

Moderator : Rev Rod Dyson



December 15, 2008

Hon Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to express my concern at the decision by the Australian Government to promote the trade of armaments and weapons an example of which was seen in the Asia-Pacific Defence and Security Exhibition (APDSE) which was to have been held in Adelaide over November 11-13, 2008.

While I acknowledge the cancellation of the APDSE, I am concerned by the Australian Government's support for future armaments fairs and urge the Government to reconsider its support for the promotion of the arms trade.

Arms fairs such as the APDSE promote a culture of instability, violence, fear and hostility in order to profit from the weapons of war. Traders who were to be present at this expo included the manufacturers of cluster munitions and land mines which have a devastating effect on civilian populations and against which, the Uniting Church as long campaigned. Through arms fairs such as this, Australia is promoted as a 'neutral country' and therefore suitable territory for the exchange of armaments including traders who are under investigation for illegal trading activities.

Such events are contrary to the call of all Christians to be peacemakers, to the Uniting Church's commitment as a peacemaking body and to the commitment of the world-wide church in the Decade to Overcome Violence. The 2008 theme for the Decade to Overcome Violence is 'Witnessing to God's Peace' with a focus on the Pacific region. The world-wide Church has committed to peacemaking in this region, while the promotion of the arm trade fosters unrest, distrust and war.

Further to this, the global arms trade draws resources away from measures which achieve peace through justice and genuine security. One example is the Millennium Development Goals which the Uniting Church calls governments to support through our active role in the Micah Challenge and Make Poverty History campaigns.

In light of these concerns, I hereby call on the Australian Government to cease to support the promotion of the arms trade including all future arms exhibitions and to re-direct resources to developing peaceful solutions to conflict and a just and equitable world.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns on this matter.

Rev Rod Dyson
Moderator
Presbytery and Synod of South Australia