

Submission

To Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Re: Inquiry into Australia's Nuclear Agreements

**From the Committee for Peace, Social Justice and the Environment of
the Religious Society of Friends, West Australia Regional Meeting
(Quakers)**

I. THE QUAKER POSITION

We preface our remarks regarding international treaties, to which the Australian Government, on behalf of the Australian people, is party, with a statement of our underlying philosophies. We do not subscribe to creeds, but rather we seek to live by testimonies, tried and true for us, which are borne out of more than three hundred and fifty years of witnessing to the spirit's direct manifestations in our lives.

We seek the goodness in all beings. We listen directly to the Spirit's guidance. Our testimonies, arising out of experience rather than dogma, invite us to be peaceful, to live simply, to follow the dictates of justice and equality, to live with integrity in all our dealings, and to create supportive communities based on mutual respect. These testimonies manifest themselves in our efforts towards nonviolence, to inclusivity, to fairness and good neighbourliness, in order to share the world's resources with a keen eye to the future, lest we damage the social and environmental capital which is entrusted to us as stewards for future generations.

Bearing this in mind, it is appropriate for us to comment on the Australian Government's international obligations and commitments to global citizenship by adherence to this series of international treaties relating to nuclear activities.

II. BROAD SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S STANCE

Over most of the last decade, we have noticed that Australia's international reputation as a good global citizen has slipped considerably. We are heartened by renewed commitment of the Rudd government to strongly support the work of the United Nations. We applaud the establishment of the Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, and trust that the work of that Commission will enable Australia to position itself as a firm advocate of a Nuclear Weapons Convention, and to giving strong, unambiguous support to the next NPT Review in 2010.

III. REVIEW OF EXISTING AGREEMENTS

We will briefly canvass the following treaties, with our recommendations for future directions for the government, before commenting on other nuclear-related matters with suggestions for future directions.

1. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT]
2. Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty [FMCT]
3. Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT]
4. Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space [PAROS]

1. **CTBT:** We have seen the fortunes of this treaty wax and wane over the years since its inception. Whilst we acknowledge various Australian Governments' commitment to progressing the aims of the CTBT (Stopping all nuclear tests in all environments, for all time), we would like to see our government find renewed energy and commitment to getting the United States to ratify this treaty. This is a very old conversation now, but there is hope that the new United States' administration will take this matter seriously, cease "sub-critical" tests and simulations, and cease developing new mini-nukes, bunker busters, and new technology delivery systems.

We would also ask our government to pursue the Russian Government to observe both the letter and the spirit of the CTBT, and of course, to extend the ban on testing new or existing nuclear weapons beyond the limits of declared Nuclear Weapons States to those countries which possess “le bomb,” and even more importantly to those countries striving to join the nuclear club.

2. **FMCT:** This treaty, still only a proposal (which has been its status for many years) is an important back up for other treaties, were it to be enacted, because of its capacity to prohibit the re-processing and separation of weapons-useable fissile materials as a key step to banning fissile materials altogether. Fissile materials would cease to become available to would-be bomb-makers in future – a pipe dream at the moment. But we strongly encourage the government to keep the FMCT on the agenda of any disarmament discussion. Of course, a Treaty in itself will be worthless if not backed by strong sanctions and verifiability. An important recent and worrying resource on the topic of fissile material unaccounted for is William Langewiesche’s 2007 publication “Atomic Bazaar.” The so-called “poor nations’ bomb” is a possibility partly because of slack international regulations and easy movement of dangerous materials, which the International Atomic Energy Agency, in its current form, cannot hope to monitor, police or curtail. The IAEA is problematic by its very nature, as a promoter of the nuclear industry, whilst also being guardian of nuclear materials. ... But that is a topic outside the guidelines for this JSCoT committee enquiry.

3. **NPT:** Australia’s contributions to the five yearly reviews have been patchy. We would hope for a more robust attempt at the 2010 conference to finally getting this most important of all nuclear-related treaties agreed to by all nations of the world. Perhaps our very future depends upon it. Yet the NWS have routinely shirked their responsibilities, especially relating to Article VI, and apparently have stood idly by while other nations have taken on the nuclear weapons mantle. There are too many ways of getting round the NPT, so our Quaker committee would advocate:

- A) the universalisation of the NPT to include India, Pakistan & Israel – this would be easier for the Australian government to promote if we had a foreign policy less based on the alliance with the United States;
- B) Revision of the provisions of the NPT to close loopholes allowing new weapons research;
- C) Increasing Australia's contribution to the inadequate IAEA budget to enable that organization to do its work thoroughly;
- D) Continuation of the policy to deny sales of uranium to countries outside the NPT, but also to deny uranium to countries not complying with their current NPT obligations (all five original NWS's);
- E) Refusal of further uranium exports to Japan unless it stops accumulating enriched uranium and plutonium;
- F) Strong representation at every possible opportunity through the Conference on Disarmament, UNGA and special committees, and of course the new Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. Here is an opportunity for Australia to take a leadership role, which we think is the government's intention. We want the Government to know that there is strong community support for that initiative. Too many of the excellent thirteen recommendations of the 1996 Canberra Commission were allowed to languish, but all are still relevant – time lost between then and now needs to be made up!

4. **PAROS**: an idea whose time has come. This treaty should be strongly supported by the Australian Government for a couple of very basic reasons:
- A) Nuclear materials in outer space, or any weapons in outer space, are prone to accident – this is a totally unnecessary risk to which the planet does not need to expose itself;
 - B) It is an enormous waste of resources when there are so many pressing issues much more deserving of expenditure, whether by individual governments or by a communal global entity e.g. dealing with the mitigation of climate change events on populations and environments everywhere.

IV. OTHER NUCLEAR-RELATED MATTERS

Our Quaker committee would strongly support the government to pursue the following further suggestions towards disarmament, connected to nuclear issues:

- 1. Establishment of a Nuclear Weapons Convention:** another idea whose time has come. While there are conventions banning chemical and biological weapons, it is highly regrettable that the NWS have managed to thwart the best efforts of many Non-NWS to establish such a convention. At times, Australia has sided with our great friend and ally to thwart such suggestions, but we should be more independent, and able to take our places with the Middle Powers Initiative to record and enforce total disarmament of all nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. It is a sacred duty. There are many steps in this process, obviously known to members of this committee, and we think the Australian Government should support all of them, to head inexorably towards the great dream of millions (most) global citizens, for the world to be rid of the threat of nuclear weapons. A proposed Nuclear Weapons Convention has already been through various phases, one of the more recent being the 2007 Model NWC, which would ban the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. With a new Administration in Washington, perhaps now is a better time than ever before to pursue this vision with alacrity.
- 2. Vexed question of Australian uranium exports:** we contribute substantially to the world's nuclear worries by exporting uranium, despite the best efforts of the Australian safeguards and Non-proliferation Office. There is no sure way to quarantine Australian uranium from any other uranium oxide once it enters the nuclear fuel cycle. No safeguards can guarantee that no Australian uranium ends up in nuclear weapons. A case in point is the Tricastin plant in France, which is both a civilian and military facility – they do not separate out uranium from countries which prefer for their uranium oxide not to be used for weapons production. What country would admit to allowing its uranium to be enriched to weapons-grade material? All countries hide behind the

smokescreen of safeguards. Despite additional protocols being recommended by various agencies, there is inadequate supervision of the existing protocols, so there is a great deal of weapons grade material unaccounted for! As mentioned earlier, we should not be exporting to any country not complying with its existing NPT obligations, nor to any country which is not a signatory to the current NPT. However, our Quaker committee would go much further, in saying that we should not be exporting uranium at all. This is because at the end of a very long nuclear chain there are two consequences: radioactive waste and/or nuclear weapons. It is totally irresponsible to future generations to burden them with contaminated legacies which in some cases, last for hundreds of thousands of years. Australia should make no further contribution to the already huge backlog of nuclear waste, which after sixty years, no country, no aspect of the industry, can claim to have solved. Enormous pressure will be exerted on Australia (again – Pangea was sent packing by the people and Government of Western Australia, but they're back, as we knew they would be: same CEO, but now called ARIUS) to find a spot to dump the world's nuclear waste. If we continue to export uranium, there will be greater and greater pressure to accept the world's waste in our relatively secure desert landscape, supposedly not very important because only a few Aboriginal people live there. To us, this is a denial of justice and respect to the first Australians, and to the land which they so generously share with us. Our recommendation therefore would be to cease exploring for, mining, milling, transporting and exporting of uranium (all processes listed produce greenhouse emissions, as do the next phases of construction of power plants - vast quantities of cement - plus construction of enrichment plants, decommissioning of old nuclear power plants) in favour of prioritizing renewable energies which do not have lasting negative impacts, and which are technologically ready right now, to soar as the energy revolution picks up pace. The nuclear industry dares to promote itself as an answer to global warming: not so – apart from the fact that it produces significant greenhouse emissions at every stage bar the boiling of water in the turbine, it is too slow, too expensive and too dangerous to be seriously considered as an energy source for the future. Australia would do well to break loose from the nuclear chain

CONCLUSION:

We believe that you cannot look at international nuclear treaties without consideration of the whole nuclear industry, which we have just touched upon here it is an interconnected web, and its multifarious parts need to be addressed.

We reiterate that our Quaker committee is keen to support the Rudd government's initiatives in this field of nuclear disarmament. We would hope to see a non-partisan approach within the Parliament and the community to enhance the government's efforts.

We commit ourselves to be watchful, and active in furthering the government's agenda, and in progressing towards the realization of the overwhelming call by citizen groups everywhere, for nuclear weapons to be abolished, everywhere, and for all time.

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On behalf of

Peace, Social Justice and Environment Committee of the West Australian Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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