



Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN)

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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 3 July 2020

Increase in Military Expenditure Unjustified and Destabilising

- **The Australian Government's increase in military expenditure is pure fear-mongering and compromises urgent social needs.**
- **The objective to project significant military power far from Australia's shores only contributes to regional instability while undermining our security and peaceful relations with our neighbours.**

The Morrison Government's decision to spend \$575 billion on the Defence budget over the next ten years to 2029-30, including \$279 billion in defence capabilities, is of great concern to the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN).

"There are numerous pressing issues impacting on the wellbeing of Australians that are more deserving of such budgetary investments. That the Federal Government has committed to spending this eye-watering amount over the next decade in the midst of a massive health and economic crisis makes it all the more extraordinary", stated IPAN spokesperson Dr Vince Scappatura.

"Prime Minister Scott Morrison invoked the spectre of the 1930s and 1940s collapse of the global and regional order to justify the largesse bestowed on the Defence portfolio, but Australia's security environment in no way reflects such dire circumstances", stated Dr Scappatura.

IPAN does not support the Defence Department's decision to significantly expand the ADF's force-projection capabilities, including in expeditionary combat and the acquisition of long-range strike capabilities and ballistic missile defence systems that are clearly directed at China.

"The strategic priorities, threat assessment and capability investments detailed in 2020 Defence Strategic Update and Force Structure Plan indicate that the government's priority is not the defence of Australia, but the exercise of military power and influence in support of America's quest to maintain its regional dominance", explained Dr Scappatura.

The Defence Update reconceptualises Australia's "immediate region" and area of direct strategic interest to the mainland and maritime areas covering the north-eastern Indian Ocean, South East Asia and the South West Pacific. Defence's strategic objectives are to deploy its military power in this vast expanse and beyond in order to *shape*, *deter* and *respond* with credible military force.

"This is not a strategy to defend Australia. The acquisition of long-range strike weapons and ballistic missile defence systems can only be credibly employed in the defence of American

military bases, assets and infrastructure hosted by Australia, as well as deployed Australian forces, involved in offensive action against China”, stated Dr Scappatura.

IPAN urges the Australian government to respond to increasing great power competition and regional instability via increased efforts in diplomacy, aid and multilateralism. Australia’s goal should be to de-escalate strategic rivalry, not contribute to the further militarisation of the region.

“This new defence strategy is being construed by the government as providing an independent and sovereign military capability to defend Australia’s interests. It can be more readily understood as a response to pressure from Washington, and the pro-US lobby in Australia, to join in America’s efforts to contain China’s rise. Australia, as in the past, is acting as America’s deputy sheriff”, Dr Scappatura explained.

IPAN rejects the long-standing bi-partisan consensus to submit Australia to assuming the role of America’s sub-imperial power. The Defence Department should be directed to pursue a strategy that asserts an independent and peaceful role for Australia.

“We should be investing heavily in our diplomatic resources to build mutual trust and security in the region, not mobilising for war with China on behalf of the United States. The depiction of China as an ominous threat to Australia, coupled with significant military preparations for force-projection and expeditionary combat, contribute to rising tensions, fear and mistrust, increasing the likelihood of a devastating military conflict in the region,” stated Dr Scappatura.

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