



## MEDIA RELEASE

### COALITION URGES AUSTRALIA TO CONDEMN LANDMINE DECISION BY US

**Sunday, 9 February 2020:** The Australian Arms Control Coalition (AACC) has written to Prime Minister Scott Morrison urging him to publicly condemn the decision of the United States to lift restrictions on its use of landmines.

The letter calls for the Australian Government to guarantee that Australia's military cooperation with the US will not involve the use or transport of landmines. It also seeks a guarantee that Australia will not relax the existing ban on the manufacture and export of landmines or their components in meeting its stated ambition to become a top weapons exporter.

The US has [announced](#) the reversal of a long-standing policy banning the use of anti personnel landmines outside of the Korean Peninsula.

The AACC is deeply concerned that the shift undermines decades of international effort to protect civilians from indiscriminate explosives in conflict zones.

"The use of Anti Personnel Mines is clearly prohibited in the Anti Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) which has been signed by 164 states," states the letter to the Prime Minister.

"It goes against thirty years of international cooperation to ban landmines, since the signing of the APMBC in 1997."

The majority of landmines and explosive remnants of war kill civilians (71 percent), and more than half of all the civilians who are killed are children (54 percent). In places like Afghanistan the percentage of child casualties is as high as 77 percent.

In 2018, Australia [recommitted](#) its support for international action towards the goal of a world free of landmines by 2025 at the Anti Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Geneva.

As the letter states: "Australia has long been a strong supporter of mine action and is a state party to the APMBC and the Convention on Cluster Munitions."

"Australia is supporting efforts to reduce the number of deaths and injuries from landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war through bilateral aid partnership and through the United Nations Mine Action Service."

"Given these efforts by Australia, the announcement by the US is a retrograde step which must be condemned by all countries concerned with the horrific humanitarian impact of landmines."

The AACC is calling for the Australian Government to –

- Register Australia's grave concern with the United States over its new policy allowing the increased use of anti personnel landmines;
- Ensure Australia's military cooperation with the United States does not involve the transshipment or storage of anti personnel landmines through US military bases on Australian soil;
- In the case of joint operations, guarantee Australian forces will not be involved in the facilitation of landmine placement;
- Continue to champion the ban of landmines internationally, including by funding de-mining programs and by complying with Australia's own international commitments; and
- Guarantee that Australia's ambition to become a top 10 defence exporter will not include the manufacture or export of anti personnel landmines or components.

The AACC was formed in April 2019 out of shared concern around the lack of accountability and transparency in Australia's defence exports, particularly around current arms sales to parties to the devastating war in Yemen.

Its members include Save the Children Australia, Amnesty International, the Australian Centre for International Justice, the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network, the Medical Association for Prevention of War, Oxfam Australia, SumOfUs, Wage Peace and individual advocates.

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