



**THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE MP
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE INDUSTRY
LEADER OF THE HOUSE
MEMBER FOR STURT**

MC18-000730

Steering Group of the
Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)
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Dear WPS Coalition Steering Committee Members

Thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, regarding the recent release of the Defence Export Strategy. You also wrote to the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, the Minister for Women, the Hon Kelly O'Dwyer MP and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Hon Julie Bishop MP. As this matter falls within my area of responsibility, your correspondence has been passed to me for response. Australia faces greater security uncertainty and complexity from threats in our immediate region and globally. In order to protect the Australian people and defend our national interests, our Australian Defence Force must be equipped with the best capability our nation can afford.

The Australian defence industry base equips and supplies the Australian Defence Force. It is fundamental to our Defence capability. Without a robust Australian defence industry to supply our Defence Force, Australia and our people may become exposed to international actors and influencers that undermine the prosperity and sovereignty of our nation.

With Defence as a sole customer for the Australian defence industry, businesses may experience significant peaks and troughs based on defence demand and spending at that time. If Australian industry is not globally competitive and exporting, the chance of survival in this industry becomes unpredictable. Without the industrial base to support our defence capability, Australia's resilience to global threats is weakened. It is therefore imperative that the Australian defence industry is globally astute and competitive in international markets.

Australian defence industry currently employs over 25,000 people and includes over 3,000 small to medium sized Australian businesses. It covers a wide range industry sectors, from electronic communication equipment, to some major platforms such as vehicles, life rafts, radars, software, medical supplies and surveillance goods. Many of our defence industry companies also work in parallel sectors such as mining, infrastructure and transport.


While our defence industry offers goods and services across the capability spectrum, some of Australia's most successful defence exports are defensive in nature and save lives. These include the Nulka active missile decoy, Redwing counter improvised explosive device equipment, and deployable battlefield medical hospitals which were used in response to the recent Ebola epidemic in West Africa. One of Australia's high profile defence exports is the Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle, which saved Australian lives in Iraq and Afghanistan and is also used for UN Peacekeeping Operations.

Exporting military equipment from Australia requires an export permit. Australia has a rigorous defence export controls framework that reflects our international obligations as a member of non-proliferation regimes and as a party to the Arms Trade Treaty. This framework has not changed as a result of the Defence Export Strategy. The export control process is robust, and considers applications for defence export permits on a case-by-case basis against the five policy criteria of human rights, international obligations, regional security, national security and foreign policy.

The Australian Government remains committed to the Women, Peace and Security agenda as affirmed under our international commitments within United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and related resolutions. We view the Defence Export Strategy as operating within this context, noting in particular our robust export controls framework that ensures compliance with, among other international agreements, our obligations as a party to the Arms Trade Treaty.

I want to again thank you for writing to the Government on this matter; I hope this response helps allay your concerns.

Yours sincerely



Christopher Pyne MP

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