



GUARANTEEING TRANSPARENCY IN AUSTRALIAN WEAPONS SALES

In 2018, then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced Australia's renewed interest in becoming a top global arms exporter to "build a stronger, more sustainable and more globally competitive Australian defence industry. This reflects Australia's desire for strong defence capabilities and financial security through exports. However, this goal cannot come at the detriment to Australia's responsibility to ensure that our defence industry is not benefitting from the export of weapons used to commit war crimes. Therefore, Australia must reinstate its practice of releasing detailed annual reports about weapons exports.

Evidence ascertained through freedom of information documents shows that Australia has been selling weapons and military technology to countries accused of war crimes. Australia has become increasingly secretive about its weapons exports, and in 2003 ceased releasing annual reports detailing the countries that it exports weapons to. This differs from other established democracies similar to Australia such as the UK, US and the Netherlands who all provide detailed public reports about weapons export practices.

Reinstating the practice of releasing an annual report regarding weapons exports will greatly benefit both Australia and the international community by ensuring transparency in government decision making. This would emphasise a focus on peace building mechanisms by abstaining from exporting weapons to countries such as the United Arab Emirates, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka whose governments have been accused of committing war crimes. Australia would be able to align its self with other nations who release regular and detailed information about weapons exports, thus building trust within the Australian and international community.

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