



Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee

ACTION ALERT 08-23: AUKUS

QPLC held a Share & Tell during Yearly Meeting 2023 exploring the AUKUS trilateral security agreement. Guest speaker was Allan Behm, Director, International & Security Affairs Program, The Australia Institute (<https://australiainstitute.org.au/expert/allan-behm/>). His book, *No Enemies No Friends* was the theme of the 2022 Australia Institute webinar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EjVGv8F00o>

Allan's Share & Tell presentation covered six key points about the AUKUS agreement: attack on democracy, high risk, costs, loss of sovereignty, nuclear waste and regional reaction. The presentation is available via the Quakers Australia website:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1exSEnjH_bA7r42HbeNDbGFMd603Z2n9E/view
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(copy and paste this address into your web browser).

The decision for Australia to be a part of AUKUS was taken without Parliamentary, let alone public, debate. Such major decisions should be part of the national conversation and not part of a creeping autocracy which contradicts democratic practices. Australians should be concerned about such secrecy which is not in the public interest and **jeopardizes Australian democracy.**

Risk takes many forms: technological, financial, strategic and capacity – all of which are enormous. The engineering requirement and operational integration/maintenance of equipment and personnel are bigger and riskier than anything Australia has done before. Financial risks are likely to be even higher than predicted as costs for material, building, transport, operation and maintenance are likely to escalate significantly.

Strategically, the nuclear-powered submarines in the AUKUS pact are apex killer submarines – designed and built more for offensive rather than defensive maneuvers. Regardless, the technology is being superseded by other forms of cyber warfare. Lastly, the submarines are not really operational in Australia's relatively shallow waters as their heat and noise signatures are easily detected.

The **costs** of building, operating and maintaining the various weapons included in the AUKUS agreement will only increase. Such funds could be more productively used for domestic, regional, or international programs to reduce the underlying reasons for conflict, respond to issues through diplomatic means or develop collaborative climate crisis measures.

The 'inter-operational' clauses in the AUKUS agreement negates Australia's **sovereignty**. The ongoing operation and maintenance of equipment will require British and American personnel as it will take significant time for Australian skills to develop. Australia's sovereignty is also challenged when adversaries and actions are identified by the US and UK (eg Russia and China). Australia's sovereignty must be aimed at our interests, not those of other countries.

Nuclear waste will be an ongoing issue and will not be managed by the other AUKUS members. Australia's has yet to develop a sustainable approach to our existing nuclear waste which is primarily low-level waste. Burying waste on Aboriginal land is not the answer, and until a satisfactory answer is found, nuclear waste will be a significant problem.

Our Pacific/regional **neighbors** believe that our decision on the AUKUS agreement is disrespectful, offensive and 'mad'. They remain committed to nuclear free waters and safe regional transportation. The AUKUS agreement will continue to create distrust and concern across the region and possibly endanger our relationships.

Allan Behm's concluding advice: The best way forward is to 'dump AUKUS and go our own way'.

During Yearly Meeting in July 2023, Friends agreed to a public statement on AUKUS defence and foreign policies:

<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/news/quakers-concerned-over-australia%E2%80%99s-defence-policies>

Friends may wish to take some form of action in opposition to the AUKUS agreement:

- Send letters, emails to your MP/Senator, arrange a meeting or drop in to your Parliamentarian's office with a one-page information sheet and express your concerns.
- Jump on the ICAN website and send a message quickly to your MP – numbers count, encourage your friends and networks to do the same <https://icanw.org.au/action/aucus/>

- Action is the antidote to despair – check out the ICAN webpage on AUKUS with links to other organisations and actions https://icanw.org.au/aukus_action/
- Attend local commemorative events around 6 August 2023 which marks the 78th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- For Friends in Brisbane, the Rally for Peace not War is taking place at the Brisbane Convention Centre on 18 August to coincide with the ALP conference.
- On 29 July the Calling for a Peaceful Pacific conference is taking place at the Queensland Council of Union in South Brisbane. <https://ipan.org.au/regional-peace-initiatives-and-network/>
- For Friends who are members of the ALP, you may wish to contact Labor MPs and Senators encouraging them to use the conference to call for the Party to fulfill its commitment to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons <https://icanw.org.au/laborpolicy/>

Resources

- The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) has contacts in each state/territory and campaign announcements and information on their website <https://ipan.org.au/no-aukus-no-nuclear-submarines/>
- Australian Anti-AUKUS Coalition is a national network with local groups across the country <https://antiaukuscoalition.org/>
- International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Australia <https://icanw.org.au/>