EXAMPLE: Letter from VRM to Prime Minister re ICAN matter

Prime Minister Morrison                                                    9 November 2020
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Morrison,
We write to you as a group of Quakers deeply concerned about peace and social justice issues. An issue of major concern to us is the grave danger posed by nuclear weapons. Nuclear insiders such as former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry warn of this danger. He sees the current threat of actual nuclear war by design, accident, or even by hacking as the worst he has seen. This includes the tensions at the height of the Cold War.

We call upon the Australian Government to sign and ratify the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

The United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has now received the necessary 50 ratifications.  On 22 January 2021, the treaty will enter into force, and at that point, nuclear weapons – like chemical and biological weapons, the other kinds of weapon of mass destruction – will become illegal under international law.

This treaty categorises nuclear weapons as being inhumane, beyond what the conscience of humanity will allow, and therefore illegal for all states. It makes it illegal to manufacture, transfer, possess, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons; it also makes it illegal to assist any state in these activities.

The TPNW is compatible with the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and it is feasible for Australia to join the TPNW and still maintain ties to the United States. The ANZUS alliance can continue, based on the (not inconsiderable) destructive power of American conventional weapons. Some allies of the US have already signed the TPNW, and people in several NATO states are calling on their governments to sign the treaty, recognising that security does not have to depend on the threat to annihilate millions of people.

With the TPNW becoming international law, Australia, will have to make a choice of either committing to a rules-based order where international law, humanitarianism and respect for the UN prevail, or remaining subservient to an archaic system which threatens massive nuclear destruction.

We call upon you, Prime Minister, to take the lead and sign and ratify the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Australia has had a strong tradition in the past of working to limit the dangers of nuclear weapons and we can take action now to build wider international support at a time when the multilateral framework for disarmament and non-proliferation is under threat.

Please let us know what action you have taken.
In peace,

Bruce Henry and Tessa Spratt,
Co-Clerks,
Victoria Regional Meeting
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)