



20 September 2021

Scott Morrison  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2000

Dear Prime Minister,

I refer to your recent media statement (16 September) about the proposal to create a new trilateral security relationship involving Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. We are concerned that this plan has received no public attention so far, and gives the impression that a major decision about our foreign relations has been made without sufficient explanation as to the reasons and the implications for our role in international relations.

The principal focus of the announcement is the construction of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia's defence forces. At the same time, it includes reference to the purchase or production of other enhanced military weapons such as cruise missiles, anti-ship missiles, guided missiles and guided weapons manufacture. This raises questions about what impact such weapons will have on our relations with countries of our region, especially New Zealand and Indonesia, and on our capacity to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament.

Your statement says that the new alliance seeks to protect shared values and promote security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. We consider that making nuclear weapons illegal under international law is essential to ensure a safe, secure and peaceful future. We urge the Australian Government to demonstrate leadership as a sovereign state which chooses peace over war and humanity over greed, by signing with intent to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We note that a high proportion of Australians (78.9% in 2018 Ipsos poll) have voiced support for joining the Treaty.

Although your statement does not single out a particular nation, it seems clear that the containment of China is a major factor in the formation of this new alliance. The priority given to a military response puts at risk the options for seeking a long-lasting improvement in Australia-China relations through diplomatic cooperation in trade, aid, education, health and environmental challenges. It also gives the impression that a group of Anglo-centric nations is forming a bloc to confront China, rather than using the established United Nations and other international fora to have dialogue and debate about issues of concern.

#### **Australia Yearly Meeting**

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Further, we regard the renewed commitment to a significant increase in defence spending as distorting the Federal Budget over the longer term, adding to the existing inequities. It also raises the prospect of an arms race in our region. This seems most unfortunate given the traumas (for Australians as well as the local people) associated with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the ongoing challenge of climate change for the environment, and the importance of taking steps to prevent the recurrence of violence and war.

Given the close proximity to major cities and critical water systems, it is essential that the Government put in place rigorous, accountable and transparent environmental monitoring and protection measures. We urge you to ensure that full Parliamentary examination of the proposal takes place, and that opportunities be provided for public contributions to that process.

Yours faithfully,



Ann Zubrick  
Presiding Clerk  
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

Cc:

Anthony Albanese, Leader of the Opposition  
Adam Bandt, Leader of the Greens  
David Fawcett, Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Meryl Swanson, Deputy Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
All Members of Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Liz Stone, General Secretary, National Council of Churches of Australia  
Adrian Glamorgan, Secretary, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Asia-West Pacific Section  
Gem Romuld, Australian Director, ICAN  
Annette Brownlie, Chairperson, IPAN

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