

SUBMISSION TO JSCOT RE. AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR TREATIES

From

VINE AND FIG TREE PLANTERS

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As people of faith committed to nonviolence we are pleased to have this opportunity to make a statement regarding Australia's nuclear-related treaties. We are a small Perth-based group of Christians from the Historic Peace Churches (members and associates of Anabaptists and Quakers), intent on making linkages between climate change and militarism. We see relationship between the world's nuclear activities and climate change, and find it perplexing that many, if not most, international strategists, miss the point that, as a global community we cannot continue with the illusion of protection under the nuclear umbrella. There is no protection from anything by following the nuclear path – in fact it leads us into many dangers which are totally unnecessary.

So, our thesis is that we need to reconsider the global strategies for security, by re-defining security in these uncertain times, allowing for probabilities of a most inconvenient kind resulting from global warming. The nuclear machine offers no solutions whatsoever to the dilemmas facing the world, and would be much safer place without any ongoing nuclear activities. Security is increasingly being seen, including by military personnel, as dealing with rising sea levels, huge displacements of people, food and water shortages, possible breakdowns in civil society resulting from climate change events, than as hiding behind so-called deterrence of huge military apparatus and thousands of bombs. We've

experienced oil wars already --- water and food wars are distinct possibilities, and already occurring at local levels nuclear machinery will be of no use in such circumstances. What we need is concerted effort as a global community, to mitigate the possible consequences of climate change, so that the world's people and governments are equipped to deal with challenging situations, the like of which we have not experienced before.

To that end, our group recommends that the world's military forces work together in an EARTH DEFENCE FORCE to do what they do best community building, rather than community destroying. It is clear that morale in military forces is highest when they are instructed by their governments to help with rescue operations after natural disasters (and there will plenty more of them), and they are some of the best equipped outfits available with large numbers of workers, efficient communications, skilled engineers and medical personnel, logistical planning expertise and so on. They are well placed to be of enormous assistance as events unfold.

No amount of conventional weapons, let alone nuclear weapons, could undertake such positive reconstruction tasks as will be required increasingly into the foreseeable future.

Although we can't exactly put the nuclear genie back in the bottle, because unfortunately, the world is swamped with nuclear waste, and with nuclear materials "unaccounted for", we can surely take steps to halt any further expansion of this nefarious industry, whose products, at the ends of the nuclear chain, are nuclear waste, or even worse, nuclear weapons.

Australia can and should take a leading role towards de-nuclearising the planet, and we are in a good position to do so, as a major source of the world's uranium supplies.

And as responsible global citizens, Australia should be striving to use our middle power influence to chase the nuclear weapons states into compliance with the terms of the **Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty**, to find ways to encourage non-signatories to the NPT (Israel, India and Pakistan – acknowledged NWSs) to sign up, and to prevent Non-NWSs from being tempted to join the nuclear club.

We are pleased that the Rudd Government seems keen to resume action from the excellent and mostly still highly relevant recommendations of the 1996 Canberra Commission, which was unfortunately left to gather dust on the shelves for over a decade. We fully support the instigation of the **Commission of Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament**, and hope that under the guidance of Australia and Japan, that it will have desired effects, and soon.

It is hoped that the new Commission will include the **Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty** in its deliberations. The aim of this proposed Treaty, preventing more fissile material being available for production of new nuclear weapons, is highly desirable. Although this Treaty is mostly aimed at reprocessing nuclear materials from civilian production of nuclear energy into weapons grade material, which Australia does not engage in at the moment, we are keen to see this Treaty enacted. It also begs the question about availability of fuel from nuclear reactors which is capable of re-processing into weapons grade material- clearly the connection between the nuclear industry and nuclear weapons production is there ... no nuclear power stations, no plutonium from spent fuel rods to progress further. So, Australia must take responsibility for fuelling nuclear reactors around the world – and some of that material is likely to end up in nuclear weapons.

The best way to ensure a cut-off of fissile materials would be to prevent uranium mining. Despite the claims of the nuclear industry regarding re-processing and enrichment plants and fast breeder reactors to continue a fuel supply regardless of new uranium oxide coming into the cycle, stopping the nuclear chain at source would be a good move.

Uranium is the only energy source with a direct and repeatedly-demonstrated connection to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Sixty countries worldwide have built nuclear power or research reactors, and over twenty are known to have used the “peaceful” nuclear facilities for covert or overt weapons research and production. Of the ten countries to have built nuclear weapons, five of them acquired the necessary nuclear facilities and materials through their civil nuclear programmes..... India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa, North Korea. There are also overlaps between nuclear power generation plants and weapons of mass destruction programmes in the five original, declared Nuclear Weapons States (e.g. the Tricastin plant in France deals with both civilian and military applications of nuclear technology). There is absolutely no guarantee that Australian origin uranium oxide does not end up in the nuclear weapons programme of some client states. As former vice President Al Gore said in 2006 “For eight years in the white House, every weapons-proliferation problem we dealt with was connected to a civilian reactor program.”

We know that the **International Atomic Energy Agency** is woefully underfunded, understaffed, unable to carry out on-the-spot inspections wherever and whenever it deems fit. Australia should, as long as this country is a supplier of nuclear materials to any country, insist on the upgrading of this agency, which has the unfortunate and totally contradictory roles of both promoting and policing

the nuclear industry. To that end, Australia's pitiful contribution to the IAEA budget should be increased.

According to Director-General, Dr. Mohammed El Baradei, the IAEA's basic rights of inspection are "fairly limited," the safeguard system suffers from "vulnerabilities, and "clearly needs re-enforcement" . It has no authority or capacity to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation, although it may be able to detect diversion of nuclear materials after the event.

The procedures regarding **Australian-Obligated Nuclear Materials** (ANOM – referring primarily to uranium and its by-products), with the intention of preventing Australian origin nuclear materials from being used in nuclear weapons, is open to question. Only a fraction of the safeguards-eligible nuclear facilities and stockpiles are actually inspected e.g. there have been no IAEA safeguards inspections in Russia since 2001. It is a highly secretive society, with incidents of theft/smuggling from Russian nuclear sites being common. We are pleased that the Government is at least reviewing Russia as a client for uranium exports from this country.

The **Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office** (ASNO) has a shocking reputation for lack of transparency. It refuses to publicly release country-by-country information on the separation and stockpiling of Australian obligated plutonium, and information on accounting discrepancies (Material Unaccounted for) including the volumes of nuclear materials, the countries involved and the reasons given to explain account discrepancies. Nor does it require that all nuclear facilities processing AONM be subject to IAEA inspections.

Last year, ASNO misled your committee with claims that safeguards will ensure that Australian uranium is not used for weapons production in Russia (an empty

claim, since there have been no inspections since 2001). ASNO also claimed that nuclear power does not present a risk of nuclear weapons proliferation; that Australia only sells uranium to countries with impeccable non-proliferation credentials, and that all AONM is fully accounted for. These are false claims, which should be tested in a full public open enquiry in to the workings of this government agency.

The bottom line for Australia's involvement in the global nuclear industry is the huge uranium reserves and large volumes of uranium exports. As long as we continue with this trade, which Vine & Fig Tree Planters regard as immoral and deadly, we must take all steps to ensure that there is accountability, transparency, and ongoing steps towards the phasing out of this insidious industry.

It is not an answer to global warming, or to anything else. Every link in the nuclear chain, bar the boiling of the water in the giant kettles, produces greenhouse emissions, and costs a massive amount in financial, human and ecological terms. It is too slow and too dangerous to be considered as a useful technology as we grapple with climate change. It provides no security whatsoever – only adds to our insecurities on a global scale. What it does leave is a radioactive legacy with which future generations will have to deal, way beyond the foreseeable future. It is a theft from the future to continue down the nuclear path

Best case scenario would be for Australia to desist from making money out of such a lethal material, but seeing that is not likely to happen in the short term, we will renew our efforts to prevent uranium mining from happening in our state, whilst at the same time supporting the government's efforts to industry, and get rid of nuclear weapons.

Encouraging our ally, the United States, to ratify the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty** would be a step in the right direction. Despite hopeful signs from the new U.S. Administration, we cannot continue to seek “protection” from the nuclear umbrella – we need to distance Australia from the policies of governments which continue to design, test and /or threaten to use nuclear weapons. Successive Australian Governments have given support to the CTBT, but the United States needs further encouragement to fully implement it.

The lead up to the 2010 NPT Review will be a good opportunity for Australia to take a lead in progressing the desires of most of the world’s people, for an end to the nuclear weapons threat.

Specifically, Vine & Fig Tree Planters recommend strong backing for the proposed **Nuclear Weapons Convention**, which would complement the existing Biological Weapons Convention, and the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is the third leg in the trilogy banning all weapons of mass destruction, and is long overdue. Following from the historic 1996 decision of the International court of Justice at the Hague, which outlawed the use, or threat to use nuclear weapons in most circumstances, putting nuclear weapons planning, testing, deployment, use or threat to use, outside the law would be a sensible and strongly supported step towards becoming a respectful global community.

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January, 2009.

