

## MEDIA RELEASE



Jacqueline Schultze  
Yearly Meeting Secretary  
0423 308 550

e: [secretary@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:secretary@quakersaustralia.info)  
w: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/>

### **Australian Quakers deeply dismayed at Arms Export Proposal**

“Australian Quakers are deeply dismayed at the federal government’s devastating proposal to underwrite \$3.8 billion to expand the export of Australia arms,” says Jo Jordan, Presiding Clerk of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia.

“Exporting weapons to countries in Asia and the Middle East is bound to increase the level of mistrust, conflict, and ultimately, human rights violations,” Ms Jordan says. “War-making inevitably ends badly for women, children and their families,” Ms Jordan says.

“Government’s decision to increase weapons exports has been met with deep concern and incredulity in the community. We hear reports that even the arms business is baffled by the proposal.”

“Australia was a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty in June 2014, but this \$3.8 billion takes policy entirely a new direction.

“Ethics aside, the Australian Government’s proposal lacks business acumen. The number of jobs in the UK arms industry is falling sharply.<sup>1</sup> It hardly makes sense to develop an industry that diverts investment away from positive steps promoting international trust and cooperative security abroad, and health, education, sustainability, and the creative industries at home,” Ms Jordan says.

Just released research data on global arms trade for 2017 from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) confirms that Asia (including the Indian subcontinent) remains the world’s single largest arms market for the past decade. It’s highly unlikely that Australia could ever become a major arms exporter in such a competitive market, or would want to contribute to international tensions.

Ms Jordan says “Quakers ask the Government to rethink its weapons export strategy. By selling arms we are directly engaging in the continuation and potential escalation of war. We call on the Australian Government to take a leadership role in fostering and building peace: using our expertise for cooperative dialogue among nations.”

**Contact:** Jacqueline Schultze  
**Mob:** 0423 308 550  
**Email:** [secretary@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:secretary@quakersaustralia.info)

For more information, visit. <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/28/australia-unveils-plan-to-become-one-of-worlds-top-10-arms-exporters>