



Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN)

MEDIA RELEASE

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Stop spending billions on warfare and put healthcare first

The Australian Government must stop funneling billions of dollars into offensive weapons and instead redirect much-needed funds into the health and welfare of its people.

The Independent and Peaceful Australian Network (IPAN), a national network of more than 50 members and supporting organisations, on Saturday will publish a national statement calling on the government to stop investing in unjust US-led wars and instead invest in the health and safety of its own people as a priority.

IPAN further calls on Defence Minister Linda Reynolds to reconsider her decision to now allow the rotation of US Marines to Darwin this year after her previous decision to postpone – particularly given the strict international border restrictions imposed by the Commonwealth as a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

“As Australia reels from the massive social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 crisis, we call on the Morrison Government to immediately halt this year’s annual rotation of US soldiers through Darwin,” said IPAN chairperson Annette Brownlie.

“The healthcare of Australians should come first. Why open the door to the possibility of Covid-19 re-entering the country while the vast majority of Australians are working hard, together, to control the virus?”

“We have long called for an end to Australia’s unquestioning and ongoing support for the US military and this year our message is even more pressing. We urge the Australian Government to act as an independent nation and heed the call by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for a global ceasefire amid the current pandemic and immediately cease all military operations.”

“Imagine how many lives could be saved if the Australian Government brought home our military forces from battle zones in the Middle East, Afghanistan and the Philippines and invested that huge expenditure in much-needed health and medical services.

“Australia’s immediate priorities should be providing support for millions of people facing unemployment, homelessness and poverty during the national disasters of coronavirus, the climate crisis, drought and bushfires – rather than supporting unjust US-led wars.”

“Prioritising health and healthcare would not only mean more jobs and timely access to healthcare for millions of Australians and others who currently miss out. It would also necessarily focus our attention in the post-COVID world on the two biggest global health threats, nuclear weapons and climate change. Preventive action on both is urgently needed.” added Dr Sue Wareham President of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War (MAPW) who have endorsed the statement.

The latest report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in April shows Australia maintained its position as the world’s 13th largest investor in military expenditure in 2019, spending \$US25.9 billion (A\$47B) on its warfare capabilities.

More than 600 people, including many prominent Australians, have endorsed IPAN’s statement calling for healthcare not warfare. To view: ipan.org.au/healthcare_not_warfare/

The statement will be published in *The Saturday Paper* this weekend.

Media interviews: Annette Brownlie 0431 597 256, Dr Sue Wareham 0407924152

Media Liaison Kathryn Kelly: 0417 269 984