

## Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN)

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### **Morrison chooses submarines and fighter jets over social services & health care**

Health, welfare and aged care are facing combined cuts of more than \$3.7 billion as the Federal Government faces down a deficit stretching beyond the end of the decade.

On Tuesday Treasurer Scott Morrison set out through his MYEFO to reduce spending on services for some of the most vulnerable in our community such as the elderly, welfare recipients and the sick.

Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) executive member Dr Ross Gwyther said he was disgusted the cuts were being planned at the same time that spending on military hardware continued to rise.

Currently there is a federal government commitment to purchase a fleet of submarines with a price tag of \$40 billion and over 70 F35 fighter jets at a cost of up to \$24 billion.

Professor Richard Tanter from the Nautilus Institute has written on the government's military spending: "Almost everything about the government's project to spend up to \$40 billion on twelve new submarines is breathtakingly wrongheaded, hazardous strategically and profligate financially."

The purchase of submarines and fighter jets appears to be designed for interoperability with key US Allies in the region Australia, Japan, NZ and the Philippines.

Japan recently reinterpreted Article 9 of its constitution to allow for a more active military role in the region.

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott all but promised Japan the contract to build Australia's new submarine fleet abandoning local production with commercial details still not known to Australians.

IPAN has called on new Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to take a leaf out of Canada's book by asserting that our armed forces' role is to defend Australia and not be an adjunct to the US Defence Department. This would mean changes in both the number (fewer) and equipment of the submarines, and consideration of much cheaper alternatives to the F-35.

The newly elected Canadian government, under Liberal Party Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, went to the polls stating it would abandon its purchase of 65 of the yet-to-be completed F-35 fighters.

Mr. Trudeau went on to say "The primary mission of our fighter aircraft should remain the Defence of North America, not stealth first strike capability. We will reduce the procurement budget for replacing the CF-18s, and will instead purchase one of the many lower-priced options that better match Canada's defense needs."

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