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| Submission No:..... 1 |
| Date Received: 24-3-10 |
| Secretary: |

22 MAR 2010

18 March 2010

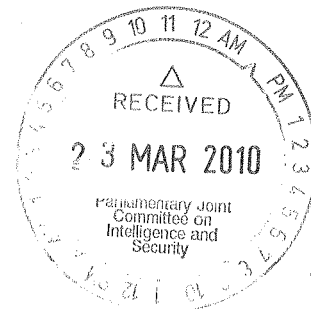
The Secretary

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

PO Box 6021

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600



RE: Review of the Department of Defence annual report 2008-2009

World spending on militarism has reached alarming proportions and the trade in armaments has accelerated despite the downturn in the world economy. Australia spends approximately 2 billion dollars a month on military defence and there are many new weapon systems on order for the future.

Excessive arms purchases can provoke a regional arms race. For example:

- The single biggest acquisition will be for the navy. A fleet of 12 submarines are envisaged – but Australia should only replace its submarines, not increase its fleet.
- For the airforce there is to be a purchase of 100 joint strike fighter aircraft. There should be no increase in Australia's airforce, only replacement.
- Also for the army there should be replacement only and no increases such as the 1,100 new armoured combat vehicles.

These and other new weapon systems outlined in the White Paper increase Australia's fighting potential and gives Australia an extended reach. This will alarm countries in our region and provoke a response.

Spending on war preparations is rising every year in all countries and there is no sign of it being reined in. Clearly another approach is needed to curb this wasteful expenditure. Financial resources are vitally needed in the civilian economy.

In 2007 Prime Minister Rudd took an initiative on the question of nuclear weapons and formed the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament. Something along the same lines is needed to explore the threat of conventional weapons. A way must be found to arrest the continuing upward spiral of world military spending and the accumulation of armaments.

pmitchell

Pauline Mitchell

Secretary