high-level nuclear waste is globally unprecedented. Our AUKUS ‘partners’, the US and UK, have proven unable to dispose of the waste in the 60+ years since first putting nuclear submarines to sea. It seems that the ALP’s National Platform commitment to “remain strongly opposed to the importation and storage of nuclear waste that is sourced from overseas in Australia” is yet to be considered.

Further, storage and disposal of nuclear wastes already compromises the safety and welfare of the people in South and Western Australia. The fact that nuclear waste storage is prohibited in South Australia by the *SA Nuclear Waste Storage (Prohibition) Act 2000* can potentially be overridden by Federal law. This is shameful, and could be an abuse of power that undermines Australians’ basic human rights.

Thirdly, **nuclear weaponry and waste have gendered impacts.** Women face unique devastation from the effects of the use of nuclear weapons and nuclear waste, such as reproductive and maternal health. It is known that women are more vulnerable to ionising radiation than men. Moreover, pregnant women exposed to high doses of ionising radiation are at risk of harm to their children, including malformations, disabilities, as well as the risk of stillbirth. A decision that leads to these outcomes is in no one's interest.

Australia claims to be a "proud and long-time supporter of" the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Ignoring the impact of government decisions on women's health and security is not in the National Interest.

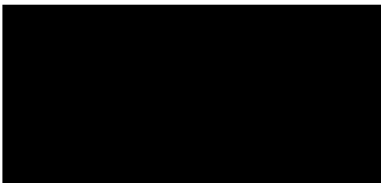
Fourthly, Australia has a long and ongoing **legacy of colonialism, especially through nuclear waste disposal and nuclear testing on indigenous land and people.** The commitments that the draft Agreement will enable will continue these colonial and racist implications, as it is proposed that nuclear waste be dumped on Aboriginal land, with no consultation with the First Peoples of that area. The proposed nuclear waste dump plans trigger the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (adopted by United Nations, Sept 2007) in Indigenous People's Article 29 rights to "Free, Prior and Informed Consent" over storage or disposal of hazardous materials on their lands. Abandoning this commitment is not in the National Interest.

WILPF Australia recommends that the Agreement be rejected

Australia should stand for the good of humanity and the environment, as nuclear weaponry, storage or disposable brings absolutely no good to any living being. The Agreement will implement decisions previously made which have not been subject to National Interest analysis. These decisions have significant implications for our economy, our independence, and our civil society, especially women and Indigenous Peoples. They signal an abandonment of international commitments made to women and Indigenous people. They are an abandonment of commitments in the ALP platform. They represent a significant shift in Defence Policy which will not make us safer. They threaten the progress that has been made in gender justice, racial justice, environmental justice and economic justice.

The draft Agreement must not be signed until such time as the original decisions on which it is based have been subject to the scrutiny that such momentous decisions deserve.

WILPF recommends that the draft Agreement be rejected.



Margaret Reynolds
President
WILPF Australia

