



Medical Association for Prevention of War

27 February 2013

Defence White Paper 2013
R1-1-A065, Russell Offices
Department of Defence
PO Box 7901
CANBERRA BC ACT 2610

Thank you for the opportunity for the Medical Association for Prevention of War to make a submission to the development of the 2013 Defence White Paper (DWP). As an organisation of physicians and other health professionals concerned about the impact of war on human and environmental health, we had some particular concerns with the direction taken in the 2009 DWP, and would like to direct you to our 2010 publication in response: *Vision 2030, An Alternative Approach to Australian Security* (Appendix 2)

We note Minister Stephen Smith's summary of changing strategic circumstances prompting the new DWP at this time:

- The shift towards the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean rim as a region of global strategic significance;
- The increased focus of the US on our region through its Global Force Posture Review;
- Australia's operational drawdown in Afghanistan, East Timor and Solomon Islands;
- Australia's own Force Posture; and
- The ongoing effects of the GFC.¹

We would like to bring to your attention four key areas of concern for our organisation:

1. The increasingly interdependent relationship between Australia and the United States, and Australia's sometimes submissive role in the relationship in military matters, including a stated reliance on extended nuclear deterrence.
2. The projections of increased military spending while spending on diplomacy and aid is currently inadequate and continues to face reductions.
3. The narrow view of security as that provided by military means rather than a comprehensive approach to genuine human security.
4. The inappropriate influence of commercial interests in defence policy development, and defence spending decisions.

¹ (Minister for Defence – To the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), Australia's Changing Strategic Circumstances August 2012)

1. Relationship between Australia and United States

Australian political positioning unswervingly supports the US pivot towards the Asia Pacific region and the Indian Ocean rim. There is an oft-stated assumption that this must occur because of the ANZUS treaty. Minister Smith talks of the need for “*assisting our South-East Asian partners to meet external challenge, and to meet our Alliance obligations to the United States*”.² This misrepresents the ANZUS treaty, which has a strong and repeated emphasis on the pre-eminence of the United Nations in settling international disputes by peaceful actions. It also hints strongly at a declaration of support for the US over China in any future conflict between these two nations. The actions of Australia in allowing US troops to train here, the revitalisation of the North West Cape as a US military facility, expansion of the Stirling Naval base to allow US warships to be based there, and development of other so-called “joint facilities” have sent aggressive signals from Australia to China which have concerned many Australians.

While there is talk and activity around the Australia-US military alliance, there is little or no acknowledgement that in the last decade Australia blindly followed the US to war in Iraq, undermining the role of the United Nations, against the will of a majority of Australians,³ and almost certainly against international law. In the process, we contributed to the profound suffering and instability that was generated by that war. Many Australians were and remain deeply concerned about our role there, yet directions being taken now show no sign that we have learned anything from this experience. The militarisation of our region is a growing concern within Australia and more broadly.

Extended nuclear deterrence is a key concern in this relationship. MAPW welcomed the Government’s role in establishing, along with the Japanese Government, the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament in 2008; and the related JSCOT inquiry established in 2008 and reporting in 2009, which called for “concrete action” to be taken on nuclear disarmament.⁴ Despite this, there was a contradictory approach in the 2009 DWP, which stated that “the value to Australia of the protection afforded by extended nuclear deterrence under the US alliance” which “provides a stable and reliable sense of assurance.”⁵ We hold that there is nothing secure about nuclear weapons. We now know that even a “limited” nuclear exchange with today’s weapons would cause unprecedented humanitarian disaster and could induce, through further climate disruption, crop failure and famine with up to a billion people dying.⁶

By relying on nuclear weapons for security we are lending legitimacy to their existence, and impeding the urgent action that is needed to eliminate them.

² Minister Smith – Speech to the Lowy Institute on the 2013 Defence White Paper

³ http://polling.newspoll.com.au/image_uploads/cgi-lib.22318.1.0102iraqi_military.pdf

⁴ Report 106 Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Introduction by Kelvin Thompson, Chairperson

⁵ 2009 Defence White Paper

⁶ www.mapw.org.au/news/nuclear-famine-new-ippnw-study-shows-billion-people-risk (also Appendix 3)

2. Military spending

Our Defence budget equates to 6.4 percent of Australian Government outlays. It is equivalent to around 1.6 percent of Gross Domestic Product.⁷ While the projected increases detailed in the 2009 white paper have not occurred, due to unforeseen financial constraints, spending as a percentage of GDP has not been reduced, despite defence “cuts” announced in the May 2012 Budget.

Global military spending is about \$US 1.7 trillion.⁸ Much of this goes to large US and European companies making large and small weapons, vehicles and equipment for state and non-state actors all over the world. Australia is among 9 countries which increased their military spending as a percentage of GDP in the first decade of this century. We spend well over \$70 million a day.

The budget for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, responsible for the Australian Government's international relations, trade and development assistance programs, continues to suffer from a lack of funding to important areas. It is an imperative that Australia refocuses on human security questions through adequate funding of development assistance and diplomacy, rather than over-spending on military approaches to regional problems.

3. Human Security:

We consider that there is an urgent need to broaden Australia's discourse about “security” to look comprehensively at meeting human security needs.

The narrow view of security in the 2009 White Paper is that security comes from military preparedness. Rather, Australia's best hope for preserving our freedom and way of life lies in working with local, regional and global partners to address our shared global human security challenges — climate change, resources depletion, poverty and inequity, disease, disasters and human rights abuses. It is increasingly recognised that climate change, if not adequately addressed, will lead to worsening global violence and instability. These challenges all have the potential to increase conflict between and within states, and to create masses of displaced people, who will desperately look to places like Australia for safe haven.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), if achieved, would bring improvements in the areas of education, food supply, disease prevention, maternal health, and environmental sustainability in the world's poorer nations. The MDG were to be achieved by 2015. Achieving these goals would not only improve quality of life but would also help improve global security by reducing the likelihood of armed conflict. The World Bank estimates that achieving the MDGs would cost USD\$40-60 billion per year — a small fraction of the world's global military spending of \$US 1.7 trillion.⁹

For a broader approach to security there must be a much greater co-ordination between DFAT, Defence and AusAID, and the Australian community in developing policy, with a building of our diplomatic resources, strengthening of our relationships, a commitment to working within and

⁷ Minister Smith, August 2012, speaking to Australian Strategic Policy Institute

⁸ SIPRI Military expenditure data base

⁹ <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/mdgassessment.pdf>

strengthening the peace-building role of the United Nations, and reduced reliance on our relationship with one super-power for determining our regional posture.

4. Conflict of interest

The medical profession is at last addressing the insidious effect of commercial company sponsorship. It would appear that the Defence Ministry must also address the same problem. Two examples of possible conflict of interest are closely linked to the Defence White Paper process: firstly, the appointment of Stephen Loosely to chair the previous DWP community consultation, while he was a director of arms manufacturing company Thales; and secondly the sponsorship last August by Austal, a ship-building company which has contracts with the Department of Defence, of an event where the Minister spoke to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute about Australia's changing strategic circumstances. These possible conflicts of interest were not declared in advance. We are concerned that huge marketing pressure can be put on individual politicians in an attempt to influence defence spending decisions, which may result in impulsive rather than carefully considered spending of taxpayers' funds. Much lobbying of politicians by companies is not at all transparent, despite the welcome 2008 Lobbying Code of Conduct and Register of Lobbyists. This register records names of third party lobbyists and their clients, who obtain an audience with a minister, but not that of in-house lobbyists, or of lobbyists contacting other politicians. Transparency would be strengthened by a stricter code for both political donations and lobbyists.

We respectfully request further opportunities for the Medical Association for Prevention of War to address these and other concerns in the development of the new Defence White Paper.

Please also find attached three appendices.

The first is MAPW's original [2008 submission](#) to the development of the 2009 DWP. The recommendations of our organisation remain relevant and current, and we request the reviewers to consider these as current.

The second appendix is the 2010 report in response to the 2009 DWP, [Vision 2030: An Alternative Approach to Australian Security](#). Again, this report contains 20 key recommendations, which we would ask to be considered as current.

The third is a report by International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War based on climate research examining the effects of a future limited nuclear exchange, [Nuclear Famine: A Billion Lives at Risk](#).

We look forward to your timely response to this submission.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jenny Grounds

President