

Weapons manufacturers invade Australian Schools - a submission to IPAN's People Inquiry

Prepared by Michael Williss – retired teacher and former AEU (SA) Research Officer, and Derek Burke retired teacher and member of the national coordinating committee of the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN)

In 1993, the Australian Education Union (SA Branch) adopted a policy that states: “1.1.6 No sponsorship under any circumstances should be accepted from corporations involved in the ownership of armaments factories, sales or manufacture of armaments, or environmentally damaging products”. Consistent with that policy, we make the following comments on arms manufacturers and Australian schools.

Weapons manufacturers are spending big money in Australian schools to promote their brands and to inspire a new generation of engineers to work in their deadly business of war. These arms companies aren't concentrating on schools because they care about students' education. They are doing it because they want to improve their standing in our society and normalise their atrocious business. In particular, these corporations are targeting bright and successful students into STEM subjects to pursue advanced engineering and technology that can be utilized for warfare.

How do they do it? The weapon manufacturers sponsor competitions, award prizes and issue teaching materials for use in classrooms that promote the defence sector.

British Aerospace (BAE) compromises The Smith Family

In Australia, BAE sponsors The Smith Family's STEM education program for underprivileged children.

It sponsors the FIRST Robotics Competition, an annual event that “helps inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers and innovators. A large-scale robotics competition, it brings together secondary school students and mentors from across Australia to build robots, to precise specifications, that perform in a competitive environment against teams from all over the world.”

BAE also sponsors the FIRST LEGO League, which is the junior version of the Robotics Competition. It uses LEGO MINDSTORM robotics kits “to introduce upper primary students to real-world engineering challenges, in which they research and identify a problem, develop a solution for that problem, and share their solution with their community.” BAE has been sponsoring the competition and event since 2010 by “providing robotics kits to schools, mentoring the students and acting as judges, volunteers and the major sponsor for the final event.”

BAE sponsors the Concept2Creation program which introduces a “product life cycle” approach to STEM education, “where secondary students work with industry mentors to take a product from concept, through research and development, production and quality assurance, to final creation and marketing. BAE Systems also provides sponsorship, mentoring support and helps to judge the Wetlands Environmental Management (WEM) Challenge of C2C, where secondary school teams design, manufacture and test a vehicle that can obtain multiple water samples from a wetlands environment.” (All quotes from the BAE website [Inspiring a love of science | BAE Systems |](#)

Australia) 1 (<https://www.baesystems.com/en-us/about-us/a-responsible-company/community-investment/inspiring-a-love-of-science>)

In themselves, such projects have educational value – our concern is that they are the carrot on the stick of enticing young Australians into an uncritical relationship with multinational merchants of death. Is this egging the cake in relation to BAE and its murderous role? Not when we consider BAE's involvement in the Middle East and elsewhere.

"The UK's largest weapons-maker, BAE, is working inside Saudi Arabia supporting the Saudi-United Arab Emirates military operations in Yemen, a war that has killed or injured tens of thousands of civilians, including thousands of children." 2 (Michelle Fahy, Reputation Laundering: weapons companies infiltrating schools to promote education, Michael West Media, Nov 27, 2020 - <https://www.michaelwest.com.au/reputation-laundering-weapons-companies-now-infiltrating-schools-to-promote-education/>)

BAE sales to the Saudis have amounted to £15 billion since 2015 when the Yemen war started. This defence contractor trains Saudi pilots, maintains Saudi's BAE-supplied fighter jets, and supervises the Saudi military as they load bombs onto the planes.

BAE has sponsored The Smith Family to the tune of \$100,000. This is cheap public relations considering that this is 0.3% of The Smith Family's \$36.3 million fundraising budget and the tens of billions of dollars in Australian defence contracts. All the while BAE assists in war crimes in Yemen and elsewhere.

Raytheon - and the travelling Maths Alive! circus

Raytheon is another weapons company goliath that is promoting their interactive travelling exhibition, Maths Alive! Their website promo states, "Raytheon Australia is inspiring the next generation of Australian engineers by supporting students through every step in their journey toward a STEM career – from primary school interaction and secondary school scholarships to university engagement – all the way through to employment," said Raytheon Australia Managing Director Michael Ward. 3 (<https://www.raytheon.com/au/news/feature/bringing-maths-life>)

David Fawcett, the then Assistant Minister for Defence gave his imprimatur and stated: "I welcome the ongoing commitment by Raytheon to engage young Australians by helping them visualise what a career in science or engineering might look like." No reference of course to the fact that the giant US missile-making Raytheon supplies the Saudi-UAE coalition with missiles that targeted and killed civilians and children. Rather, Raytheon deceptively engages Aussie school kids to enjoy time with a hired Australian Paralympian and delight in the launch of its Maths Alive! STEM program.

Raytheon infiltrates a SA school

In 2008 Raytheon and the then Premier of South Australia, Mike Rann secretly hatched a 'partnership' with a high school from the southern suburbs of Adelaide. In the days leading up to the launch of the Raytheon deal, abnormal secrecy enveloped this school. Teachers and parents had no idea of this *fait accompli* 'partnership' between their school and Raytheon until the day before the launch of this 'commercial collaboration'. The next day the science area was cordoned off. On that morning Premier Rann revealed to a select group the school-Raytheon partnership, which provided

\$450,000 over three years to provide laptops to the school's gifted students program. The quid-pro-quo was that Raytheon engineers and scientists had access to the gifted students and mentor them towards potential employment with the company. That Raytheon is a merchant of death and arms profiteer went without mention by the Premier or the Education Department.

Only after the launch of this deal were the staff and community officially informed by a circular about the partnership with the company. The whole process smacked of underworld machinations. Obviously, the deal had an odious stench about it and that is why it was kept secret until it was a done deal. There was no consultation with staff and students, as one of us who worked there at the time can confirm, and no discussion of the ethics of involving adolescents with manufacturers of weapons of destruction.

These days, Raytheon is preying on the understandable interest of young Australians in the aerospace industry. Its website [Investing in Australian STEM education - Raytheon Australia offers scholarships for future aerospace pros | Raytheon Australia](#) notes:

As part of an ongoing investment in STEM pathways for young Australians, Raytheon Australia has announced it will support the Australian Youth Aerospace Association to deliver a series of scholarships to deserving students across the nation.

Raytheon Australia and the AYAA will be providing 20 scholarships in two categories – the Australian Youth Aerospace Leader category, for students currently studying at an Australian high school in Years 10 to 12, and the Australian Youth Aerospace Scholar category, for undergraduate students in their first year of an engineering degree at any Australian university.

The scholarships will be available to all Australian students with a keen interest in the aerospace industry.

“Providing young Australians with opportunities to benefit their studies and aid in their professional development is an important goal of the AYAA, so we are grateful for Raytheon Australia’s support of our mission and for collaborating with us for these scholarships,” said Oliver Paxton, AYAA president.

“The support provided by Raytheon Australia will allow us to dedicate these scholarships for students all around Australia who show exceptional passion, and we hope these scholarships are able to support growing their interest, skills, and enthusiasm in the Australian aerospace industry,” he said.

All scholarship recipients will receive \$1,000 to go towards their education and professional development, while three scholarship recipients will also receive mentorship from a Raytheon Australia engineering expert and an AYAA executive, which will continue into 2021, providing them with the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and gain a clear understanding of the pathways available to them after high school.

“As a technology and engineering company employing more than 700 engineers, Raytheon Australia is aware of the need to motivate young people to continue their studies in maths and science,” said Michael Ward, Raytheon Australia managing director.

“By inspiring the next generation of STEM professionals, Raytheon Australia is supporting the development of skills for the future and developing leaders of tomorrow,” Ward said. “We’re excited to provide this pathway for students to engage directly with the Australian aerospace industry.

“Furthermore, by partnering with the Australian Youth Aerospace Association, we are helping create a pipeline of future talent from a diverse range of backgrounds for the defence industry and the

Australian Defence Force," he said. 4 (<https://www.raytheon.com/au/news/feature/investing-australian-stem-education>)

On its "corporate responsibility" page of its website, Raytheon congratulates itself for "a school-based traineeship program for students in Exmouth, Western Australia", failing to point out that Exmouth, or North West Cape, is the site of the US Navy's "Harold E Holt Naval Communications Base" which is used for communications with US submarines, and is currently operated under contract by Raytheon Australia.

Lockheed Martin captures the National Youth Science Forum

Once a year around 600 students throughout Australia are introduced to a range of careers in science through the National Youth Science Forum. From 2015 onwards Lockheed Martin became a national sponsor of the NYSF and students visit their laboratories and speak with their staff as part of the Forum's program.

"The National Youth Science Forum's website does not mention Lockheed's dominant influence as the world's No. 1 weapon manufacturer or its significant role in producing nuclear weapons. Lockheed's role in civil sectors is covered, however, this work constitutes a minor aspect of its business. The most recent information from Stockholm International Peace Research says 88% of Lockheed's revenue comes from arms sales." 5 (Michelle Fahy, Reputation Laundering: weapons companies infiltrating schools to promote education, Michael West Media, Nov 27, 2020 - <https://www.michaelwest.com.au/reputation-laundering-weapons-companies-now-infiltrating-schools-to-promote-education/>)

Lockheed Martin latches onto the Gallipoli heritage

The Gallipoli Scholarship Fund (GSF) has as one of its aims, "...the future security of our nation and our national values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law." The GSF is complicit in opening itself up to gratuitous influence from arms profiteers. In 2020 Lockheed Martin became the first corporate partner of the Gallipoli Scholarship Fund and threw in a \$120,000 bursary for the 'educational benefit of descendants of Australian veterans'. This encourages from one generation to the next involvement in the war machine. This is good planning from Lockheed's perspective because it persuades family members to stay in the family business of war.

"The awkward truth is that the Gallipoli Scholarship Fund's new corporate partner, Lockheed Martin, is one of the largest nuclear weapons-producing companies on the planet. Lockheed is all set to provide its 12 bursaries from now through to the end of 2023.

Such is the ethical dilemmas these weapons corporations create for organisations doing good work that are in need of funding." 6 (Michelle Fahy, Reputation Laundering: weapons companies infiltrating schools to promote education, Michael West Media, Nov 27, 2020 - <https://www.michaelwest.com.au/reputation-laundering-weapons-companies-now-infiltrating-schools-to-promote-education/>)

Nuclear weapons became illegal under international law in January this year when the new UN treaty prohibiting them came into force. Two-thirds of the world's countries, such as New Zealand, voted for the treaty, thus banning the world's most dangerous weapons of mass destruction. Opposing this new global norm, are the nine of the world's nuclear-armed countries who have refused to sign the treaty, including the USA's acolyte Australia.

Northrop Grumman - Turns Space Camp into Star Wars

Northrop Grumman Corporation is an American multinational aerospace and military technology company. With 90,000 employees and an annual revenue in excess of \$30 billion, it is one of the world's largest weapons manufacturers and military technology providers. Its Aeronautics Division currently leads the development of the B-21 Raider, a long-range, stealth strategic bomber that can drop conventional and nuclear weapons.

For the last six years, Northrop Grumman has sponsored Australian school students and teachers to attend Space Camp®, held at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. As a sponsor, the Northrop Grumman Foundation covered all participation and accommodation expenses.

It goes without saying that students with an interest in science and technology would be attracted to a project with a large potential employer that allows them to “defend cyber networks, engineer autonomous vehicles, explore space and more.” 7 (<http://www.spacecamp.com/>) Yes, “wait, there’s more...” And the “more” is that many in the weapons industry, including the companies now infiltrating our schools, believe that space is the new frontier for weapons deployment and warfare.

AEU endorses the call - Peace is union business

In addition to the AEU (SA Branch) policy referred to in our opening paragraph, we note the following statement from the AEU’s federal office: "The Federal AEU has voted to support the campaign for Australia to join the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

“The AEU is proud to support the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and efforts to create a world free of nuclear weapons and the threat they pose to humanity. We call on the Australian Government to sign and ratify the UN treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.”

- Susan Hopgood, AEU Federal Secretary, October 2018 8 (<https://icanw.org.au/learn/support/>)

The old mantra, "Peace is union business" has never been more relevant than it is now. We are deeply concerned about the costs and consequences of Australia's involvement in US-led wars and the US-Alliance. The Australian government has committed \$50 billion annually, and \$570 billion over the next ten years towards ensuring the support of our nation for whatever military provocations the US cares to involve us in. That is money denied to public schools. As retired members of a caring profession, we are dismayed that predominately foreign weapons manufacturers have easy access to our students and have inordinate influence to involve them in ventures of technological destruction. We demand that educational authorities cease the involvement of arms profiteers in Australian schools.