



**The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021,
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT 2600.**

27th February, 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament. This is an important opportunity to explore the serious risks of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and particularly how the export of Australian uranium can contribute to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and to look at ways of strengthening international treaties and agreements to minimise these risks.

The psychological issues underpinning nuclear proliferation must not be underestimated and the Australian Government has the opportunity to advance peace education in schools to better equip society to resolve conflict by peaceful means rather than through weapons of mass destruction.

The APS has no interests or affiliations relating to the subject of the review other than our concern that the Australian Government be well-informed and effective in its strategies.

For further information about our submission please contact Dr Susie Burke on (03) 8662 3300.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Bob Montgomery FAPS
President
Australian Psychological Society

**Submission to Inquiry into Nuclear Non-proliferation
and Disarmament**

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House of Representatives**

February 2009

**APS contact:
Dr. Susie Burke**

s.burke@psychology.org.au

Acknowledgments

This submission has been prepared by:

Dr Susie Burke MAPS is a senior researcher, in the area of *Psychology in the Public Interest* at the Australian Psychological Society (APS). Psychology in the Public Interest is a unit of the APS dedicated to the communication and application of psychological knowledge to enhance community wellbeing and promote social justice. The public interest team undertakes and encourages strategic research and produces position statements, submissions, tip sheets and media releases on a range of social issues, including psychology and the natural environment.

Ms Heather Gridley, FAPS, is APS Manager of *Psychology in the Public Interest*, and also coordinates the postgraduate program in community psychology at Victoria University.

Ms Hoa Pham is a research assistant in the area of *Psychology in the Public Interest* at the APS.

Executive Summary

Australia's participation in a global nuclear chain comes with enormous risks and responsibilities. We have a clear responsibility to protect current and future populations from the dangers of nuclear by-products – including the risks of nuclear weapon proliferation and war. This Inquiry is an important opportunity for the Federal Government to become an international leader in nuclear disarmament, and to drive stronger international initiatives in the short time before the UN's 2010 review of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Nuclear weapons have devastating impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, and are unique in their capacity to cause incalculable human suffering. Rather than acting as a deterrent, nuclear weapons create international instability and insecurity.

The arms race, and nuclear proliferation, can be described as an example of a 'defensive' spiral of conflict. Each country or nation in the conflict attempts to protect itself from fear of a threat that it perceives in another country's self-protective actions (evidenced by their acquisition of arms). What one country sees as protective, another country may see as threatening, and they respond by developing their own arsenal of weapons.

Escalating conflict amongst countries that possess nuclear weapons, or nuclear weapons capability, is extremely dangerous, as the risks of use of weapons of mass destruction heightens as the conflict escalates. The existence of nuclear weapons and the threat of them encourages nation states to regard violence and hostility as a first choice for dealing with perceived 'enemy' powers ahead of communication, negotiation and dialogue. Psychological research shows that the availability of any weapons increases the likelihood that they will be used. Similarly, the more actions that are taken towards warfare, the more likely that path to war will be maintained and be seen as an inevitable course.

It is critically important, therefore, that the production, possession, trade and use of nuclear weapons should be banned.

Existing nuclear safeguards are insufficient to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The existing agreements and domestic and international efforts have been unable to effectively and comprehensively address evolving threats or allay growing fears about the manufacture, acquisition and use of such weapons of mass destruction.

It is important that the Australian Government recognises nuclear insecurity issues, and strengthens safeguards on nuclear disarmament, nuclear waste management, security and safety issues. This Inquiry is a major opportunity for a critical review of Australia's nuclear cooperation and uranium exports agreements across the board in the light of nuclear weapons proliferation risks, and to implement measures to reduce these risks.

The APS believes that a major focus of the Inquiry should be the proposed Nuclear Weapons Convention (www.icanw.org/nuclear-weapons-convention) to bring about the elimination of nuclear weapons. The Inquiry should recommend that Australia champion this initiative at the United Nations.

Australia should also reinforce the message by ceasing uranium exports to any nation that maintains nuclear weapons or has not signed the NPT.

Over time it is easy to forget the number of nuclear weapons around in the world, to become accustomed to their presence, and begin to see their existence as inevitable and a fact of national security. Once we become habituated to having nuclear weapons around the globe, it is hard to remember back to times before world leaders believed that they needed nuclear power and nuclear weapons. We have a tendency to forget about the nuclear threat, until something comes along to remind us. It is necessary to raise the public's awareness of the dangers of weapons of mass destruction, the tragic consequences of their use, as well as the psychological issues that perpetuate cycles of violence and conflict. An important part of this education is also the

challenges raised by disarmament and non-proliferation as important public issues. We emphasise that disarmament and non-proliferation education is essential to progress toward the full implementation of the disarmament and non-proliferation obligations of the NPT.

Key Recommendations

1. Australia must encourage the ratification of key treaties. The most essential is gaining the outstanding signatures needed to bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force. Support of Nuclear Weapon Free Zone treaties by current Nuclear Weapon States is also vital.
2. A Nuclear Weapons Convention is a clear path to disarmament, and Australia must advocate for commencement of negotiations towards a Convention. The International Commission on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament provides a key opportunity to promote a Nuclear Weapons Convention.
3. Australia must review its uranium export agreements in the light of nuclear weapons proliferation risks, and act to reduce these risks.
4. The Australian Government should actively support peace and disarmament education.

1. About the Australian Psychological Society

The APS is the premier professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing over 16,500 members. Psychology is a discipline that systematically addresses the many facets of human experience and functioning at individual, family and societal levels. Psychologists are experts in human behaviour. Psychology covers many highly specialised areas, including the fields of social, community, peace and health psychology, all of which may provide input into the understanding of cycles of conflict, nuclear proliferation, enemy images, and conflict transformation.

Psychologists have been substantially involved in collaborative, multi-disciplinary work on social issues internationally and nationally for decades. They bring their psychological skills and knowledge to bear on trying to understand the psychological and systemic issues that contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and international insecurity, as well as the opportunities for non-violent resolution of conflict.

Psychologists have also had a long involvement in researching and understanding the root causes of different types of violence and conflict, and the psychological dimensions of how conflict escalates. Throughout the 20th and 21st century, psychologists of many different orientations have worked for peace. Many of the ideas about peace building techniques and strategies have been informed by psychological theory and research. This includes the well-developed processes of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding, as well as, diplomacy and negotiation. These techniques have the potential to resolve disputes and rebuild peace in seemingly impossible situations, and are useful both for resolving international and regional, as well as interpersonal disputes. Common methods of alternative dispute resolution include negotiation, facilitation and mediation, which bring disputing parties together to understand each other's interests, before brainstorming solutions that address everyone's most important needs and concerns.

2. Terms of Reference for the Inquiry

Terms of Reference for an Inquiry into Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

The Committee is to inquire into and report on:

- The international treaties involving Australia which relate to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.
- How these treaties advance Australia's objectives in this field.
- How the treaties might be made more comprehensive or effective.
- How inter-parliamentary action can assist in strengthening treaty-based aspects of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.
- How the Committee and the Parliament can contribute to the work of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

This submission will concentrate on how Parliament can contribute to the work of the International Commission on Nuclear Non Proliferation and Disarmament and the sound psychological reasons for doing so.

3. Risks and responsibilities of participation in nuclear chain

Australia's participation in a global nuclear chain comes with enormous risks and responsibilities. We have a huge responsibility to protect current and future populations from the dangers of nuclear by-products – including the risks of nuclear weapon proliferation and war. This Inquiry is an important

opportunity for the Federal Government to become an international leader in nuclear disarmament, and to drive stronger international initiatives in the short time before the UN's 2010 review of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In particular, it is important that the Australian Government recognises nuclear insecurity issues, and strengthens safeguards on nuclear disarmament, nuclear waste management, security and safety issues.

4. Weapons of mass destruction

Since 1970 when the world's governments agreed to abolish nuclear weapons through the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the number of countries with nuclear weapons has increased to nine (Russia, United States, China, Britain, France, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea), which possess 27,000 weapons between them (The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, 2007). Each of these weapons has a potential destructive force up to 40 times that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima that killed 100,000 people.

Nuclear weapons have devastating impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, and are unique in their capacity to cause human suffering. Acute Radiation Exposure causes central nervous system dysfunction, gastrointestinal damage, uncontrolled internal bleeding, massive infections and death. Delayed radiation causes widespread contamination and increased risk of developing cancer for survivors (MAPW, 2009). The first nuclear weapons, used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people.

The effect of nuclear war, if many nuclear bombs were exploded, would cause radioactive contamination of whole continents, permanent large scale damage to the environment, and deaths of millions of people. If exploded they would create a nuclear wasteland in which no medical help would really be possible. In terms of the scale of disaster they can wreak, nuclear weapons are in a league of their own.

Besides the dangers of their use in war or accident, nuclear weapons impact now on health and the environment through the effects of their past production and testing. These include deaths, cancers, other illnesses and large amounts of radioactive waste. We still cannot estimate the long-term effects of radiation on individuals, future generations and other life on the planet.

Furthermore, billions of dollars are spent each year on the production and maintenance of nuclear weapons. This spending takes vital resources away from other more socially useful services such as healthcare and education, as well as diplomacy and peace-building.

5. International instability and insecurity

Nuclear weapons create international instability and insecurity, rather than act as a deterrent. Falk and Lifton (1982) use the term 'nuclearism' to define the psychological, political and military dependence on nuclear weapons, in which these weapons are embraced as a solution to a wide variety of human dilemmas, most ironically that of security. Such beliefs are based on enemy images – stereotyped images of another group or individual as implacably evil, aggressive and untrustworthy, that are used to create fear, justify abrogation of treaties, and provoke proliferation of military and nuclear defences. In a mirror image of 'the enemy', as one side claims the right to protect its sovereignty with weapons of mass destruction, so, too, does the other. In this way, the conflict escalates, with each side justifying its further acquisition of nuclear weapons in the interests of their own self-defence. Ironically, rather than making themselves safer, they raise the risks and make the situation more and more dangerous. Psychological research over the past three decades has identified the exaggerated image of 'the enemy' as the key source and amplifier of international tensions (Falk et al 1982; Perlman 2001).

Conflict escalation refers to an increase in the intensity of a conflict and in the severity of tactics used in pursuing it (Rubin, Pruitt & Kim, 1994). Parties begin to make bigger and stronger threats

and impose harsher negative sanctions. Issues move from specific to general, the relationship between the parties deteriorates, and parties devote more and more resources to the struggle. A great deal of conflict escalation is inadvertent, and occurs without the parties having fully considered the implications of their actions. Sometimes this is a result of perceived crises and time pressures that compel the parties to act before they have considered alternative courses of action or have a full understanding of the situation. The use of force and threats, if regarded as too extreme, can ultimately backfire and provoke retaliation. It is in these cases that conflicts have the potential to spiral out of control and have terribly damaging effects. Destructively waged conflicts typically involve great losses for one or more of the contending parties, and tend to persist for a long time.

Spiral of conflict

According to the conflict-spiral model, escalation results from a vicious circle of action and reaction (Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994). Because each reaction is more severe and intense than the action that precedes it, each retaliation or defensive action in the spiral provides a new issue or grievance. These dynamics explain the movement from lighter tactics to heavier tactics, as well as the expansion of issues in conflict. As the spiral rises, each party's list of grievances grows longer, producing a growing sense of crisis.

The arms race, and nuclear proliferation, can be described as an example of a 'defensive' spiral of conflict. Each country or nation in the conflict attempts to protect itself from fear of a threat that it perceives in another countries' self-protective actions (evidenced by their acquisition of arms). What one country sees as protective, another country may see as threatening, and they respond by developing their own arsenal of weapons.

Escalating conflict amongst countries that possess nuclear weapons, or nuclear weapons capability, is extremely dangerous, as the risks of use of weapons of mass destruction heightens as the conflict escalates (Britton, 2001). The existence of nuclear weapons and the threat of them encourages nation states to regard violence and hostility as a first choice for dealing with perceived 'enemy' powers rather than communication, negotiation and dialogue. Psychological research shows that the availability of weapons increases the likelihood that they will be used. Similarly, the more actions that are taken towards warfare, the more likely that path to war will be maintained and seen as an inevitable outcome (Wessells 1995). The possession of nuclear weapons exacerbates the possibility of nuclear provocation.

6. Nuclear safeguards

Fears of a nuclear threat in a major city are more acute now than in the past. The existing agreements and domestic and international efforts, although relatively successful in some areas, have been unable effectively and comprehensively to address evolving threats or to allay growing fears about the manufacture, acquisition and use of such weapons of mass destruction.

According to a report by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and the Medical Association for the Prevention of War (MAPW) (ACF, 2006), the current global nuclear safeguards are inadequate to protect us from nuclear proliferation. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has the authority to enter into safeguards agreements with individual nations to ensure that, for a given period, "no significant quantity of nuclear material" has been diverted to military use. According to *An Illusion of Protection* (ACF, 2006), however, the IAEA cannot practically ensure timely detection, and the 'significant quantities' are, by today's standards, far too high. If a country decided to divert plutonium or highly enriched uranium from its civil nuclear program to fabricate nuclear weapons, it could assemble nuclear weapons very quickly. International safeguards are only effective if the country concerned is not intent on violating its Treaty obligations or its safeguards agreement. In other words, safeguards depend on the country behaving lawfully.

For decades Australia has provided uranium to several nuclear weapons states, believing that safeguards will keep that uranium out of weapons. As a provider of a raw material that has such catastrophic potential, Australia has a responsibility to help eliminate nuclear weapons. Given the limitations of existing nuclear safeguards, there is a therefore, a serious and unavoidable risk that

Australian uranium exports to nuclear weapon states will directly or indirectly support nuclear weapon manufacture and proliferation. Australia must review its uranium export agreements in light of nuclear weapons proliferation risks and act to reduce these risks by ceasing uranium exports to any nation that maintains nuclear weapons. Providing uranium exports also runs the risk of the material being obtained by “rogue” states and terrorists who are not subject to any treaty obligations at all.

A further critical step involves the ratification of key international treaties concerning nuclear weapons. The most essential is gaining the outstanding signatures needed to bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force. Support of Nuclear Weapon Free Zone treaties by Nuclear Weapon States is also vital. Australia has an important role to play in encouraging the ratification of key treaties.

Elimination of nuclear weapons will only happen if all countries, including nuclear and non-nuclear states, genuinely work towards this result. A robust and open debate between nations is one of the most likely ways of generating creative solutions and engaging the broad transnational and cross-industrial involvement necessary for a world free of nuclear weapons. What is needed is a coordinated effort across states and institutions, in the framework of voluntary governmental and non-governmental participation, if there is to be a reversal of the nuclear threat. One element of such coordination that has been proposed is a nuclear weapons convention (NWC) - a multilateral agreement to prohibit the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons. In the same way that comparable treaties have banned landmines, biological and chemical weapons, with considerable success, the NWC would provide for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

7. Peace and disarmament

In 2002, the UN Secretary General recommended that governments around the world must actively support peace and disarmament education. It is necessary to raise the public's awareness of the dangers of weapons of mass destruction, the tragic consequences of their use, as well as the psychological issues that perpetuate cycles of violence and conflict. An important part of this education is also the challenges raised by disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Disarmament and non-proliferation education is essential to progress toward the full implementation of the disarmament and non-proliferation obligations of the NPT.

Over time it is easy to forget the number of nuclear weapons around in the world, to become accustomed to their presence, and begin to see their existence as inevitable and a fact of national security. Once we become habituated to having nuclear weapons around, it is hard to remember back to times before world leaders believed that they needed nuclear power and nuclear weapons. We have a tendency to forget about the nuclear threat, until something comes along to remind us.

According to Frankenhauser (1987), because the nuclear threat has grown through gradual escalation with successive weapons increases spread over decades, what we encounter is emotional blunting. Feelings of distress and anxiety fade away without eliciting corrective responses. If one is in a horrific, inescapable situation, psychic numbing becomes a protective survival mechanism. With this pseudo-adaptation comes decreasing emotional involvement with increased distance in time and space. People display inability to become emotionally involved in problems not perceived as urgent. We may acknowledge risk but shut our eyes to its imminence (Frankenhauser, 1987). We must continue to educate and increase the public's awareness of the danger and presence of the nuclear threat to counteract this human tendency to become desensitised to the issues and threat.

Another part of education is about the broader issues of peace and violence. The belief that the only way to solve problems is by threat ignores bodies of knowledge from psychology, violence prevention, tension reduction and conflict resolution. Paradoxically, the way to be more secure is to make the enemy more secure. Decades of psychological and social science research into conflict have resulted in the development of well-understood theories of conflict transformation,

beginning with the causes of violence, and including the consequences of violence, violence prevention, and non-violent means of conflict resolution.

There is an extensive literature that looks at the many and various components of a peace process in which conflicts are resolved by peaceful means, including official and unofficial mediation, dialogue, peacekeeping (efforts to bring armed conflict to a halt and to ensure that violence does not continue to erupt), peacemaking (agreements to settle the issues that have contributed to conflict through negotiation, dispute resolution), peace-building (efforts to redress structural violence, facilitate the establishment of durable peace, and to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes), and much more. Christie et al. (2008) differentiate between some of these processes, illustrating the numerous applications of psychological techniques in all aspects of the peace process.

Current levels of violence and the threat of weapons of mass destruction pose an urgent need for effective peace education programs. Peace education programs include those applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina in primary and secondary schools (Danesh 2008) which encourage healing and planting the seeds for fruitful relationship building between previously opposed sides. A global study of peace education programs in Aceh, Albania and Armenia found that peace education brings about a change in individuals which increases the knowledge and promotes the practice of non-violent, collaborative means of achieving peace (Ashton 2008). In Australia, programs run in Victoria introducing restorative justice practices have achieved better outcomes for disruption in schools (Shaw 2007). This suggests that in Australia, peace education curriculum has a practical and pragmatic application for the everyday as well as for more sustained global cultural change for peace.

8. Summary

There are several psychological issues underpinning the proliferation of nuclear weapons and several steps that can be taken to prevent the dangers underlying the threat of such weapons. Obtaining such weapons increases the risk of active hostility between nation states, prolongs the perception of other nations as the “enemy”, and accelerates the spiral of conflict. Australia must take concrete steps such as encouraging the ratification of key treaties, supporting a nuclear weapons convention and reviewing its current uranium export arrangements. At home the Australian Government should actively support peace education in schools in order to educate the public of alternative means of conflict resolution apart from armed violence.

9. Recommendations

1. Australia must encourage the ratification of key treaties. The most essential is gaining the outstanding signatures needed to bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force. Support of Nuclear Weapon Free Zone treaties by current Nuclear Weapon States is also vital.
2. A Nuclear Weapons Convention is a clear path to disarmament, and Australia must advocate for commencement of negotiations towards a Convention. The International Commission on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament provides a key opportunity to promote a Nuclear Weapons Convention.
3. Australia must review its uranium export agreements in the light of nuclear weapons proliferation risks and act to reduce these risks.
4. The Australian Government should actively support peace and disarmament education.

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