

VICTORIAN TRADES HALL COUNCIL SUBMISSION

INQUIRY BY JOINT PARLIAMENERTARY COMMITTEE ON TREATIES INTO NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

About the Victorian Trades Hall Council

The Victorian Trades Hall council (VTHC) is the peak union body in Victoria with affiliated unions representing approximately 600,000 working people.

The Union movement in Victoria has had a long history of opposing nuclear weapons including the research, development, manufacture, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons.

Role of Australian Government internationally

For many years prior to the election of the current Government Australia was seen merely as a mouth piece for the aggressive and vicious leadership of the United States of America.

The change of Government both in the United States and Australia provides the Australian government with an opportunity to promote peace and international cooperation. It is well placed to demonstrate to the international community that it is an independent country that genuinely seeks to engage with other nations and provide leadership toward the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

Australia must also contribute to this debate as a country with vast uranium resources. Uranium is the core element of nuclear weapons and current safeguards systems are inadequate to ensure that Australian uranium does not end up in nuclear weapons.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Australian Government should continue supporting this treaty and work with other nations to ensure that the commitments by signatories to the treaty are genuinely up held. The Australian Government should increase lobbying and facilitate negotiations with those nations that are not signatories to the non-proliferation treaty.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Australia should continue as a signatory to this treaty. It is particularly fitting for Australia to take a lead role in ensuring nations support this treaty and that nations such as the United States ratify this treaty.

The Australian people have been subjected to nuclear weapon testing both within their own country and as a nation of the Pacific. The Australian people have seen the devastating effects of nuclear weapon testing on their own citizens and the citizens of neighboring countries. The reaction of the Australian people to the last nuclear tests in the Pacific demonstrate the overwhelming opposition that the Australian people have to such tests. The democratically elected Government of Australia can act on behalf of its citizens by being proactive with a loud voice in the international community on this subject.

In the past the Australian Government has attempted to convince its powerful ally, the United States to ratify this treaty. The election of an alternative Government in the United States may provide opportunity to again take up this discussion for a more successful outcome.

The current economic crisis justifiably dominates the thinking and actions of most nations however Australia should continue to raise this issue to ensure that it does not get forgotten. Nuclear weapons also are a devastating threat to us all.

Treaties that support Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

As with all agreements, it is not just the written word but the intent of such agreements that signatory nations must accept. In order to ensure genuine implementation of non proliferation and eradication of nuclear weapons this submission suggests we must support and develop any additional treaties to ensure the implementation of our aims. This would include any treaties regarding the Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space and Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

No First Use of Nuclear Weapons.

The Australian Government should support and call internationally for a "No First Use" commitment from all Nuclear Weapon States.