

# RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) IN AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

## QUAKER PEACE AND LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

### SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES ON INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR TREATIES INVOLVING AUSTRALIA

1. This submission is presented by the Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee (QPLC), a national Committee of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia. It reflects longstanding concerns of Friends in relation to peace and disarmament.

2. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has since its beginnings 350 years ago been strongly committed to achieving a peaceful world. To this end it has advocated policies that build trust among nations, reduce the need for using military options in conflict situations, and create the conditions for complete disarmament.

3. One expression of Quaker concern for peace is The Geneva Forum, a joint initiative of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. The Forum seeks to build partnerships among and between governments, international organisations and NGOs on disarmament and arms control, and to promote disarmament negotiations and agreements.

4. In the United Kingdom, Quakers (through their Quaker Peace and Social Witness group) are active in a joint campaign with the British American Security Information Council to facilitate engagement between Friends and decision-makers on nuclear disarmament. They see opportunities for Britain to (a) encourage the US Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, (b) raise the issue of NATO's tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, (c) review ballistic missile defence policies, and (d) engage in deep unilateral cuts to the US nuclear arsenal to build confidence.

5. Australian Friends have taken a public stand in favour of complete disarmament over many years. This has been reflected in public statements, submissions to Government and Parliament, participation in public rallies for peace, attendance at conferences and consultations between NGOs and Government officials. Friends were represented on the National Consultative Committee on Peace and Disarmament (NCCPD) established in the International Year of Peace and continued by governments for many years after that.

6. In a letter to the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, in May 2008, the Presiding Clerk of the Society, Lyndsay Farrall, made the following comments in the context of the Preparatory Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) being held at that time:

We are heartened by your public statements of Australia's role as a middle power in the world, and we congratulate you and the Government on re-affirming the national commitment to multilateralism and disarmament. We acknowledge the excellent work being done by our diplomats and other experts in areas of non-proliferation, verification, safeguards, control of chemical and biological weapons, limits on fissile material, and support for a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT).

At the same time, we feel that there is great urgency in working for complete nuclear disarmament. The significant increases in military spending by nuclear weapons states, the failure of last NPT Review Conference and the Conference on Disarmament to make significant progress, and the ongoing threat of the use of nuclear weapons – all these trends pose dangers that could well be as great as climate change.

We urge Australia to take a pro-active position by (a) working towards a Nuclear Weapons Convention which would provide a way for all states to disarm, (b) seeking ways to follow-up the success of the Canberra Commission with further disarmament initiatives, (c) reviewing the export of nuclear material to nuclear weapons states, and (d) distancing Australia from dependence on the US nuclear umbrella.

The Committee wishes to bring these comments to the Inquiry's attention as reflecting the deep concern of Friends about the ongoing threats posed by nuclear weapons.

7. We affirm the value of the establishment of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament set up by the Australian Government and Japan in July 2008. We see it as an appropriate successor to the important Canberra Commission. We expect that the focus given by this Commission on issues of non-proliferation and disarmament will add to the expressions of concern by many people for progress to be made towards a truly disarmed world.

8. We support the campaign by the Medical Association for the Prevention of War (MAPW) to achieve a nuclear weapons convention to bring about the elimination of nuclear weapons. In particular we agree with MAPW that such a treaty would complement existing nuclear weapons treaties by (a) prohibiting the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons; (b) require nuclear-armed countries to destroy their nuclear weapons in stages; and (c) place all fissile material under international control.

9. We would like to see Australia take an increasing role in seeking to strengthen existing treaties, especially the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). There is a clear need for these treaties

to include stronger safeguards to guard against the spread of nuclear weapons and fissile material.

10. We have serious concerns about the expansion of the number of nuclear reactors in Australia and the disposal of nuclear waste in remote areas and on Aboriginal land.

11. We consider that the time has come for Australia to make very clear that it is in the forefront of efforts to remove nuclear weapons. This will involve the Government in taking a more independent position in relation to reliance on the US nuclear umbrella as part of our defence policy. It will also require greater pressure on all nuclear-armed states to review their policies. The inauguration of a new President in the USA provides an opportunity for Australia as an ally to encourage a change of approach by that country.

Canberra  
January 2009