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MEDIA RELEASE

Government wrong to dismiss concerns on Submarines program – savings could address urgent social needs.

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) calls on the PM Scott Morrison and Defence Minister Christopher Pyne to heed, rather than dismiss, the call by an ex Australian Rear Admiral, Peter Briggs and two ex- Australian naval Commodores, Paul Greenfield and Terence Roach, to change course on submarine procurement.

In a letter, these former officers urge the Government to consider commissioning a new generation of Collins class fleet submarines.

They stated, "The alternative option, that we believe could be cheaper, quicker and less risky and offer a greater level Australian industry participation, is to build an evolved version of the *Collins* class."

The group has asked the Government to invest \$50 million in a two-year study to assess the merits of building a so-called "son of Collins", which they estimate could result in savings of around \$30 billion.

The cost of the current submarine procurement program is around \$50 billion for 12 submarines, some \$2,000 for every person in Australia. Experts say this will double or triple in maintenance costs over the life of the submarines.

"IPAN considers that a number of areas of defence spending need further evaluation and with the submarines being the largest ever defence deal, the government should heed this warning by these experts in naval defence" said IPAN spokesperson, Bevan Ramsden.

"There are many urgent areas of social need which are being starved of funds which contrasts with massive defence spending. We have 100,000 homeless, 17% of children living in families under the poverty line, inadequate income for people on Newstart Allowance and pensioners as well as hospitals in urgent need of funds."

"Australia would also have greater sovereign control over the submarines and Australia's defence future with a local build.

If significant savings could be made by developing a new version of the Collins class submarines and with an increase in Australian content providing more job opportunities, surely the Plan B urged by the three ex Naval officers ought to be examined," Mr Ramsden concluded.

CONTACT: Bevan Ramsden 0418 697 528

Media liaison: Kathryn Kelly 0417 269 984

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