



## National Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee Religious Society of Friends in Australia

**Submission to the IPAN People's Inquiry, June 2021**  
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**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.**

### **Australia and the United States: a reimagined relationship**

It can be quite easy to fall into a mindset that just because something, or some relationship, has been a certain way it can never change. Whispers in the ear can convince people, including decision makers, that any change would inevitably lead to catastrophic outcomes, endangering economic, social and safety stability.

Before Friday 13 March 2020, most Formula 1 fans in Australia could not imagine the Government ever cancelling the Australian Grand Prix, the first event on the 2020 racing calendar. On the same day most political pundits, noting the moribund character of the Council of Australian Governments, would have put little stock in the newly announced 'national cabinet' composed of state/territory premiers and federal ministers, led by the Prime Minister himself. Four days later, Australians living or traveling overseas would hear disquieting advice from the Government to return home as soon as arrangements could be made - Australia's borders were closing – a national shutdown was underway.

If the pandemic has shown anything, it's that situations and relationships which impact all Australians do change, sometimes very quickly and not always with clear or predictable outcomes.

At the press conference wrapping up the 2020 Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) on Tuesday 28 July 2020, Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne stated that while Australia had much in common with the US, 'we make our decisions, our own judgments in the Australian national interest and about upholding our security, our prosperity and our values.' (<https://asiapacificdefencereporter.com/ausmin-talks-conclude-with-australia-saying-it-charts-its-own-course/>).

In this submission we argue that now is the time for Australia's relationship with the United States to be reimagined and re-configured to drive a sustainable, resilient and peaceful future. Importantly, we think that much of the critical infrastructure to

accomplish such a shift already exists within the alliance, and requires primarily a change in resource priorities, from military to diplomatic.

### An alliance built on more than military objectives

It is true that the 2020 AUSMIN Joint Statement affirmed the commitment of both countries to collaborate on a range of weapons and related support systems. However, other priorities of the current alliance were highlighted in the statement.

At the core, both countries reaffirm their commitment to democracy and freedom. This includes expanding regional collaboration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), India, Japan and the Republic of Korea to strengthen existing diplomatic networks. We were pleased to see the Australian Government acting on this commitment by opening new diplomatic missions in the Pacific, bring Australia's total to 19 missions – the largest diplomatic network in the region.

Both countries reaffirm that women's economic empowerment is key to achieving the goals of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The Australian Government is progressing these goals through the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031 announced on 12 April 2021. In the US these goals are supported through the Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017 and the June 2019 US Strategy on Women, Peace and Security. In June 2020, the US Department of Homeland Security released its Implementation Plan to implement the government's strategy, led by the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.

Health has also been identified a joint issue in which the alliance can further enhance its work. Australia's Partnerships for Recovery has set out a framework for the Pacific region's COVID-19 recovery and the US Government is committing over USD\$118 million in health-based support.

Economic recovery from COVID, and longer-term economic stability for the Pacific, are key goals of the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Community. Both countries are committed to supporting the Forum's Pacific Humanitarian Pathway for COVID-19. Australia has already contributed AUD\$3 million to the UN World Food Programme Pacific Humanitarian Air Service to deliver the Pathway, and the US is contributing USD\$5 million.

The US and Australia share concerns over China's growing influence in the region. Both countries are taking steps to suspend their respective extradition treaties with Hong Kong, and have made public statements expressing deep concern over China's repression of Uyghurs and other minority groups in Xinjiang. The countries are on the public record supporting Taiwan and intending to maintain strong unofficial ties with Taiwan and support its membership in international organisations where statehood is not required.

While neither country has signaled its intention to sign or ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, both remain committed to the obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to pursue negotiations relating to nuclear disarmament.

### What next for the bilateral relationship

Australia could use the above common objectives, and seventy years of solid relations, to have a 'frank and fearless' conversation with the United States about where the expectations of the two countries converge and diverge, planning for the future.

In their June 2019 report, 'The future of the US-Australia alliance in an era of great power competition', Charles Edel and John Lee argue that for the alliance to succeed and remain relevant it 'demands a realistic roadmap...' (2). The authors go beyond the edges of overlap, such as the topics above, and encourage a more 'strategic approach'. Edel and Lee focus on six key objectives over which the US-Australia alliance could expand:

- 'coordinated and aligned strategic objectives' (p10)
- 'economic architecture and trade agreements which....increase mutual market access opportunities...[while also] promoting desirable rules and standards (11)
- greater engagement with civil society
- greater coordination on strategic and tactically-consequential decisions
- greater active market diversification in dealing with China
- earned regional leadership.

To these six objectives, we would add the often under-acknowledged contribution of Track One and a Half or hybrid diplomacy which 'gives the third party diplomatic ability to flip from Track One to Track Two conflict resolution techniques in accordance with the situation' (Mapendere, COPOJ, p70). Where Track One diplomacy takes a traditional approach, and Track Two participants (such as the United Nations Office in Geneva and New York City) usually have limited influence and resources, the hybrid approach engages mediators with high-level influence who are driven not by a political institution's agenda, but by the philosophy of their Track Two type organization. The Mapendere article focuses on the work of the Carter Centre as an example of such diplomacy.

We encourage the establishment and support of such centres in Australia, including the recently launched (21 April 2021) Initiative for Peacebuilding at the University of Melbourne <https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/peacebuilding#about> .

### Increasing multilateralism

Both the US and Australia tend to lean toward bilateral relationships in their respective foreign policy settings. Heavily influenced by the Government of the day, engagement with the United Nations and other international and regional organisations is often treated with ambivalence, caution or thinly veiled hostility, depending on the issue at hand and perceived threats to sovereign rights. In his article, 'The Liberal Party's struggles with multilateralism and the UN (1 February 2021), Graeme Dobell notes that 'Australia will only bother with the UN when clear national interests are served.' This attitude is

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reflected in Prime Minister Scott Morrison's 2019 order to DFAT to undertake another 'comprehensive audit of global institutions...where we have the greatest stake.' Dobell goes on to speculate that Foreign Minister Marise Payne's June 2020 statement 'Australia's interests are not served by stepping away and leaving others to shape global order for us' was 'aimed at persuading her own party.'

Meanwhile, while US foreign policy appears to be shifting towards more multilateral engagement, there is a continuing sense in some sectors that the 'current international system does not always deliver for US interest' (Whineray, p2). If leaders carry influence, it's important to note that during a March 2021 virtual gathering of UN Security Council Permanent Representatives, President Biden 'reaffirmed the US commitment to values-based global leadership and re-engagement with international institutions, in particular the United Nations...[and] reiterated the importance of working with global partners and through multilateral institutions...' (White House media release, 18 March 2021).

It would seem as though the portents are strong for reimagining the Australia-US Alliance and embedding it in a renewed environment of peace-building multilateralism.

### Pivoting for peace

Everyone pivots. Kirtley and O'Mahony (2020) provide a multi-sector definition of pivot – 'Entrepreneurs and the popular press have embraced the term *pivot* to describe nearly any strategic shift made by a firm, a person, or even a government' (p1).

Over the last 18 months schools and families have pivoted to online and home-based education, governments have made critical decisions via highly encrypted virtual cabinet meetings and families have had to find ways to celebrate and mourn through the magic of zoom.

In 2016, Asana Hamidu said that 'pivoting to peace is a journey...that requires us to invest in tools and structures that mitigates and transforms conflict'. Pivoting to a re-imagined Australia-US Alliance is a wise investment in a peaceful future, the timing of which has arrived.

## Appendix

### The Religious Society of Friends

The Peace Testimony of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) calls on us to actively build peace in all aspects of our lives, including removing the reasons for conflict and war. Over time, Friends have developed processes and organisations to undertake such work at the local, national, regional and international levels. Aid programs including the American Friends Service Committee, Quaker Service Australia and British Quaker Peace and Social Witness provide support to communities around the world. Friends have actively undertaken peace, mediation and reconciliation work in many conflict zones including South Africa, Northern Ireland, and Tanzania, more recently through Friends Peace Teams Projects.

The Quaker United Nations Offices in both Geneva and New York City engage with people at the UN, multilateral organisations, government delegations and non-governmental organisations to build a more peaceful world. Our good offices are well known for bringing diverse opinions together for Chatham House Rule discussions.

The Friends World Committee for Consultation (Australian Friends are part of the Asia-West Pacific Section) brings together all branches of the world-wide Quaker family to build networks addressing issues of shared concern.

The Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee in Canberra and the Friends National Committee on Legislation in Washington, DC each engage decision makers, influencers and civil society organisations to bring about positive changes in their respective countries.

To apply peaceful approaches to conflict and educate another generation of peace builders, Friends founded, and are actively involved with, programs and schools around the world, including:

- Friends primary and secondary schools in Ramallah Palestinian West Bank, Rwanda, Kenya, Belize, Bolivia, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Zimbabwe, the USA and the the UK
- Several universities and peace programs, including the University of Bradford Peace Studies Program which includes working with civil society groups
- Friends Peace Centres in Capetown, South Africa and the Deep Humanity Institute in Canada
- Conflict resolution programs including: LEAP Confronting Conflict (London), Healing and Rebuilding our Communities (Burundi and Rwanda), Turning the Tide (UK)

Trusts have been established throughout our history to provide ongoing funding for peace studies and research work, including: UK Quaker Peace Studies Trust, Quaker International Educational Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

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In Australia, the national Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee undertakes peace-building work including preparing submissions and letters to the Australian Government on behalf of Australian Friends, preparing and distributing Watching Briefs and Action Alerts to a wide network of Quakers and other Australians, working with other peace groups on shared projects, and maintaining regular communications with other Friends' organisations around the world, including the Quaker United Nations Office.

### **Resources**

Joint Statement Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) 2020 - <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/united-states-of-america/ausmin/joint-statement-ausmin-2020>

Joint media release: New Australian missions in the Marshall Islands and French Polynesia,  
07 May 2021: <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/new-australian-missions-marshall-islands-and-french-polynesia>

DFAT National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/australias-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2021-2031>

US Department of Homeland Security media release: DHA Moves to Promote Global Peace, Stability, and Security by Enhancing Women's Leadership Around the World Through Whole-of-Government Strategy, 11 June 2020  
<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2020/06/11/dhs-moves-promote-global-peace-stability-and-security-enhancing-women-s-leadership>

Charles Edel and John Lee, "The future of the US-Australia alliance in an era of great power competition," United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, June 2019. <https://www.ussc.edu.au/analysis/the-future-of-the-us-australia-alliance-in-an-era-of-great-power-competition>

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Whineray, David. 'The United States' Current and Future Relationship with the United Nations', United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, 2020.

White House media release, 'President Biden hosts virtual gathering of UN Security Council permanent representatives'. 18 March 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/18/president-biden-hosts-virtual-gathering-of-un-security-council-permanent-representatives/>