GDAMS Brisbane Action, April 15, 2013

The April 15, 2013 action in Brisbane, Australia, was organised by Just Peace Queensland Inc., a community-based peace and justice group. The plans were spearheaded by co-convener, Annette Brownlie, and their organisation was commenced three months earlier. The GDAMS event was widely advertised from that point on, with several meetings being held to finalise the specific actions we would take.

It was decided to present our case for a serious reduction of military spending by Australia in several ways. Firstly it was decided to interact with the community at a key location in the centre of the Brisbane central business district (CBD) during a busy lunchtime period on April 15, 2013.

Secondly a series of letters were sent to persons considered favorable to the concept of arms reduction in Australia. These persons included Senators Scott Ludlam, Doug Cameron, Claire Moore, Larissa Waters and MP Anna Vamvakou; plus Ron Monaghan (Secretary, Queensland Council of Unions), Beth Mohle (Secretary, Queensland Nurses Union), Queensland Teachers Union and the members of IPAN (Independent and Peaceful Australia Network, www.ipan.org.au).

To support our case a two-page flyer (see below) was compiled which advertised the time and place of the event, but primarily argued for a substantial reduction in military spending by Australia. The flyer urged the reader to contact the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and/or the Treasurer. Phone numbers and website addresses for everyone were provided.

At the same time a large full-colour poster (see below) was designed to bring the attention of our contacts to the waste of resources that is the F-35 joint strike fighter. Additionally a four-page colour brochure (see below) was prepared which forcefully presented the case for a reduction in military spending in Australia and related that spending to the $1.75 trillion globally, and the need to redirect these resources to creating a safe, stable society. Finally a formal petition was composed and copies made (copy below).

The two-page flyer and poster were distributed widely over the months prior to April 15. Our large email base, the Just Peace website (www.justpeaceqld.org) and several meetings prior to GDAMS day were targeted.

On GDAMS day of 2013 seven volunteers wearing bright red T-shirts (see photos below) manned a table on the Queens Street Mall in Brisbane, containing a variety of pamphlets and the petition. Scores of men and women of many ages signed the petition, which will be forwarded to the Government of Australia. Several young members of the public stopped and spontaneously took over the work of handing out leaflets. Large numbers of passersby took leaflets; some were critical of our stance but most were interested in reading up on the background to our action.

We are planning a more detailed action around the F-35 strike fighter program in the coming months as there is only marginal appreciation in Australia of the immense misdirection of resources for this weapon system. In addition F-35 is a potent symbol of the waste that is military spending.

We felt that we needed more advanced planning for GDAMS in future and a stronger contact with the media. Luckily the F-35 issue received powerful and critical coverage on Australia’s top current affairs program, Four Corners, several weeks before GDAMS 2013.
Australian Government Department of Defence
In Association with Lockheed Martin Inc.
Presents

The Plane that Ate Canberra

Starring The F-35

The most expensive weapons system ever built

Direct from Fort Worth, Texas! The First time in Australia!
- Perhaps
  Fifteen years in the Making! Budget: $369 billion!
  Box Office: $30 billion (est.) so far.
  Secretly ordered by Australia in 2002; ea: 100; Total Cost: $16 billion
  Investment so far: $120 million; Delivery Date: Unknown.

Prognosis: Still not working and grounded for a second time!
Imagine what we could do if Australia stopped the purchase of this weapons
system and invested in schools, jobs and healthcare? This is true security.
Get involved and tell your Member of Parliament: Invest in People, Not
Weapons.

Just Peace www.justpeaceqld.org
Contact us: anneleebrownlie@fortius.net.com.au or phone 0431587256
Just Peace is a Brisbane-based organisation whose aim is to raise public awareness about alternatives to war and the necessity of justice in achieving lasting peace.

Just Peace works to exchange information, promote dialogue, organise events and develop publications that seek to clarify the peace issues we face as a national and international community. We also offer support and fellowship to those who face the destructive effects of war and injustice.

Just Peace stands as both a group of locally active individuals and as a proud member of the global peace movement. We come from all walks of life, all ages and all political persuasions. Our one commonality is our commitment to a safe, just and peaceful world.

www.justpeaceqld.org
Contact us: annettebrownie@optusnet.com.au or 0431597256
The GDAMS (Global Day of Action on Military Spending) initiative was co-founded in 2011 by the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Peace Bureau and the Institute for Policy Studies. It is currently coordinated by the IPS and the US partner for the 2013 edition, Peace Action.

Just Peace, the Brisbane-based Community Organisation, is proud to be one of scores of civil action organisations world-wide who are participating in a series of actions on April 15, 2013. We join hundreds of other organisations in dozens of countries who are calling for a meaningful decrease in military spending.

Our message for Australia is simple. We must begin to reign in the AUS$21 billion annual pointless military spending spree and redirect these resources to urgent priorities, including health, education, environmental, food and water security, national resilience, and our commitment to the 2015 Millennium Development Goals.

We urge you to join us and send messages to our government that it is time to stop preparing for wars and purpose for peace and security.

In particular we draw your attention to the plan of Australia’s military to purchase one hundred US-manufactured F-35 Lightning II aircraft. Each one is currently costing well over $200 million. These aircraft are part of an immense and complex plan to weaponise Australia in cooperation with the United States. It has been made abundantly clear that the potential enemy we may have to fight is China. In view of the recent high profile business trip of our Prime Minister to this Asian country, it is patently absurd to be arming ourselves for conflict with China. In 2011-2012 Australia relied on China for imports, exports and investments totaling AUS$164 billion.

What can you do? Send messages to the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, The Foreign Minister and the Treasurer. Use email, tweets, Facebook messages, letters, or even faxes. Here are a few channels of communication:

Minister for Defence, The Honorable Stephen Smith, MP, Phone: (02) 6277 7800
Stephen.Smith@dfac.gov.au

The Prime Minister, The Honourable Julia Gillard, MP, Phone: (02) 6277 7700
http://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm

The Treasurer, The Honourable Wayne Swan, MP, Phone: (02) 6277 7249
http://www.treasury.gov.au/Forms/Ministers/Correspondence

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Honourable Bob Carr, Phone: (02) 6277 7800
http://www.fpa.gov.au/Secretary_and_Members/
Just Peace Queensland, together with scores of like-minded organisations around the world, presents:

**GDAMS: Global Day of Action on Military Spending**

**Monday April 15, 2013**
**Queens Street Mall, Brisbane**

In 2011, global military spending surged to US $1.74 trillion. Given the numerous crises facing the planet — economic, environmental, health, diplomatic — it is imperative that we create a global movement to shift this money to human needs. We know that there are thousands of organisations and millions of individuals who support this point of view — what is needed is to begin a serious mobilising effort to make it visible.

Australia’s planned Defense expenditure 2012-2013 is AUD$21.6 billion. This is equivalent to 13% of every individual’s income tax or $130 out of every $1,000.

We have been organizing a Global Day of Action on Military Spending (www.demilitarize.org) each year in April for the past three years to coincide with the release of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s (SIPRI, www.sipri.org) annual figures on world military expenditures. In 2013, GDAMS will take place Globally on Monday, April 15, which is coincidentally Tax Day in the US. On this day, people on all continents will join together in joint actions to focus public, political, and media attention on the costs of military spending and the need for new priorities. Such events will help us to build an international network around this issue.

In Brisbane we will be calling attention to the overall size of global military spending, linked to issues such as the Afghanistan war and other wars, the incommensurable expense of the F-35A Lightning II aircraft that Australia has committed to and the use of drone aircraft to attack anyone, anywhere. We will use this as an opportunity to connect up with development, anti-poverty, environmental, pro-democracy organizations and others who share our perspective.

Our message for Australia is simple: We must begin to reign in the $21 billion annual purposeless military spending and redirect these resources to urgent priorities, including health, education, environmental, food and water security, and national resilience.

We urge you to join us and send messages to our government, that it is time to stop preparing for wars and prepare for peace. Send letters to or phone the Minister for Defence, the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, or the Foreign Minister; or write to newspapers, television or radio stations. Send us messages on Facebook or Twitter. It’s easy and fun. See contact details over page.

Just Peace is a Brisbane based community organisation whose aim is to raise public awareness about alternatives to war and the necessity of justice in achieving lasting peace. Please join us every second Tuesday of the month at 7 pm in the QSU building on 16 Peel Street, South Brisbane.

Just Peace www.justpeaceqld.org
Contact us: annettembrownlee@optusnet.com.au or phone 0431557256
Contact the Minister for Defence, The Prime Minister, The Treasurer and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. If you want a reply please include your full name and address. Please note that the method of contacting each of these people is different.

**Names:**
The Honourable Stephen Smith, MP, Minister for Defence
The Honourable Julia Gillard, MP, Prime Minister
The Honourable Wayne Swan, MP, The Treasurer
Senator the Honourable Bob Carr, Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Writing:**

**Canberra Addresses:**
P.O. Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

**Telephone and email:**

Minister for Defence, The Honourable Stephen Smith, MP
Phone: (02) 6277 7800
Stephen.Smith.MP@aph.gov.au

The Prime Minister, The Honorable Julia Gillard, MP
Phone: (02) 6277 7700
http://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm

The Treasurer, The Honourable Wayne Swan, MP
Phone: (02) 6277 7340
http://www.treasury.gov.au/Forms/Ministerial-Correspondence

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Honourable Bob Carr
Phone: (02) 6277 7500

**Newspapers**

Courier Mail:

The Australian:
Email: letters@theaustralian.com.au

**Television Stations**

ABC:  http://www.abc.net.au/tv/abctv/contact.htm
SBS:  comments@sbs.com.au
Channel 7: Mailing address: GPO Box 604, Mount Coot-tha QLD 4001 Newsroom    fax: (07) 3368 2973
Channel 9: Mailing address QLD Viewers: PO Box 72 Brisbane, QLD 4001 phone: 07 3214 9999
Channel 10: Mailing address: Sir Samuel Griffith Drive Mt Coot-tha, QLD 4066 phone: 07 3214 1010
Fax: 07 3369 3786
PETITION

Support Cuts in Military Spending in Australia.
Cancel the F-35 aircraft order of 100 planes.
Petition published by Just Peace Queensland on April 15th 2013 (www.justpeaceqld.org)

To The Prime Minister, The Honorable Julia Gillard, MP

Australia’s expenditure on military systems and personnel bears little relation to any real defence needs. There are in addition too few resources being devoted to diplomacy, health, education, sustainability and infrastructure in Australia.

We the undersigned ask that the parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia re-examine the process of weaponizing our country as a strategy of supporting the foreign policy objectives of the United States; rather than a realistic examination of the elements of a secure and far-reaching future for all Australians.

Specifically we ask that the plans to purchase AUS$20 billion of F-35 aircraft be scrapped. There are many controversies surrounding this weapons system, not the least of which is the aggressive nature of this technology. It appears to be part of a complex system of weapons aimed at attempts to counter the influence of China in our part of the world. In view of your recent successful trip to China, Australia’s continuing support of the F-35 purchase and other weapons technology sourced from the USA makes no sense.

When this petition has been signed by as many Australians as able, then it will be presented on the steps of Federal Parliament in Canberra.