

Nuclear Non-Proliferation & Disarmament

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

Ever since the bombs obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, mankind has understood only too well the threat nuclear weapons pose to mankind. Fear of these weapons reached its zenith during the Cold War and led to the establishment of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968. But the millennium has brought with it new challenges to proliferation. New technologies have meant the collective destructive ability of nuclear stockpiles has increased alarmingly, while non-state terrorist groups belie the mutually assured destruction doctrine and climate change imperatives provide the nuclear industry with an undue legitimacy. In the Australian Parliament the Democrats have been at the forefront of the fight to abolish nuclear weapons now for thirty years and will maintain our vigilance until the world no longer stands at the precipice of annihilation.

“Controlled, universal disarmament is the imperative of our time. The demand for it by the hundreds of millions whose chief concern is the long future of themselves and their children will, I hope, become so universal and so insistent that no man, no government anywhere, can withstand it.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Our Action Plan

- Press all nuclear weapons states to agree to a verifiable timetable of complete disarmament of nuclear weapons, as envisaged 30 years ago under the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
- If uranium mining continues, cease exporting uranium to countries that have nuclear weapons or are suspected of developing nuclear weapons.
- Join international efforts focused on disarmament, including the Nuclear Weapons Convention, Nuclear Free Zones, the ailing Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and all other measures under the IAEA safeguards system.
- Provide the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons with funding to carry out its educational role.
- Prohibit the stationing of nuclear weapons and nuclear powered vessels in or above Australia.
- Support Australia's withdrawal from agreements that contribute in any way to the use of nuclear weapons, including the use of Australian bases for any aspect of a nuclear missile defence system.
- Oppose the use of depleted uranium in the munitions used by allies.
- Ban any use of warheads with depleted uranium by Australia
- Press for international agreement for countries that have used DU to clean up contaminated areas once military operations are finished

The Issues

Nuclear Terrorism

Probably the greatest threat to mankind lies in a terrorist organisation gaining access to nuclear weapons. Usurping state boundaries and blending in to civilian populations, terrorist groups cannot be pinned to a specific location. Therefore the doctrine of mutually assured destruction that was so successful even at the height of



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the Cold War is no longer guaranteed to work. The Australian Democrats believe without the commitment to ban nuclear weapons their likelihood of falling into the hands of terrorists like those willing to fly planes into buildings is greatly diminished.

Uranium Sales

The Howard Government is actively undermining the nuclear weapons safeguard system by approving uranium sales to China, India and Russia. All three countries have nuclear weapons and one (India) is not a state party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Despite all the bluster about Australian uranium only being used for civilian programs the bilateral agreements between Australia and uranium customers have gradually been weakened since the framework was established.

Of course there are also wider security ramifications of uranium sales to China, India and Russia. In all instances it is likely to escalate regional tensions.

Nuclear Weapons Convention

For too long the world has attacked the problem of nuclear weapons from polarised positions. The answer is to work on disarmament and non-proliferation simultaneously. The Nuclear Weapons Convention, as modelled a decade ago would do just that by establishing legal, technical and political mechanisms that would prevent proliferation and nuclear terrorism and achieve disarmament.

Last year at the United Nations, 125 nations called for the immediate commencement of multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention that has as its ultimate aim the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Unfortunately Australia chose to abstain from such an undertaking but the Australian Democrats will continue to pressure the Government to actively pursue multinational negotiations leading to such a convention.

Nuclear Veterans

A study into cancer and mortality rates of veterans of the British atomic bomb testing at Maralinga in the 1950's finally released its findings last year. The study found large excesses in cancer rates of up to 300 percent over a wide range of cancers, suggesting a common causative effect, yet miraculously found no link.

The study took seven years and in that time many of the nuclear test participants died. Death certificates showed that most of the 6000 servicemen who died, died from cancer, leukaemia, heart failures or brain tumours and almost half were in their 40s and 50s. The Government has belatedly offered those still alive free cancer treatment, but no compensation. Meanwhile war veterans from the Gulf Wars face similar problems due to depleted uranium.

Depleted Uranium

The use of depleted uranium in warheads exposes not only civilians but our troops to this deadly waste product. Although Australia has banned depleted uranium in its own warheads our Government has not objected to its use by allies in Iraq. Only a particle of depleted uranium is required to kill and it remains radioactive for 4-5 million years.



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