



Electrical Trades Union of Employees Queensland

**O.** 41 Peel Street South Brisbane Q 4101

**P.** PO Box 3520 South Brisbane Q 4101

**T.** 07 3846 2477 | 1800ETUYES(1800 388 937) | **F.** 07 3844 9851

**E.** info@etu.org.au | **W.** www.etu.org.au

Please address all correspondence to the Secretary  
ABN: 80 450 640 455

## **Submission to the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network People's Inquiry**

### Unions and Workers' Rights

The Electrical Trades Union QLD & NT represents our workers. Workers have been and will continue to bear the burden of wars, whether that burden be financial, social, injury, trauma, or death. Continuing to involve Australia with US wars leads to Australian workers carrying the cost. These impacts can be seen at every level, from the most obvious impact on soldiers and defence workers, to tax payer dollars being spent on militarisation rather than community betterment. Australians should see their tax dollars contributing to services and resources they can use, like public schools, hospitals, energy assets, community development, and the significantly lacking social housing.

The Australian weapons manufacturing industry is largely controlled by multi-national weaponry firms, which exercise a great amount of control over workers' rights and working conditions. The management and executives of these corporations are largely based overseas, running the risk of managers coming in with little to no regard for Australian workers. Additionally, profits from such corporation would be reaped overseas, injecting little to nothing into the Australian economy.

Unions have a history of campaigning against conscription for overseas service, the most historic of which took place from 1914 to 1916, and ended with an historic victory on 28 October 1916. More recently, Australian Unions opposed Australian involvement in the Iraq war in 2002. Peace has, and always will be a Union issue.

### Environment and Climate Change

An issue highly relevant for ETU Members is climate action, and a just transition for impacted workers. The 2021 Federal Budget's allocation of funds to renewable energy sources and de-carbonising was minimal, allocating only \$30 million towards renewable energy sources for one project in the Northern Territory. In stark contrast, \$46 billion was budgeted for military spending. We are in immediate danger of a climate crisis, yet are still not allocating satisfactory funds to tackle this emergency. Much-needed funds must be allocated to the climate crisis and to ensuring our energy workers and citizens have a sustainable future.

Aside from fund allocation, the US military and its resources is a major contributor of fossil fuels. The US military alone produces more greenhouse gasses than the entirety of Sweden, Switzerland, or Morocco. The act of war is a massive polluter, directly and indirectly, for example, in the case of climate change refugees.

### Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

The ETU contributes to campaigns aiding refugees and people seeking asylum, with the Youth Crew particularly invested in the plights of detained refugees in Australia and offshore. War results in refugees and people seeking asylum fleeing their homelands in search of somewhere safe to live without fearing persecution.



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There is additionally an increased risk for climate change refugees to become collateral damage of war, particularly in countries like Bangladesh, India, Iraq, Pakistan, and Egypt. Displaced individuals and families already face countless struggles, and funds to support people seeking asylum are limited in Australia as it is. The Australian Federal Government does not offer significant support to refugees and people seeking asylum, in fact, it actively spends taxpayer dollars deterring displaced people. This is evidenced by the conceptualisation and implementation of the prominent 'Stop the Boats' campaign and the allotment of \$7.7 million to the Airline Liaison Officer Program in the 2021 Budget. If the Federal Government does not seek to support people seeking asylum from war torn countries, it cannot in good conscience contribute to displacement of citizens or increasing the numbers of refugees.

#### Social and Community

The ETU is active in the community and on pressing social issues, running anti-racism campaigns, growing more active on First Nations issues with the establishment of an Indigenous Advisory Committee this year, and getting behind community issues like homelessness. Australia has work to do in addressing issues of equality in our society, among First Nations people, homelessness, and domestic and family violence. The continued allyship between the US and Australia as illustrated in the media and perpetuated by our politicians is not productive to improving our society.

The US has a broken healthcare system, a significant class divide, and completely unsatisfactory welfare system. There is evidence of US systems and practices leaking into Australian society with the aid of media and political agendas like the Coalition's cuts to Medicare. Further allyship with the US is likely to cause more changes to Australian political and social systems, and result in further damage to our society, which is struggling significantly in key areas already.

Rather than allocating a significant \$46 billion to military spending, the Australian Federal Government should consider spending more on community-led programs and developing social programs to assist people experiencing homelessness, abuse and violence, mental health struggles, and substance abuse.