



Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee

IPAN Peoples' Inquiry Submission: Australia, United Kingdom, United States of America Trilateral Security Partnership (AUKUS)

As Quakers we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia is deeply incensed with the Australian Government's trilateral security partnership with the United States and the United Kingdom, announced on 16 September 2021.

By telling our regional allies and neighbours about the new AUKUS partnership just prior to the joint public announcement, Australia has emphasized a stronger commitment to British and American alliances than our regional agreements. AUKUS binds Australia even more closely to future US military incursions.

By excluding its regional neighbours from any form of discussions on a possible AUKUS partnership, Australia has decided to take-on the role of a local bully who forms partnerships in its own best interest.

By ignoring the various nuclear-free zones in the Pacific, especially our closest regional ally, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia has demonstrated a lack of commitment to a peaceful region and a world free of nuclear threats.

By deciding to fund the building of eight nuclear-powered submarines, while also paying out the French-based Naval Group, the Government is putting weapons before economic recovery and public health planning post-COVID.

By circumventing Parliament, the Australian Government has turned its back on representational democracy.

By circumventing civil society, including subject matter experts, the Government acknowledges that public opinion on such matters is mixed. According to the Lowy Institute Poll June 2021: 57% of Australians say that in a military conflict between China and the US Australia should remain neutral, and 72% said it was possible for Australia to have good relations with both the US and China at the same time.

The Government consistently states that the submarines will not carry nuclear weapons and that Australia remains committed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, ICAN warns that building nuclear-powered submarines is a 'foot in the door' towards weapon development. The Government must be held accountable for all nuclear-related activity including the initial transport of fuel from the US and the UK.

This partnership shifts Australia's military posture from defensive to offensive, increasing the potential for Australia's participation in US-led regional incursions, including through the use and transport of nuclear weapons.