

SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO NUCLEAR WEAPONS TREATIES

The world is at a pivotal point with regard to nuclear weapons: the risk of terrorists and rogue States obtaining and using nuclear weapons has reached an all-time high, while there has never been a better opportunity for progress towards nuclear disarmament than that presented by the change of direction in US politics under President Obama.

Australia must be seen to be among the leading nations in seizing this moment and applying top level diplomatic effort towards risk abatement and disarmament. The following comments apply to the current Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT].

- The NPT is a failure so long as even one nuclear weapons-owning State [NWS] fails to sign it; currently at least 5 NWSs have failed to sign [China, Israel, India, North Korea and Pakistan];
- Given this failure, Australia must now review its position and approach to future negotiations on this subject, with primary focus on total nuclear disarmament;
- If any country, including Australia, supplies to an NWS any material which could be used to make nuclear weapons, that country must be found to be in breach of the NPT, and must be required to pay appropriately severe penalties;
- Australia's new Federal Government must take this opportunity to acknowledge and redress any such wrongs committed by this or previous Australian Govts;
- Australia must also (1) develop a plan to apply all possible pressure to those NWSs with whom we trade, and which have not signed the NPT, aimed at using commercial avenues to force them to sign; and (2) commence working with competitive trading countries to persuade them to take similar action, in such a way as to avoid any competitor gaining an advantage over any other as a result of the above pressure;
- Every person working on Australia's behalf in this field must be required to visit the Peace Park at Hiroshima, and prepare and present a paper to a nominated learned society on his or her impressions and intentions as a result of that visit;
- Australia must make a clear, unequivocal statement expressing its absolute opposition to the spread and retention of nuclear weapons, and undertake high priority education and negotiations towards complete nuclear disarmament.

Robert S Burke