

6.3 ICAN CITIES APPEAL

Submitting Councillor: Cr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council:

- 1. Congratulates the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), founded in Melbourne, on winning the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize.*
- 2. Endorses the ICAN Cities Appeal, that is, that the City of Monash "is deeply concerned about the grave threat that nuclear weapons pose to communities throughout the world. We firmly believe that our residents have the right to live in a world free from this threat. Any use of nuclear weapons, whether deliberate or accidental, would have catastrophic, far-reaching and long-lasting consequences for people and the environment. Therefore, we warmly welcome the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by the United Nations in 2017, and we call on our national government to sign and ratify it without delay."*
- 3. Writes to ICAN with notification of Council's endorsement.*

BACKGROUND

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is a coalition of non-governmental organizations in one hundred countries promoting adherence to and implementation of the United Nations nuclear weapon ban treaty. This landmark global agreement was adopted in New York on 7 July 2017.

The ICAN Cities Appeal is a campaign run by ICAN. ICAN is approaching a large number of Councils and is using responses from Councils to advocate to government to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

ICAN believes that discussions about nuclear weapons must focus not on narrow concepts of national security, but on the effects of these weapons on human beings – our health, our societies and the environment on which we all depend for our lives and livelihoods. The processes that led to treaties banning landmines in 1997 and cluster munitions in 2008 demonstrated the importance of adopting a humanitarian based discourse. Today we must adopt a similar approach for nuclear weapons.

Scientists have modelled the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear strikes against various urban centres. In a city like Mumbai, India, with population densities in some areas of 100,000 people per square kilometre, a Hiroshima-sized bomb is estimated to cause up to 870,000 deaths in the first weeks. A 1-megaton bomb could promptly kill several million people, with the death toll rising over time.

A 12.5-kiloton nuclear explosion in a New York shipping yard would produce casualties more than one order of magnitude greater than those inflicted in the September 11 terrorist attacks. Blast and thermal effects would kill 52,000 people immediately. Another

238,000 would be exposed to direct radiation from the blast. Fallout would expose a further million and a half people. In total, more than 200,000 would die¹.

TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS²

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – adopted by 122 nations on 7 July 2017 – offers a powerful alternative to a world in which threats of mass destruction are allowed to prevail. It provides a pathway forward at a time of alarming global crisis.

The treaty embodies the principle that there can be no safe hands for nuclear weapons, establishing the same standard for all its parties. Far from ignoring the security concerns of governments, the treaty is a direct response to them.

Prior to the treaty's adoption, nuclear weapons were the only weapons of mass destruction not subject to a categorical ban, despite their catastrophic humanitarian consequences. The new agreement thus fills a major gap in international law.

History shows that the prohibition of certain types of weapons facilitates progress towards their elimination. Weapons that have been outlawed by international treaties are increasingly seen as illegitimate, losing their political status.

Arms companies find it more difficult to acquire funds for work on illegal weapons, and such work carries a significant reputational risk. Banks, pension funds and other financial institutions divest from these producers.

The UN nuclear weapon ban treaty (2017) complements the prohibitions on biological and chemical weapons (1972 and 1993 respectively), land mines (1997) and cluster munitions (2008), and reinforces various other legal instruments on nuclear weapons, including the non-proliferation treaty of 1968.

IMPACT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON AUSTRALIA

For many Australians, nuclear weapons are not a distant, abstract threat, but a lived reality – a persistent source of pain and suffering, of contamination and dislocation. Indigenous communities, long marginalised and mistreated in Australia, bear the brunt of this ongoing scourge.

From 1952 to 1963, the British government, with the active participation of the Australian government, conducted 12 major nuclear test explosions and up to 600 so-called “minor trials” in the South Australian outback and off the West Australian coast. Radioactive contamination from the tests was detected across much of the continent. At the time and for decades after, the authorities denied, ignored and covered up the health dangers.

Little was done to protect the 16,000 or so test site workers, and even less to protect nearby Indigenous communities. Today, survivors suffer from higher rates of cancer than

¹ <http://www.icanw.org/the-facts/catastrophic-harm/the-radioactive-incineration-of-cities/>

² <http://www.icanw.org/why-a-ban/the-case-for-a-ban-treaty/>

the general population due to their exposure to radiation. Only a few have ever been compensated. Much of the traditional land used for the blasts remains off limits³.

The Department of Defence website clearly indicates that Australia's official position is to support the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons⁴.

FINANCIAL

There is no financial impact to this proposal.

³ <http://www.icanw.org/black-mist/>

⁴ http://www.defence.gov.au/foi/docs/disclosures/421_1213_Documents.pdf
