

Defence

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN DEFENCE & VETERANS

There are no immediate threats to Australia and yet our military budget has leapt to \$22 billion a year, not including recent contracts signed for military equipment worth around \$40 billion. This is both economically unsustainable and incompatible with our defence priorities which should be peaceful engagement, international cooperation and supporting and stabilising our own immediate region. For this Australia arguably needs a bigger but more lightly armed defence force and much more comprehensive assistance than troops and police.

There is already some evidence that widely criticised spending on war fighting equipment is leading to an arms build up in our region and the Government has made the extraordinary admission that Australian troops remain in Iraq predominantly in order to enhance our alliance with the US. Joining the 'coalition of the willing' and maintaining forces in Iraq has so far cost Australia over \$3 billion directly and played a part in actions which have led to the loss of perhaps hundreds of thousands of lives.

Our Action Plan

"The Government has become very careless about how it spends the defence budget, devoting billions to capabilities we could do without"

Hugh White,
Visiting fellow at the
Lowy Institute and
professor of strategic
studies at ANU. He was the
principle author of the
2000 defence white
paper.

- Withdraw our troops from Iraq, whilst working with the international community to ensure the protection of vulnerable groups in Iraq, in particular enabling the Kurdish people to maintain the stable democracy that has operated in the north of the country for well over a decade.
- Cancel contracts for the Super Hornet Fighters and Air Warfare Destroyers, cutting \$15 billion from forward defence spending.
- Shift the overall focus of defence spending from intensive combat in distant conflicts to engagement under the UN flag, self-reliance, regional security and peace keeping activity and maximising the capability to defend Australia from military attack.
- Build better alliance cooperation with other countries in our region, whilst maintaining strong human rights standards.
- Build a better resourced but lighter armed force capable of undertaking emergency, security and peacekeeping operations in our immediate region.
- Increase spending on land mine and cluster munitions clearing operations.
- Move as far as possible from bilateral to multilateral defence agreements and make them conditional on protecting human rights and democratic freedoms of peoples within partner states.
- Withdraw from any support for a Missile Defence System or militarisation of space.

Defence

- Establish a peace and nonviolence commission to provide non-military solutions to conflict and security issues and to revive disarmament efforts.
- Establish an independent review process for all major defence acquisitions.
- Where possible manufacture defence equipment domestically and where impractical ensure a diverse range of source countries is maintained.
- Ensure adherence to international norms and minimised civilian impacts when purchasing weapon systems. Start by banning cluster munitions.

The Issues

Strategic Defence Spending

September 11 redirected the strategic direction of our defence policy and not for the better. We are currently committed to contributing to a range of military operations distant from our shores. This has led to futile and expensive attempts to project power far from Australia. We believe military spending should be focused on a genuine defence imperative, coupled with providing regional stability, will allow us to buy cheaper hardware better suited to our strategic needs.

Spending Out of Control

Australia's defence spending represents 2% of GDP and we are now the 11th largest defence spender in the world. In our immediate region, Singapore has a military budget, less than one third of ours while Indonesia and New Zealand spend barely a tenth. Yet in the coming years Australia's military spending is only tipped to escalate further. In the past sixteen months alone, the Coalition has signed contracts for the acquisition of military hardware worth \$40 billion, much of which has been against departmental advice. Below are some of the Government's contentious contracts, many of which are either funded outside the budget or are still awaiting appropriations. A recent study has also noted that final costs exceeded budget by an average 189%:

F-35 Joint Strike Fighter – \$20b	Air warfare destroyers – \$8b
F-18 Super Hornet - \$6b	C-17 Globemaster aircraft – \$2b
Amphibious Assault ships - \$2b	Sea-Sprite Helicopter - \$1b
Armada class Patrol Boats – \$550m	Abrams tanks – \$500m

Suggested Alternative Military Hardware

There are many more cost-effective hardware options that Australia should consider. For example: Non-nuclear submarines instead of Destroyers. China recently purchased eight state of the art non-nuclear submarines for the price of one of our proposed destroyers. Unlike vulnerable surface vessels, non-nuclear submarines are hard to detect and could provide excellent defence for a fraction of the price of the Destroyer program. We could balance the air-forces of our



CONTACT US

(03) 9416 1880

Lv 1, 62 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne VIC 3002

inquiries@democrats.org.au

Authorised by Jack Evans, 5 Poinciana Place, Wanneroo WA 6065
Printed by Senator Lyn Allison, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Defence

immediate neighbours much more effectively by choosing to purchase the same aircraft that they have in service. This would save over ten billion.

Alternatives to Military Solutions

In a world so consumed by violence, it is a major shortcoming that there is no statutory body in Australia that has peace and nonviolence as its specific objective. We need to realise that no army will provide long-term solutions to security crises, which are symptomatic of deeper political, social, and economic problems. A Peace and Nonviolence Commission would work hand in hand with the defence forces to provide a holistic approach to these issues.

Wrong Acquisitions

There is no independent body charged with verifying whether or not our recent expensive acquisitions ensure our ongoing national security and maintain regional supremacy. Abram tanks, new destroyers and the Super Hornet fighter jets have all been committed to despite grave concerns that these assets will be unable to defend us from weapons systems now proliferating in the region.

Ensuring Civilian Protection

Civilians are overwhelmingly the victims of modern war. As such, it is up to combatants who take the rule of law seriously to ensure that weapons used in conflict areas minimise civilian impacts. The Australian Democrats introduced the Cluster Munitions (Prohibition) Bill that if enacted would ban Australian forces from using a weapon, which has a similar to civilian impact to landmines.

Space and Defence Shield

In July 2004 Australia agreed to co-operate with the US on a missile defence shield. This decision contradicted a November 2000 UN resolution supported by 163 nations that said the 'prevention of an arms race in outer space would avert a grave danger for international peace and security.' But while Australia denies such claims, by its own admission the Government will spend 'tens of billions of dollars over the next decade keeping up with a world of sophisticated military technology'. This spending is also futile. Even if the shield did work, "rogue states" would simply deliver weapons of mass destruction by other means.



CONTACT US

(03) 9416 1880

Lv 1, 62 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne VIC 3002

inquiries@democrats.org.au

Authorised by Jack Evans, 5 Poinciana Place, Wanneroo WA 6065
Printed by Senator Lyn Allison, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600