

28th October 2014

Hon A Abbott MHR
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

Just Peace Queensland Inc is a Brisbane based Peace and Social Justice organisation which was established thirteen years ago.

It is a group of locally active individuals, who are proud members of the national and global peace movement. It's members come from all walks of life, are of all ages, and of all political persuasions. Our one commonality is our commitment to a safe, just, and peaceful world.

As a mark of respect for the "fair go" principle, that Australian Governments claim to uphold, Just Peace has allowed your Government, a settling in period, before making any judgement of it's performance, in areas of concern, and of interest, to Just Peace.

We in Just Peace are also acutely aware of the pitfalls of a total reliance on the veracity of main stream media, social media, and other sources, to obtain factual information on which to form accurate, and considered opinions.

Major areas of interest, and of concern to Just Peace are;

- Aggressive Militarism
- Foreign Policy
- Human Rights
- Federal Budget

The above issues are not necessarily listed in order of importance, or priority, and it is obvious that most are in some way inter-related.

Aggressive Militarism

Just Peace believes that Federal Government's should ensure that the ADF has the capacity, capability, and resources, to provide adequate protection, which reasonably safeguards the safety and security of all Australians if attacked by an external military force.

Just Peace has major concerns that a clear trend has emerged in recent years, that emphasises the conscious shift in defence policy, to that of aggressive militarism.

It has represented those concerns, and it has stated it's opposition to the continuance of Government policies that perpetuate those trends, to both Coalition and Labor Governments over the past decade.

The tone and apparent intent of your Government's statements, policies, and actions, have further reinforced our fears that the trend towards aggressive militraism is escalating under your stewardship.

Some of the factors that have reinforced our concerns are;

- Your Government's failure to repudiate the Howard Government's adoption and implementation of the pre-emptive strike doctrine, that committed Australian troops to the illegal invasion, and occupation, of Iraq;
- Your Government's commitment of billions of taxpayer dollars to purchase 72 of 100 yet to be proven F35 Fighter Jets, the largest expenditure ever on military hardware;
- This was at the time of a claimed budget emergency, which has been strongly disputed. It was also during the framing and delivery of a Federal budget which has been widely criticised as one of the harshest and unfair budgets in Australian history;
- The Defence Minister's statement that Australia would support any US request for involvement in the then developing Iraq conflict;
- The Government's actions in transporting, and dropping military hardware to forces in Northern Iraq under the guise of it being humanitarian aid; (Just Peace supports genuine humanitarian aid being provided)
- The Government's decision to commit ADF Fighter Jets, and other equipment in readiness to perform bombing raids in Northern Iraq, and to deploy 600 plus ADF personnel to what the US terms a war zone.
- The conservative open ended estimated annual expenditure of \$500M, on the deployment, and the \$630M plus allocated to intelligence services, makes a mockery of your Government's slogans, of Budget Emergencies, Debt and Deficit, and Budget Black Hole;
- The Government's involvement as a non member, in NATO discussions on the Syrian and Ukraine conflicts. Just Peace suspects that this is an indication that Australia could become involved in at least one of those conflicts;
- The failure of the Government to legislate for a "mandatory" Parliamentary debate before committing Australian troops to war/ war zones, and not justifying its actions to all Australians by way of open debate in both Houses of Parliament;
- The Government's recent "Force Posture Agreement" with the US Government, that authorises increased numbers of US Marines being based in Australia, that allows greater US access to our Ports, and Air Bases, and the creation/expansion of Joint Training Facilities, (JTF's euphemism for US Bases) on Australian soil;
- The announcement that there will be increased joint military land/sea/air exercises in the future involving the US, Japan, Indonesia, China and other foreign forces on our "sovereign" soil;
- The interdiction of a foreign vessel on the high seas, and the detention of 157 Asylum Seekers for more than one month on an Australian Customs vessel. The legality of that action is being tested in the High Court;
- The encroachment of Australian naval vessels into Indonesian territorial waters on

several occasions. Despite the seriousness of the repeated breaches, the Government has suggested that the incursions were by accident;

- Reported support given to the Japanese Government by Minister's for Defence and Foreign Affairs, regarding Japan's proposed constitutional change from it's current commitment to Pacifism;
- Reports that they also discussed the possible purchase of 12 Japanese manufactured submarines at a cost of \$20 Billion during the visit;
- The proposed purchase of 350 AIM-9X-2 Sidewinder tactical missiles, and more than 100 training missiles, from the US Government at a cost of \$610M;
- The Government's reinforcement of the perception that Australia is acting as the US Government's "Deputy Sheriff" in the Asia Pacific Region, for the purpose of enforcing military superiority over other countries in the region; (As confirmed by the US/Australia "Force Posture Agreement")

We in Just Peace categorically denounce the arbitrary use of violence, and brutality, irrespective of the perpetrators. We share with all decent and caring world citizens their abhorrence of the evil, inhumane, and brutal actions of IS and other terrorists of their ilk.

Notwithstanding that we are gravely concerned that the Government's language, and actions, are creating a climate of extreme fear, similar to that generated by the terms "War on Terror", and the "Axis of Evil," and other graphic and emotive language used prior to the illegal invasion of Iraq.

Just Peace believes those terms, and the extravagant and evocative language were used at that time to justify, promote, and sustain the so-called "Coalition of the Willing", in its ill advised, and illegal invasion, and occupation of Iraq.

The current slogan, "Coalition of Concern", and other highly emotive language being used to describe the current situation in Iraq and Syria, in our view is a reinforcement of that tactic, for similar purposes.

Just Peace believes that there is a real danger that your Government will make the same tragic mistake as the previous Coalition Government did in 2003, as a member of the so-called "Coalition of the Willing."

First came the devastating around the clock US air strikes, and then came the troops on the ground, overall it caused the death and injury to many thousands of innocent civilians including women and children, as well as the near total destruction of much of Iraq's vital infrastructure.

As a consequence of the conditions that have prevailed since that failed illegal invasion, and occupation, eleven years on, the people of Iraq are clearly in a much worse situation.

Notwithstanding that harsh reality your Government has indicated Australia will participate firstly in air strikes, and we fear when asked your Government will commit our troops to war on the ground, even if a majority of Australians may not approve at the time.

Just Peace believes that your Government's adoption, and maintenance, of aggressive

militarism, has the potential to further alienate already sensitive relationships with Asia Pacific/North Asian nations, and that it will increase the risk of terrorist attacks on Australian soil, and against Australians citizens.

We appeal to you as Prime Minister to advocate, adopt, and practice, peace orientated diplomacy, with the major emphasis on the maintenance of an effective Australian Defence Force, rather than a hawkish, and aggressive “Attack Force”.

Foreign Affairs

We in Just Peace believe that most Australians have an expectation that their Government will develop and pursue an independent and principled foreign policy.

There is also an expectation that the policy will be applied consistently, and without fear, or favour, and with the primary purpose of protecting Australia's “National Interest”.

Just Peace accepts that at this time in world history every facet of life, is in some way influenced, or affected, as a consequence of globalisation.

Given existing circumstances being experienced throughout the world we in Just Peace recognise the importance, and value, of maintaining a principled and sustainable alliance with Foreign Governments, that uphold common universal democratic values, and maintain a shared commitment to international security, peace, and justice.

Just Peace is also of the view that for an alliance to be regarded as one of substance, and enduring, it must incorporate the fundamental values of equality, trust, respect, integrity, truth, humanitarianism, and un-compromised principles.

We submit that any Alliance based mainly on the “Military Might”, and the over riding interests of one of the parties, such as that existing with the US Government, does seriously undermine, and compromise, Australia's international credibility, and its claims to be an independent “sovereign nation”.

We believe that to give meaning, and force, to those values stated above Australian Governments should insist that all Foreign Governments comply with a set of basic minimum standards before entering into new alliances, or renewing existing alliances.

Just Peace believes that some policies, statements, and actions of your Government has caused Australia's international reputation to be diminished, and damaged.

Whilst some of the issues raised here may not be totally encompassed by the Foreign Affairs portfolio, Just Peace feels that they have had a negative impact on our International reputation and relationships.

- A reported claim by the Foreign Minister whilst on a visit to Israel to the effect “that Israeli settlements in the West Bank were legal/ not illegal” which contradicts the United Nation's stated position;
- The changes made by Government to the universal and long accepted description of Palestinian “Occupied Territories”, to that of “Disputed Territories” is a blatant denial of the truth, and reality, of the existing situation;
- Your Government's reluctance/failure to unequivocally condemn the disproportionate

use of force by Israel in its attacks on Gaza, which caused the death of thousands of civilians, and the near total destruction of homes, and infrastructure, throughout Gaza;

- We note that the Government has condemned similar actions taken by pro Russian forces against the Ukraine, and we appeal for that consistency to be applied when dealing with the Israeli/Palestinian conflict;
- We acknowledge the Government's provision of genuine humanitarian aid to the thousands of innocent civilians whose lives were under threat in Northern Iraq. However we do not consider the supply of military hardware to be humanitarian aid;

It should be noted that Just Peace, detests and denounces any act of terrorism, whether perpetrated by suicide bomber/s, terrorist groups, or whether it is "State" perpetrated terrorism, such as use of cluster munitions, and white phosphorus, irrespective of the justification claimed;

Further matters of concern to Just Peace are;

- Reported statements attributed to the Foreign Minister and/or the Defence Minister whilst in Japan, that suggested support of Japan's claims over disputed territory in the South China Sea;
- Your comments during Prime Minister Abe visit commending the bravery of Japanese troops during World War II, were seen as being insensitive, and insulting, to our troops and those of our allies;
- Several incursions of Australian Naval craft into Indonesian Territorial waters, with the implausible explanation given to Indonesia that they were made by mistake. This exacerbated other diplomatic faux pas involving Indonesia, committed under your watch;
- The interdiction, and detention, of Asylum Seekers on the high seas, by your Government, which has caused a High Court challenge to test the legality of that action;
- Your Government's claim that a major plank in the Asylum Seeker policy, is based on humanitarian grounds, by preventing the loss of life at sea. The reality is they are being subjected to many forms of inhumane treatment, instigated, and oversights by Government;
- Your Government's repudiation of previously agreed Climate Change initiatives, and continued rejection of overwhelming scientific fact, in favour of, and adherence to, the advice of irrational climate change denialists;
- The proposed implementation of an expensive, ineffective, and universally discredited "Direct Action" scheme which will be a massive subsidy to major polluters, at taxpayer's expense;
- Refusal to place Climate Change on the G20 agenda despite requests from world leaders that it be included, is evidence of the un-sustainability of your Government's position;
- Your decision not to attend the UN summit on Climate Change, despite the fact that the majority of world leaders accept that it is one of the greatest challenges confronting the future of humankind;

- The continuation of the open hostility, and lack of respect, shown towards the UN by the previous Coalition Government, for example the campaign against, or lack of support for, Australia gaining a temporary seat on the UN Security Council;
- This was further demonstrated when the Minister for Immigration, foreshadowed legislation designed to negate/circumvent the provisions of the UN's International Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, of 1951, in order to abrogate Australia's responsibilities as a signatory of that Convention;
- The fact, that action was taken at the time you were attending meetings of the UN Security Council, and the General Assembly, in our view will cause further damage to Australia's integrity, and credibility, within the international community.

Human Rights

Just Peace is an organisation dedicated to the preservation, protection, and promotion, of peace and social justice for all.

It is opposed to any legislation, mechanisms, methods or campaigns, that are designed to erode, abuse, or deny, basic human rights to Australian citizens, and to those who are legitimately seeking to become Australian citizens.

Just Peace contends that Governments at all levels share a collective responsibility to develop, maintain, and to administer, efficient and effective security, policing, and emergency organisations that have the capacity to properly preserve, and protect, the security, and safety, of all Australians.

It strongly supports a comprehensive anti crime/terrorism strategy, that has prevention as its major priority, and that also includes other important elements based on preparedness, response, and recovery.

It believes that the consistent application of practical and effective strategies will do more to deter and defeat the criminal act of terrorism than a Government implementing and increasing the “states” power by enacting un-necessary and draconian anti Human Rights laws.

Available evidence suggests that your Government is now conducting what appears to be a politically motivated, media driven fear campaign similar to that of the Howard Government, prior to its introduction of what was then deemed to be un-necessary and draconian anti-terror laws.

The subsequent miscarriage of justice suffered by Dr Mohamed Haneef, and others, is a prime example, of the grave dangers inherent in passing unjust and flawed laws. In particular those that have the power to seriously undermine, and deny, fundamental human rights which are the corner stone, of our participatory democracy.

Recent actions, and expressed intentions, of your Government, that are of concern to Just Peace are;

- The proposed amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act, in particular clause 18c, said to be on the basis that an influential individual had been found to be in breach of it's existing provisions;
- The fact that the Attorney General as the first law officer of Australia, made a

statement in the Senate “that people had a right to be “bigots”;

- Despite the fact that the Government was forced to abandon the proposed amendments to the Act as the result of public pressure, the Attorney was not stood down;
- Notwithstanding his mis-handling of the above sensitive issue, the Attorney General is responsible for the presentation and carriage of the proposed amendments to existing “Terror Laws”;
- Whilst parts of the amended laws have been passed with the support of the Opposition, there is still widespread opposition within the community to some of it's provisions. The same applies to other amendments not yet introduced to the Parliament;
- The unfair and inhumane treatment of Asylum Seekers placed in detention on Nauru, and Manus Islands;
- The proposed legislation that seeks to remove/evade Australia's legal obligations as required by the International Convention, Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 to which Australia is a signatory;
- The introduction of legislation that would deny Australian citizenship to babies born in Australia to Asylum Seekers whilst in detention;
- The return of Asylum Seekers to their country of origin, notwithstanding they could be subjected to the dangers from which they had escaped;
- For example the recent execution in Afghanistan of an Australian citizen and a resident of 15 years. This happened when he was visiting relatives in that country;
- The agreement with a corrupt Cambodian Government, to take Asylum Seekers from Nauru, despite the fact that it is one of the poorest nations on earth, and that it has an abysmal Human Rights record in the treatment of it's own citizens;
- It appears the Government has shown scant regard for the future safety, security, and wellbeing, of these disadvantaged, and vulnerable, human beings. This is in stark contrast to your rejection of the so-called Malaysia solution, on similar grounds, prior to the election.
- Given the real facts of your Government's treatment of Asylum Seekers, the claims that the primary reason for such actions is to prevent deaths at sea, is difficult to comprehend, and to accept;
- Recent insensitive, divisive, and discriminatory, statements and rulings, made by you, Government Members, Senators, the Senate President, and the Speaker, that the attire of Australian Muslim women, is confronting, and constitutes a security threat to the Parliament in our view is extreme, un-warranted, and un-sustainable;

Just Peace believes that the examples cited reflect your Government's apparent lack of commitment to the principles, and proper preservation, and protection, of “universal” Human Rights.

We appeal to you as Prime Minister, to give serious consideration to the issues raised, and to take action to ensure that real meaning is given to the oft repeated mantra of a, “Fair Go” for all.

Budget

Just Peace joins with the overwhelming majority of analysts, organisations, and people in the street, in condemnation of what has been described as one of the most draconian budgets ever delivered in Australia.

It is a matter of fact that if Budget measures are adopted, they will have a severe adverse impact on the poor, sick, under privileged, dis-advantaged, and the vulnerable in our community.

It has also been established that those who are better off financially, and who live in the more affluent suburbs of our cities, are advantaged over those who reside in outlying working class suburbs.

Whilst this is not intended as an in depth analysis of the Budget measures passed, put on hold, or held up in the Senate, it is an indication of Just Peace's concerns of the adverse impact it will have on the future of all Australians.

- Your Government's use of slogans related to the Budget such as, Debt and Deficit, Budget Black Hole, and Budget Emergency, is more about perpetuating a perception of budgetary incompetence of a previous Government, rather than delivering a fair, reasonable, and responsible Budget in the interests of all Australians;
- Budget cuts, taxes, and other austerity measures, that will adversely impact, diminish, destroy, or totally abolish vital organisations, industries, research capacity, delivery of essential Government services, jobs, safety nets that protect the poor and disadvantaged;
- The major consequences of the Budget measures alluded to, will be reflected particularly in areas vital to the future of all Australians, for example;
- Health, Education, Environment, Climate Change, Renewable Energy, Public Transport, Provision of Welfare/Community Services, Human Rights, and in many other areas that will hurt the most vulnerable in our communities;
- Other factors that have caused Just Peace to question the veracity of Government claims of a “Budget Emergency”, etc are;
- The open ended commitment of billions of dollars to the purchase of, F35 Fighters, a range of combat/transport aircraft, a number of submarines (probably manufactured in Japan), substantial ongoing expenditure, related to the “Force Posture Agreement” with the US Government;
- The massive open ended, out of Budget commitment of a conservative \$500M per annum, to another Iraq War, of indeterminate length, and scope;
- The out of Budget estimated allocation of \$630M to boost Australia's Intelligence Services;
- The substantial ongoing expenditures, not yet disclosed, on the MH370, and MH17, search, discovery, and retrieval exercises;
- The fact that a number of measures included in the Budget break pre-election promises made by you, and that some other measures were not made known to electors before the election, is seen by Just Peace, and we believe by Australians generally, as a serious breach of trust on the part of your Government.

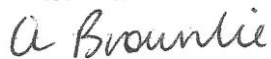
Conclusion

In conclusion, we make a sincere appeal to you as Prime Minister, and to the whole of Government, to give serious consideration to the issues raised in our communication.

We look forward to receiving your considered, and timely response.

As reference has been made to issues in a number of portfolios, copies have been provided to the following Ministers; Foreign Affairs, Defence, Immigration, Treasurer, and the Attorney General.

Yours in Peace



(A Brownlie)
Co-Convenor
Just Peace Queensland Inc



(N C Bullen)
Co-Convenor
Just Peace Queensland Inc

28th October 2014

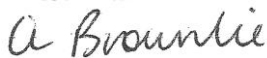
Hon D Johnston MHR Minister for Defence Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Please find attached a submission made by Just Peace to the Prime Minister, on matters of concern, and of interest to it.

As some of the issues canvassed relate to your portfolio, and areas of responsibility, a copy is provided for your information and consideration.

Yours in Peace



(A Brownlie)
Co-Convenor
Just Peace Queensland Inc



(N C Bullen)
Co-Convenor
Just Peace Queensland Inc

A copy of the submission to Prime Minister was forwarded to the following Ministers, in addition to the above;

Foreign Affairs
Treasurer
Immigration
Attorney-General