

Growing an industry of war:

Defence Industry Expansion



WILPF

Australia's aim to become a top global arms exporter indicates a growing commitment to expanding Australia's defence industry, and of increasing militarisation in Australia.

As Defence presence in the private sector grows, it enlists the public in support of Defence, **normalising increased procurement of weapons** and military infrastructure.

Indeed, a consistent justification offered for Defence's record spending,¹ is that future investment in Defence, and the Defence Industry, creates jobs, contribute to prosperity and improve the societal welfare of the Australian public. **But at what cost?**

Defence total annual budget estimate increased by 50%; from \$30.5 billion in 2010 to \$45.5 billion in 2020.²

The Defence Portfolio has jumped to a planned total investment of \$575 billion by 2030. Despite the high economic and social costs of 2020-2021, the Australian Government's commitment to increased spending on the tools of war has not waivered - arms, military expansion and defence marketing.

Australia – Top 10 Arms exporter?

In 2018, the Defence Export Strategy set the 10-year objective to grow Australia's defence industry to the status of **a top ten global defence exporter**.³ Indeed, Australia's overall standing in defence export ranking has been gradually increasing. Australia is ranked as one of the four largest arms importers in the world, behind Saudi Arabia, India and Egypt.⁴

Australia is aiming low – seeking to build an international reputation on the ever-greater export of killing machines.⁵

What is the Defence Industry?

The military industry in Australia is defined by the Government as essentially all businesses with an Australian Business Number that are serving as providers of defence-specific goods or are operating as suppliers on the military supply chain and benefit the Australian Department of Defence, or alternatively, an international defence force. This includes both Australian-based companies and Australian subsidiaries of foreign conglomerates. Defence industry, providers and suppliers, currently comprise over 3,000 businesses across Australia⁶, indirectly supporting 15,000 additional businesses.⁷ Defence industry expansion is only set to increase, particularly in light of the investment plans and large capability acquisitions.

What is Militarisation?

Militarisation is understood as the expansion of military culture, symbolism and attitudes into civilian space. It is reinforced through wide reaching and powerful media campaigns that serve to promote the military and the defence industry expansion. Defence has the **highest advertising budget of any single government** department – in 2017-2018 it peaked at \$76.4 million – all paid for by tax payers. Marketing and advertising is an effective means of promoting Defence and normalising **militarisation in Australia**.

Are we safer now?

No. Militarisation is not making Australia more secure or peaceful. Militarisation supports power through dominance and aggression, over diplomacy and negotiation. Women's experiences of the world aren't included in the traditional notion of 'security' – the greatest danger to women is in their own home. Defence spending does not meet the security needs of women or reflect their reality.

WILPF are calling for greater oversight of public spending, greater investment in building and sustaining peace and a halt to the rapid expansion of the Department of Defence and the Defence Industry in Australia.

Contracting the Private Sector

The immense modernisation efforts intending to create an Australian military complex, are principally led by bringing foreign stakeholders into the Australian market. The latest establishment of Varley Rafael Australia Pty Ltd. Thales Australia, which in 2020 reported more than 1 600 Australian SMEs in its supply chain and \$1.3 billion worth of exports in the last decade,⁸ has **increased its contracts value with the Australian Government from approximately \$440 million in 2010, to \$789 million in 2019**. Lockheed Martin Australia, had contracts valued at \$153.8 million in 2010, blew to more than \$672.67 million in 2019.

What does a gender lens tell us about militarisation?

- **Women are disproportionately impacted by** conflict and military aggression
- **Women in Australia are much more likely to be living in poverty**, at risk of homelessness or of domestic violence. Cuts to public services and social security impact everyone, but especially women.
- **Militarisation reinforces 'militarised masculinities'** in which male superiority is validated through power and aggression and the glorification of strength over others portrayed as weaker – including women
- **Women have always played a key role in peace negotiations** – why stop now?

About WILPF Australia

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom – Australia WILPF is a feminist, non-aligned, anti-war and peace-building member-based organisation. WILPF brings women together to oppose conflict, violence and global militarisation, and provides a unique space for peace activists across Australia and globally to work together for a sustainable peace. WILPF envisions a world free from violence and armed conflict, in which human rights are protected; and the diversity of women and men are equally empowered at the local, national and international levels. Further details about WILPF Australia's work and information on how to join as a member is available at: wilpf.org.au

¹Defence Industry, 2016 DWP, <https://www.defence.gov.au/Whitepaper/docs/Defence-Industry.pdf>

² Defence Portfolio Budget Statements, Defence portal, <https://www.defence.gov.au/budget/PBS.asp>

And, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/jun-2020/310101.xls>

³ <https://www.defence.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-08/defenceexportstrategy.pdf>

⁴ https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/fs_2003_at_2019.pdf

⁵ Paul Daley The Militarisation of Australian History.2019. <https://www.mapw.org.a>

⁶ <https://www.defenceindustry.gov.au/about-defence-industry>

⁷ <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/melissa-price/media-releases/morrison-governments-defence-strategy-deliver-jobs-and-6>

⁸ <https://www.vrasystems.com.au/site/index.cfm?display=751373>