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The Scott Morrison Government decision to join Aukus and acquire nuclear submarines has sparked a lot of community and international opposition and these decisions are not in our best interest, led us into war and are totally undemocratic and authoritarian.

Rapid community response opposing Scott Morrison's government's embracing Aukus war pact and nuclear- powered submarines

by Bevan Ramsden

The response to Scott Morrison's decision to embrace Aukus and nuclear submarine technology has sparked opposition in the Australian community and overseas. A coalition of concerned people and organisations is being formed to challenge and oppose these decisions.

There has been a rapid response in the Australian and international community expressing concern and opposition to the Scott Morrison Government's embracing of the Aukus war pact and moving to acquire nuclear powered submarines.

Reasons given include:

- Aukus is a war pact directed at China
- Aukus means more U.S. troops stationed in Australia (2,000 to 3,000 has been mentioned by Defence Minister Peter Dutton
- Aukus means the U.S. can store war materials such as fuel, munitions, spare parts, armoured vehicle and tanks and possibly missiles, in the NT
- Aukus means the U.S. warships have unimpeded access to our ports and their military aircraft, including B1 bombers which can carry nuclear weapons, to our aircraft runways.
- Aukus means Australia is being set up as a U.S. war platform from which it can prosecute war operations
- Aukus makes us an enemy of whoever is an enemy of the United States and so makes us less safe not mor safe.
- Aukus is a sell out to the United States of our sovereignty and locks us into their foreign policy and war plans
- Nuclear powered submarines could be a "trojan horse" for the establishment of a nuclear industry in Australia
- The U.S./UK nuclear powered submarines which are the focus of attention by the Morrison Government use highly enriched, nuclear -weapons -grade uranium making these submarines highly dangerous (said Malcolm Turnbull in his recent press conference address) and make them floating nuclear bombs should an accident occur said Adam Bandt (leader of The Greens).
- Nuclear powered sub marines are designed for offensive operations in deep oceans distant from our shores rather than for self defence operations in the relatively shallow shores around Australia and for which the French diesel-electric submarines were more suited.
- The Aukus war pact and the nuclear-powered submarines destabilises our region and promotes military build-ups.
- The decisions to embrace Aukus and the nuclear submarines was a totally undemocratic one, made behind the back of the people of Australia and its parliament. There has been no public or parliamentary discussion or debate before these authoritarian decisions have been imposed on the Australian people.
- The decision to drop the French submarine contract blind-siding France and raising their ire has shown Australia to be an unreliable partner in international contracts and has done considerable damage to our international reputation.

The mass media, apart from some reports by the ABC, has in general applauded these government decisions which are claimed to make us more safe from "security threats" and it has been left to the independent media such as Pearls and Irritations to seriously analyse and warn of the dangers of the Aukus and nuclear submarine decisions.

Other community voices and international voices have however raised their voices loud and clear. Here are some of them.

Within two days of Scott Morrison's announcement, 18th September, a zoom meeting called by IPAN (the independent and peaceful Australia Network) and the AABCC (Australian Anti-Bases campaign coalition) to discuss these development attracted over 100 participants. The deep concerns expressed at this meeting resulted in the production of a Statement headed: "Australians speak out against nuclear submarines and AUKUS"

It commences "Australia cannot become a staging point for the U.S. military, we cannot abrogate our sovereignty to the U.S., we cannot encourage nuclear proliferation and risk environmental catastrophe."

Within days, a petition produced from the same meeting and calling on the Australian government to withdraw from Aukus and cease acquisition of nuclear- powered submarines was produced on change.org. It has attracted 15,148 signatories (as at 3rd Oct.21).

It commences: " No Nuclear-Submarines; End U.S. dominance; Healthcare not warfare....."

Shortly after the government announcement, 200 people gathered publicly in Adelaide to voice their opposition to the proposed acquisition of nuclear submarines and the Aukus pact calling for a nuclear free Australia

The MUA (Maritime Union of Australia) made a public Statement:

"No to nuclear submarines-jobs & health, not nukes"..... and saying:

"Today, on the International Day of Peace, the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) declares its total opposition to the reckless announcement by Scott Morrison that Australia would be developing nuclear-powered submarines as part of a military alliance with the US and UK."

Friends of the Earth (FOE Australia) produced a petition:" Say No to subsThe Australian Government must withdraw from AUKUS, stop the development of nuclear submarines and end integration into the U.S. military. "

The National Tertiary Education Union spoke out against nuclear subs plan

The NTEU is alarmed by the announcement by the Australian Government of its agreement with the United States of America and the United Kingdom to build nuclear powered submarines, with no apparent regard as to the costs to be incurred or regional political impact of the arrangement.

The CICD (Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament) made this Public Statement on AUKUS Trilateral Agreement in which they said: "The CICD says this government is NOT ACTING IN OUR NAME. Australia does not need this agreement that can only draw Australia into another US War. Buying submarines that are offensive, not defensive is a waste of time and money.."

The Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW) issued a statement:" The AUKUS agreement represents a threat to human health and global security.

The Australian Conservation Foundation calls for Australia to be Nuclear Free - 21st September, 2021:

"Prime Minister Scott Morrison must give the Australian people confidence that his planned submarine deal will not put the nation on the path to nuclear power, nuclear weapons and nuclear waste, the Australian Conservation Foundation said today."

Pax Christi Australia made a statement regarding the AUKUS Agreement :

"Pax Christi Australia is a branch of the International Christian Peace Movement, Pax Christi International.

We wish to raise our objections in the strongest possible terms to the AUKUS agreement.

We do not believe that this initiative will do anything towards building peace in our region."

And then there is the International opposition to Aukus.

Peace and Common Security Advocates from Around the World Oppose QUAD (Japan, India, US, Australia), & AUKUS (Australia, UK, US) Militarism & Urge Common Security Collaborations to Address Existential Nuclear, Climate & Pandemic Threats. Their statement continued: "Instead of increasing stability and security, the QUAD and AUKUS alliances fuel dangerously spiraling cold war-like arms races that must be reversed with common security diplomacy.

The New Zealand Government's announced continuation of its anti-nuclear policy, which will ban any future Australian nuclear submarines from entering New Zealand waters or ports, has been welcomed by long term peace activists, the International Affairs and Disarmament Committee of the

Aotearoa /New Zealand Peace Foundation.

The Kiribati President says AUKUS nuclear submarine deal puts Pacific at risk

He says it puts the region at risk and raises some troubling memories. The people of Kiribati recall when the UK and US tested nuclear weapons there.

Then the islands were part of colonial Britain and between 1957 and 1962 more than 30 nuclear tests were carried out.

"Our people were victims of nuclear testing ... we still have trauma ... with that in mind, with anything to do with nuclear, we thought it would be a courtesy to raise it, to discuss it with your neighbours," he says.

Malaysia has joined criticism of Australia's plan to build nuclear-powered submarines, warning it could spark a renewed arms race in the region. Mr Yaakob said he had raised concerns about the project with Mr Morrison, and warned that the nuclear submarine project might heighten military tensions in Asia.

Efforts have commenced to form a national coalition to challenge and oppose the Scott Morrison government's decision to join the Aukus military pact and acquire nuclear submarines. It is expected that this will be supported by peace groups, trade unions, faith organisations, environmental groups, those opposing nuclear weapons and a nuclear industry and all who care for a peaceful and safe future for Australians.