



14 October 2015

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

I write on behalf of Australian Quakers to express our deep concern for the way budget allocations have been made. The decision to make successive and substantial cuts to Australia's aid program is ill-considered. This program accounts for approximately 1% of Federal expenditure, but has been severely cut to provide more than 25% of the Government's budget savings.

Australia's aid program saves lives. We are in the top 20 wealthiest countries, but live in a region of some of the world's poorest people, people affected by war, climate change and natural disasters, inadequate healthcare, sanitation, education and poverty.

In September 2015 the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty and hunger, to protect the planet from degradation, to take urgent action on climate change, to ensure all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives, to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies free from violence and fear, and to work in a global partnership to implement this agenda. We urge that Australia recommit to giving 0.7% of its national income to foreign aid to achieve these goals.

At the same time as the Australian Foreign Aid budget was significantly reduced, the Defence budget was increased by \$2.5 billion to \$31.8 billion (about 1.9% of GDP), with most of the additional funds going to military operations in Iraq and the Middle East and in the purchase of war planes and ships. Such expenditures are counterproductive and produce blow-back effects. For example, the military operations in the Middle East increase the number of refugees and create conditions that lead to increased recruitment of ISIS.

The Australian Defence budget should place more emphasis on negotiation, diplomacy, regional mediation mechanisms and conflict transformation through the development of law, and to stemming the international trade in arms that is so severely affecting the Middle East.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julian Robertson".

Julian Robertson
Presiding Clerk, Australia Yearly Meeting

Australia Yearly Meeting

The Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) in Australia Inc.
Incorporated in the ACT
PO Box 556 Kenmore
Queensland 4069
Australia

Tel (07) 3201 2685

Email ymsecretary@quakers.org.au

Web www.quakers.org.au

ABN 16 036 715 933