

30 July 2021

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RE: A People's Inquiry: The Case for an Independent and Peaceful Australia.

Dear Chairperson,

The Justice and Peace Office is an agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. It is responsible for promoting Catholic Social Teaching which strives to build a world founded on justice and peace that respects the life and dignity of every single human being, particularly the most vulnerable. Caring for the environment is also a cornerstone of Catholic Social Teaching. We welcome the opportunity to put in a submission to the IPAN Inquiry: A People's Inquiry: The Case for an Independent and Peaceful Australia.

The Catholic Perspective on Peace and War

The Catholic Church believes in striving for peace in all circumstances and among all peoples. All Catholics are called to live by Jesus Christ's words "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt 5:9)¹ and to follow in Christ's footsteps who is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:5).

Regarding peace, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war ... Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men [and women], respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity."² Mindful of the evils and injustices that accompany all war, particularly the intentional destruction of human life, the Church has insistently urged all people and governments to prayer and action to avoid war.³

The Church has maintained a concession that "governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed".⁴ However, Pope Francis has recently cautioned against falling into overly broad interpretations of this alleged right.⁵

For the last several hundred years Just War doctrine has governed Catholic teaching regarding the circumstances in which states can go to war (*jus ad bellum*), and the conditions for conducting war (*jus in bello*). Even though during this time there have been many calls in favour of a more pacifist approach. Just War doctrine was developed to narrowly constrain the circumstances in which

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (St Pauls, 2nd ed, 1994) 1716 (hereafter "*Catechism of the Catholic Church*").

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2304.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2307-2308.

⁴ Paul VI, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965) sec. 79 <https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html> (hereafter "Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*"); *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2308.

⁵ Francis, *Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti on Fraternity and Social Friendship*, (3 October 2020), sec. 255 <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html> (hereafter "Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*").

countries could go to war and regulate the conduct of war to limit the loss of innocent life. The rules governing the practice in war were designed to most importantly prevent the destruction of innocent human life and secondly diminish the negative impact of the social, political and humanitarian consequences of war. Even in circumstances of war the Church has always held that non-combatants, wounded soldiers and prisoners must be treated humanely.⁶

The Church is also cognisant of the fact that its teaching on peace and war must change to reflect changes in society, culture and technology. Even in the 1960s the Church declared that “Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation.”⁷ It also drew particular attention to the new dangers posed by means of modern warfare including biological, chemical and nuclear weapons which enable these crimes on a scale never before imagined.⁸

In relation to the prospect of Australia going to war in Iraq in 2003, the Australian Catholic Bishops said: “Because ‘war is always a defeat for humanity’, we support the Holy Father’s call for leaders to say No to War and to search exhaustively for peaceful solutions through the United Nations.”⁹ They maintained that the criteria for a just war had not been met.

In recent years there has been a strong shift in Catholicism towards a complete prohibition on war. Part of the reason for the shift in thinking is because with modern means of warfare it is almost impossible to protect non-combatants and other innocent parties. Pope Francis in particular has recently condemned war as a “false answer” that never resolves the problems it claims to solve while introducing even more destructive elements into the world-wide human family.¹⁰ Pope Francis has once again encouraged everyone to “work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and peoples”.¹¹

In his most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis reiterated that it is no longer possible to think of war as a solution because its risks will be greater than its supposed benefits. He declared that every war leaves our world worse than it was before and that war is a failure of politics and humanity.¹² In his earlier encyclical, *Laudato Si’* Pope Francis also recognised the serious environmental impacts of war: “War always does grave harm to the environment ... risks which are magnified when one considers nuclear arms and biological weapons.”¹³ In relation to Just War doctrine he said: “In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a “just war”. Never again war!”¹⁴

The Church is also unequivocal in condemning the arms race as it risks instigating a war. In particular the Church is concerned that the enormous amounts of money spent on new and more destructive forms of weapons detract from money that could be spent on the development of needy and vulnerable populations.¹⁵ The Church encourages public authorities to limit the sale and production of

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2313.

⁷ Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 80.

⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2314.

⁹ Archdiocese of Brisbane, “A Statement on Iraq from the Catholic Bishops of Australia”, 5 March 2003 <<https://brisbanecatholic.org.au/articles/statement-iraq-catholic-bishops-australia/>>.

¹⁰ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, sec. 255.

¹¹ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, sec. 257.

¹² Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, sec. 261.

¹³ Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si’ on Care for our Common Home*, (24 May 2015), sec. 57 <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html>.

¹⁴ Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 258

¹⁵ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio Encyclical Letter on the Development of Peoples*, (27 March 1967) sec. 53 <https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html>.

arms¹⁶ and has described the arms race as “one of the greatest curses on the human race and the harm it inflicts on the poor is more than can be endured”.¹⁷

It is in light of these Catholic teachings on peace and war that we examine Australia’s position in the military alliance with the United States.

The Australian-US Alliance

The ANZUS Treaty is often touted as the centrepiece of Australian-US military Alliance. Successive Australian Governments have declared the ANZUS treaty to be indispensable to our military cooperation with the United States because of the misconception that it requires the United States to come to Australia’s aid in the event of an attack on Australia. However, there is no guarantee in the Treaty that the United States must come to Australia’s aid when attacked. It merely states that the parties will consult¹⁸ about threats in the Pacific region. In the 70 years since the Treaty has been in force, the United States has not come to Australia’s aid once. However, as a result of the alliance, Australia has been pressured into many an international conflict which are more in the strategic interests of the United States than for the protection of Australia itself. If Australia continues in its current military partnership with the United States it is likely that will be dragged into more of the United States’ wars, which pose no threat to Australia and its inhabitants.

Given that the Prime Minister can decide to go to war without the need for debate or approval of Parliament, this is particularly concerning. It is time to re-examine this power of the Prime Minister as a recent poll revealed that 83% of Australians want Parliament to decide whether Australia enters an international conflict.¹⁹ The number of innocent civilians who will lose their lives or suffer permanent disabilities or health crises as a result of modern means of warfare do not justify the reasons invoked by states for going to war. The UN estimates that in the 21st Century, nearly 90% of current casualties are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children, compared to a century ago when 90% of those who lost their lives in war were military personnel.²⁰ In addition to the loss of life of military personnel, the recent report into war crimes by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan illustrates many other atrocious practice that often accompanies war, including war crimes.²¹ The other gigantic humanitarian crisis precipitated by war is the forced displacement of people. It is estimated there are 80 million forcibly displaced people in the world today, the highest levels since World War II and much of this displacement is fuelled by conflict.

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade’s 2006 Inquiry into *Australia’s Defence Relationship with the United States* (“Inquiry Report”) recognised the danger of Australia’s

¹⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2316.

¹⁷ Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 81.

¹⁸ House of Representatives Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, *Australia’s Defence Relations with the United States*, Inquiry Report, (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006), Appendix B: ANZUS Treaty, Art 3.

<https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_committees?url=jfad/usrelations/report.htm> (hereafter “Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, *Australia’s Defence Relations with the United States*”).

¹⁹ Australians for War Powers Reform, “Huge Majority of Australians support War Powers Reform”, Media Release, 26 November 2020 <<https://www.besureonwar.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/AWPR-Release-26-Nov.pdf>>.

²⁰ Fragility, Conflict and Violence World Bank Group, *Conflict and Violence in the 21st Century* <<https://www.un.org/pga/70/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/01/Conflict-and-violence-in-the-21st-century-Current-trends-as-observed-in-empirical-research-and-statistics-Mr.-Alexandre-Marc-Chief-Specialist-Fragility-Conflict-and-Violence-World-Bank-Group.pdf>>.

²¹ Elias Visontay and Christopher Knaus, “Inquiry into alleged war crimes by Australian special forces in Afghanistan delivers final report” *The Guardian (Australia)*, 7 November 2021 <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/nov/07/inquiry-into-alleged-war-crimes-by-australian-special-forces-in-afghanistan-delivers-final-report>>.

interests being overridden by US military interests. It said that some submissions “cautioned that Australia should be more careful in how it manages the alliance to ensure Australia’s interests are not subsumed by those of its larger alliance partner.”²² As the Inquiry Report pointed out: “For the US, the Australian alliance is one of many, and by no means the most important, but Australia’s US alliance is unquestionably its single most important security relationship.”²³ As the larger more powerful partner, the US is not obliged to take Australia’s interests into account as a member of the Alliance. If the New Zealand experience is anything to go by, the US can cut off this relationship when it no longer serves their interest, or if Australia does not capitulate to the demands which the US thinks are necessary for the alliance to work.

The Inquiry Report also noted how having certain Australian politicians strongly align ourselves with the US has jeopardised the perception of our independence among our neighbours. The examples and consequences the Inquiry Report pointed to were: “Prime Minister Holt’s ‘All the way with LBJ’ and Prime Minister Gorton’s White House dinner speech promising that ‘wherever the United States is resisting aggression ... then we will go Waltzing Matilda with you’ were unfortunate examples which understandably were met with outrage and derision. More recently the government has been criticised for not distancing itself from the casual description of Australia as America’s ‘deputy sheriff’ in the region quickly enough, before it began to damage Australia’s image with its neighbours.”²⁴

A review of the ANZUS Treaty in 2001 entitled *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years* revealed the level of influence the Treaty may have on Australia’s foreign policy independence: “It has been argued that Australia’s dependence on the US alliance is a sign of foreign and defence policy weakness, that only when Australia is willing to rid itself of ANZUS will it be able to develop truly independent foreign and defence policies, policies that it is assumed would inevitably be better for Australia than those developed as a dependent ally.”²⁵ It also found that as the smaller state in the alliance, if Australia were faced with an emergency, then the more powerful ally may not think it is necessary to provide assistance.²⁶

The same review also recognised Australia’s unequal position within the alliance: “The weaker partner, however, is by definition more vulnerable. It has fewer resources and must therefore fear threats which the larger partner could view as trivial. It runs the risk that, as the ‘price’ of protection, its great ally may seek to dictate important aspects of national policy, or that it may demand involvement in conflicts with little or no relevance to the smaller state’s interests. Arguably Australia’s involvement in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts were of this type.”²⁷ Since the review, our involvement in the war Iraq is also largely attributable to our military alliance with the United States. Our involvement in the war in Iraq was in spite of unprecedented demonstrations against the war in several major Australian cities.²⁸ Further protests continued to end the war in Iraq after it became apparent that it was entered into under false pretenses.²⁹ An inquiry into how and why Australia went to war in Iraq is incredibly overdue. The review also observed that on many matters

²² Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, *Australia’s Defence Relations with the United States*, v.

²³ Gary Brown and Laura Rayner, Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Group, *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years*, Current Issues Brief 3 2001-02, (Department of the Parliamentary Library, 28 August 2001) i <https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/CIB/cib0102/02CIB03> (hereafter “Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Group, *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years*”).

²⁴ Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Group, *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years*, 4.

²⁵ Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Group, *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years*, 6.

²⁶ Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Group, *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years*, 16.

²⁷ Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Group, *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years*, 16.

²⁸ Stephen Darley, “Repeatedly going to war: the Cost of our US Alliance” *Independent Australia*, 21 March 2021 <<https://independentaustralia.net/article-display/repeatedly-going-to-war-the-cost-of-our-us-alliance,14909>>.

²⁹ AAP, “Protests across Australia against war”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 April 2003

<<https://www.smh.com.au/world/middle-east/protests-across-australia-against-war-20030413-gdgli0.html>>.

“...Australia will support the US position and even seek to promote it. There have been numerous instances of regional governments and commentators characterising Australian initiatives as the actions of an American surrogate.”³⁰

Military Spending and Weapons Exports

The Treaty also says that Australia may have preferential access to US military equipment. While taking into account the caution mentioned above about how arms races tend to provoke war, we should also be aware that in this access can also lead to dependence. Had New Zealand’s involvement in ANZUS not ceased due to its nuclear free policy, many anticipated New Zealand would not have been able to maintain its role in the alliance due to rising costs of military equipment required for joint military operations with the US. Australia could find itself in the same situation.³¹ The review also noted how as part of the alliance Australian armaments need to be advanced enough to work with US weapons systems and this leads to an escalation of spending on weapons.³²

The “Australia in the USA” website declares: “Australia is one of the largest importers of US arms (of both commercial and government origin) in the world” and that “The 2016 Australian Defence White Paper commits to increase Australian defence spending to 2% GDP by 2021.”³³ In 2020, Australia spent \$27.5 billion USD on defence spending which amounts to 2.1% of our GDP.³⁴ Sadly this meets the Australian Government’s bold claim to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2021. It also represents a 33% increase in defence spending since 2011.³⁵ Such high expenditure on weapons is completely unnecessary especially when the money could be used to provide better health, education and social support to underprivileged populations in Australia or elsewhere in the world.

As mentioned earlier, a serious threat to peace is the arms race. Therefore it is appalling that Australia has been aiming to become one of the ten largest exporters of armaments in the world.³⁶ The vast majority of Australians and those that live here are a peaceful people and are appalled that becoming an eminent weapons manufacturer and exporter is one of our Government’s stated goals. Producing weapons to boost the economy is not a valid reason especially when we could produce things that are more beneficial for society and the planet such as medical technology or renewable energy technology. The lack of transparency about who we export weapons to is also a cause for concern as these weapons could be used to attack a nation’s own civilians, in violation of their human rights or in armed conflicts with other peaceful nations. It is shocking that Australia has issued dozens of arms exports permits to Saudi Arabia and the UAE who have been involved in the conflict in Yemen for years.³⁷ The UN has declared that due to this humanitarian crisis, 16 million Yemenis will go hungry this year while 50, 000 are already starving to death.³⁸ A further move to foster a peaceful Australia is to ban political donations from weapons manufacturers as a deterrence to Governments creating more business for weapons manufacturers who have donated to their party.

While Australia does not produce nuclear weapons, it contains some of the largest uranium deposits in the world and we export all the uranium that we mine. Despite the Australian Government’s claim

³⁰ Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Group, *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years*, 19.

³¹ Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Group, *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years*, i.

³² Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Group, *Upside, Downside: ANZUS after 50 Years*, 29.

³³ Embassy of Australia in the USA, “Australia-US Defence Relationship” (2020) <<https://usa.embassy.gov.au/defence-cooperation>>.

³⁴ Diego Lopes da Silva, Nan Tian and Alexandra Marksteiner, *Trends in World Military Expenditure 2020*, SIPRI Fact Sheet: (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2021), 2. <https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/fs_2104_milex_0.pdf> (hereafter “SIPRI, *Trends in World Military Expenditure 2020*”).

³⁵ SIPRI, *Trends in World Military Expenditure 2020*, 2.

³⁶ Misha Ketchell, “Australia is building a billion-dollar arms export industry. This is how weapons can fall in the wrong hands”, *The Conversation*, 27 May 2021 <<https://theconversation.com/australia-is-building-a-billion-dollar-arms-export-industry-this-is-how-weapons-can-fall-in-the-wrong-hands-159817>>.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

that we only export uranium to peaceful countries, there is no guarantee that those countries will not sell it to third party states that can develop nuclear weapons or to non-state actors.

US Defence Presence in Australia

A recognition of the presence of US bases, equipment and troops on Australian territory has implications for the independence of Australia when it comes to war. Officially there are only two US bases on Australian Territory: Pine Gap and the Harold E Holt Communications Station in Northwest Cape. Those two bases are cause for concern in themselves but in reality the US military presence in Australia includes approximately 2500 US troops rotating out of Darwin each year and the fact that US military personnel frequently have access to Australian bases.

Pine Gap, located approximately 20 kilometres away from Alice Springs, is the most significant US intelligence gathering facility outside the US. As a result, it is a prime target for US enemies in war as it would deal a serious blow to their intelligence capability. Approximately half the staff at Pine Gap are Australian and the other half are American.

A serious human rights concern regarding Pine Gap is that intelligence gathered there has played a role in US military drone strikes against al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders but which have also included the killing of hundreds of civilians.³⁹

Considering both Alice Springs (17.6%)⁴⁰ and Darwin (8.7%)⁴¹ have significantly higher than average indigenous populations the destruction and damage to indigenous peoples and communities would be even more significant.

Environmental Considerations

As part of our continuing military alliance with the United States, every two years the US and Australian militaries take part in extensive military operations in Queensland known as Talisman Sabre. Part of these operations takes place in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The 2021 Talisman Sabre operation is ongoing as this inquiry closes.

In previous years the Defence Department has done an environmental impact assessment, consulted the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Protection Authority and claimed there is no environmental damage as a result of these exercises. However, it is highly unlikely that the influx of 17, 000⁴² military personnel and land, air and naval military equipment for an operation that lasts several weeks can have no environmental impact. During 2013, the US was allowed to drop bombs in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as part of the Talisman Sabre operations.⁴³ In Senate questions, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority admitted that they did not actually check what the environmental damage was after the exercises, even though the military engaged in “potentially dangerous activities to marine life such as underwater demolition and high explosives” in certain areas.⁴⁴ However, the

³⁹ Philip Dorling, “Pine Gap drives US drone Kills”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 July 2013

<<https://www.smh.com.au/national/pine-gap-drives-us-drone-kills-20130720-2qbsa.html>>.

⁴⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, “2016 Census QuickStats Alice Springs”, last updated 30 October 2020, <https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA70200>.

⁴¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, “2016 Census QuickStats Darwin”, last updated 30 October 2020, <https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/701?opendocument>.

⁴² Megan Dean, “Australian, US military arrive for Talisman Sabre 2021”, *Bundaberg Now*, 14 July 2021 <<https://www.bundabergnow.com/2021/07/14/talisman-sabre-2021-underway-soon/>>.

⁴³ ABC, “Greens angry after US jets drop bombs on Great Barrier Reef Marine Park during Talisman Sabre exercise”, *ABC*, 21 July 2013 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-07-21/greens-angry-after-us-jets-drop-unarmed-bombs-on-reef/4833774>>.

⁴⁴ Greens MPs, “Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority & Talisman Sabre”

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Protection Authority still had concerns regarding the management of contamination of ordinance (UXO) outside Defence training areas.⁴⁵ This year, the Department of Defence did not do an environmental impact assessment for the operation.⁴⁶

Sincerely,



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<<https://greensmps.org.au/articles/great-barrier-reef-marine-park-authority-talisman-saber>>; see also Friends of the Earth Australia, “Talisman Saber 2019: Defend the Environment from Defence”, 21 May 2019, <https://www.foe.org.au/talisman_saber_2019>.

⁴⁵ Australian Government Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, *Independent Assessment of the Management Effectiveness for the Great Barrier Reef*, Outlook Report, (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, 2019) iv <<https://elibrary.gbrmpa.gov.au/jspui/retrieve/21ae8e60-4aad-4711-91f5-d3fd9184e886/Independent%20assessment%20of%20management%20effectiveness%202019.pdf>>.

⁴⁶ The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network, “Military Exercises put the Great Barrier Reef in Danger”, Media Release, 15 July 2021 <<https://ipan.org.au/military-exercises-put-the-great-barrier-reef-in-danger-media-release-15-july-2021/>>.