



Independent and Peaceful Australia Network

IPAN National Co-ordinating Committee Statement – October 2016

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN), representing more than 30 peace, anti-war, community organisations and unions from around Australia, held its third National Conference in Alice Springs (1-2 October), marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of one of the world's most important US military spy bases, Pine Gap near Alice Springs.

The well attended IPAN conference titled - *Serving US militarism for 50 years - Time for Independence*, called for the following:

- an independent Australian foreign policy ,
- no more involvement in US foreign wars,
- opposition to US bases on Australian soil,
- the sending home of the US marines currently stationed in Darwin. The recent upgrading and expansion of US military bases and stationing of thousands of US marines in Australia and in the Asia-Pacific are all indications of preparations for wars of aggression.

Today's world is in economic, political and military instability. The threat of a new major world war is becoming very real. Fierce competition for the world's resources and global dominance by the big powers is intensifying military tensions in many regions. There are preparations for a major world war on a scale never seen before. The increasing tensions in the South China Sea and in Eastern Europe are threatening to engulf the world, including Australia, in devastating wars.

A world wide people's movement for peace, justice and security has the power to stop these wars, and is needed now more than ever before.

Against this background the new IPAN National Co-ordinating Committee issued the following statement :

1. We reaffirm our belief that Australia urgently needs an independent and peaceful foreign policy. We seek a policy that would de-escalate the tensions that

have been provoked by the military build-up in our region, especially as exemplified by the USA's 'pivot to the Asia-Pacific'.

2. We call on the Australian government to re-assess Australia's military alliance with the USA, sharing the concerns of the growing number of voices in Australia, that the alliance has a negative impact on Australian independence and security.

3. We are concerned at the real possibility that territorial disputes in the South China Sea could develop into war between the USA and China. This concern is heightened by the realization that, in such an eventuality, Australia's alliance with the USA would make it impossible for this country to retain its neutrality but would draw Australia into another offensive US war against countries and people who do not threaten Australia's peace and security. (See attached IPAN Statement on South China Sea Territorial dispute.)

4. We question our government's increased defence budget for offensive, not defensive purposes, reflected in the White Paper 2016 that services mainly the US global military and war agenda, and re-directs people's taxes away from community and social services, public infrastructure, public health and education. In particular, we condemn the excessive public funds spent on the acquisition of the 'F35 Joint Strike Fighter', hosting US marines in Darwin and upgrading Australia's defence facilities and infrastructure for deeper integration of Australia into the US military war machine. Rather than contributing to peace, such escalating expenditure increases regional instability and the possibility of future war.

We also condemn the projected expenditure of \$A6 billion on drones by early 2020s, one third of this on killer drones that are not in any way defensive, but would draw Australia into unlawful civilian mass killings by the US.

5. We believe the presence of US bases and US marines in Australia threatens our country's security, and risks Australia being embroiled in more US wars.

The removal of US bases and US marines from Australia, and implementing an independent foreign policy that respects the sovereignty of countries, is one of the ways that can guarantee our security and independence.

This will be the Australian people's contribution to making the world a more peaceful and secure place for people and the environment.