



## **Prioritising peace over warfare**

The announcement by the Turnbull Government that we, the citizens of Australia, are going to help finance the manufacturing of armaments for export is both a surprise and an outrage.

On moral grounds alone, this initiative is appalling. On practical grounds, there are also doubts that Australia will break into the top 10 of arms manufacturing exporters who include major states such as the US, UK and France, as suggested by Andrew Davies of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in the Guardian (Australian government underwriting arms exports is 'baffling', expert says' *The Guardian* 31.01.18). Davies also points out that there is no apparent need for government financing in this industry, as there is currently adequate financing from private sources.

As an organisation focused on fostering peace and nonviolence, we, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Australia, strongly oppose any such move by the government. If the amount proposed –\$3.8 billion- is available, it would better be used to support peace initiatives in our region. The need for a defence capability that apparently we cannot fully fund without exports is in effect an outcome produced by our buying into the increasing militarisation worldwide, and particularly in our region. This trend is a major threat to us all. There can be no better way to increase the level of violence worldwide than by increasing the spread of weapons – a principle much celebrated when the Howard government acted to limit gun ownership in Australia.

In the last decade most countries have increased their military expenditure. Global military spending in 2016 was USD 1686 billion – almost twelve times higher than development aid allocations from OECD-DAC countries of USD142.62 billion.

Are we so greedy that we want a piece of this sort of action that leads not to security but to perennial insecurity?

As citizens, we prefer to work with the potential for peace not the potential for war. We want our government to promote peace by supporting measures to disarm state actors, not feed them the means for further violence.

***Barbara O'Dwyer, President***  
***6 February 2018***

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