

Defence White Paper 2015
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Submission to the Defence White Paper 2015 Public Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity for the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons (ICAN) Australia to make a submission to the development of the 2015 Defence White Paper (DWP).

ICAN Australia notes this current redevelopment of the DWP is the third repositioning of defence in the past six years. The papers resulting from the 2009 and 2013 reviews were done at considerable cost to the taxpayer, and were intended as guiding documents to defence strategy until 2030. While of course there is a desire for review with any change of government and the changing environment of defence, especially in light of the recent re-engagement in the Middle East of our military forces, many of the concerns and considerations expressed by ICAN Australia and other civil society representatives remain unchanged. In particular, we repeat our calls for the Australian Government to play a leading role in negotiations for a nuclear weapons ban, to adopt a nuclear-weapon-free defence posture, and to cease the export of uranium, especially to nuclear-armed states.

The primary concerns of this submission are captured by the first four questions proposed in the Defence Issues Paper 2014 as a basis for discussion in the Defence White Paper Public Consultation process:

- What are the main threats to, and opportunities for, Australia's security?
- Are Defence's policy settings current and accurate?
- What defence capabilities do we need now, and in the future?
- How can we enhance international engagement on defence and security issues?

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About ICAN Australia

ICAN Australia is a coalition of more than 60 national and local organisations working to achieve a global treaty banning nuclear weapons. Our partners include Oxfam Australia, the United Nations Association of Australia, the Australian Conservation Foundation, Friends of the Earth, the Medical Association for Prevention of War and the Uniting Church. ICAN Australia is at the forefront of global efforts to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons. The campaign was launched in 2007, and with more than 360 partner organizations is now active in more than 90 countries worldwide.

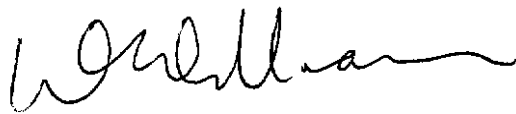
ICAN was created with the sole purpose of hastening the achievement of a nuclear weapons free world, a goal that has been repeatedly recognized at the highest levels internationally as being essential to global security. It is a goal to which successive Australian governments claim commitment.¹

Executive Summary:

- Australia faces a credible contingency of nuclear attack as a result of hosting particular United States military and intelligence facilities.
- Australia's proclaimed reliance on United States assurance of extended nuclear deterrence in the face of nuclear threat is deeply flawed, unnecessary, and counter-productive.
- Australia's defence policy should be entirely non-nuclear, abjuring extended nuclear deterrence and the hosting of nuclear war-related military and intelligence facilities.
- Australia should urgently review the nuclear safeguards regime surrounding uranium sales and cease any supply to Nuclear Weapons States not meeting their obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or other international instruments.
- A serious, unambiguous, and resolute Australian government commitment to non-nuclear defence; the advancement of the global priority for nuclear weapons abolition through a legally binding, verifiable international agreement to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons, and the consolidation and expansion of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones would increase Australia's regional and global diplomatic and strategic standing and capacities.

This submission has been authored by ICAN Australia Board members, Richard Tanter, Sue Wareham, Dimity Hawkins, Tilman Ruff, Dave Sweeney, and our Campaign Director Tim Wright. The ICAN Australia Committee has endorsed this submission to the 2015 Defence White Paper. ICAN Australia consents to the publication of this submission by the Department of Defence.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Williams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Bill Williams

President, ICAN Australia

1. Threats to, and opportunities for, Australian security

1.1 Australia faces no credible threat from nuclear attack in the short or medium term other than that which derives from the hosting of particular United States military and intelligence facilities on Australian soil, albeit described as “joint facilities”.

1.2 In the event of major war involving the United States, Australia faces a credible contingency of a nuclear missile attack on the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap. The balance of benefits and dangers to Australia from hosting signals intelligence (SIGINT) and Overhead Persistent Infra-Red (OPIR) systems at Pine Gap has always been more negative than Australian governments have conceded. However, recent growth and developments in both systems have put beyond doubt the overwhelmingly negative characteristics of the facility. and the consequent dangers to Australia.²

1.2.1 In the specific case of a U.S.-China conflict the most immediate reason derives from the role of OPIR surveillance capacities apropos both U.S. nuclear second strike targeting, and cueing for United States-Japan ballistic missile defence. China has long been concerned that the object of U.S. and Japanese missile defence is not only North Korea, but also China itself, and that these capacities have a highly offensive role which dramatically undermines what little strategic stability there is in the always unstable and dangerous world of nuclear deterrence. China fears, with some justification, that U.S. and Japanese missile defence dependent on Pine Gap may be able to destroy most, if not all, of China’s nuclear missiles in flight, thereby vitiating China’s nuclear deterrent force, and leaving the country vulnerable to nuclear blackmail.

1.2.2 Pine Gap’s SIGINT role renders Pine Gap a lucrative and reasonably high priority target in the event of major conflict involving the United States and China. Pine Gap carries a very direct and substantial responsibility for satellite station-keeping, controlling satellite house-keeping and monitoring activities, commanding satellite surveillance operations, and receiving and processing downlinked data. The increase in sensitivity, coverage, targets and global systemic intelligence integration of the space-based signals intelligence collection of which Pine Gap is a critical part further increases the already high Cold War priority for targeting the American system of space-based electronic intelligence, particularly the geosynchronous satellite elements. Attacking Pine Gap almost certainly remains a plausible and

effective way of degrading or destroying the U.S. geosynchronous signals intelligence capability – the “ears” of nuclear war-fighting capacity.

1.2.3 Former senior Defence officials such as former Defence Minister Kim Beazley and former Deputy Secretary Paul Dibb have publicly confirmed their understanding of the high likelihood of (then) Soviet attack on Pine Gap (and the former Nurrungar facility, now enfolded into the OPIR Remote Ground Station at Pine Gap).

1.2.4 The expansion of both OPIR and SIGINT capacities at Pine Gap in the past two decades gives every reason to expect that the facility remains a lucrative and priority target in Chinese planning, and that of any other potential nuclear adversary of the U.S., including Russia. *The Australian* senior journalist David Uren has reported Defence sources involved in the preparation of the 2009 Defence White Paper as saying that “defence thinking is that in the event of a conflict with the United States, China would attempt to destroy Pine Gap.” A denial by a spokesperson for the Minister for Defence was couched in restrictive terms.

1.3 In the event of major war with the United States, it is also necessary to consider the likelihood of Chinese (or other) interest in negating the increasingly important contribution to United States military capacities and strategic planning made by two rapidly expanding joint facilities in Western Australia.

1.3.1 Australia-based facilities will be deeply involved in the anti-satellite planning of U.S. Strategic Command’s Space Operations Center (JSPOC), following the establishment of two space surveillance facilities located in Western Australia: a C-band (4-8 Ghz) Space Tracking Radar at the Harold E. Holt Communications Station at North West Cape, and an advanced Space Surveillance Telescope at a Western Australia location, most likely North West Cape. Given the strategic centrality of space-based systems for both the United States and China, the possibility of an attack, whether nuclear or otherwise, on these facilities needs careful consideration.

1.3.2 Since 2008 three new United States military satellite communications facilities have been or are being constructed at the Australian Defence Satellite Communications Station (ADSCS) at Kojarena: a Wideband Global SATCOM (WGS) facility, a Mobile User Objective System (MUOS) Radio Access Facility, and a Defense Information Systems Agency Combined Communications Gateway. All three communications systems are critical to U.S. global military activities, with the last described by U.S. Pacific Command as an “Urgent Operational Need”. Once

again, in a major conflict with the United States the potential regional and global advantage accruing to an adversary such as China of an attack, whether nuclear or otherwise, on the ADSCS significantly degrading the global WGS and MUOS capacities must be considered as within the bounds of credible contingencies.

1.4 In the absence of direct nuclear threats to Australia, ICAN is of the opinion that there can be no justification for any Australian government accepting a situation where plausible nuclear threats derive from hosting these facilities. Their continuation is inconsistent with a claim by a responsible and fully informed government that all of these facilities operate with “the full knowledge and concurrence of the Australian government”.

2. Current Australian defence policy and nuclear weapons

2. Australia’s frequently proclaimed reliance on a claimed United States assurance of extended nuclear deterrence in the face of nuclear threat is deeply flawed, unnecessary, and counter-productive.

2.1 Extended nuclear deterrence is recognised amongst strategic analysts as the most difficult form of contemporary deterrence to uphold, principally because of inherent, generic doubts on the part of both the recipient of the assurance and the notional adversary about the credibility of such an assurance.

2.2 When such doubts have been expressed by U.S. alliance partners in Japan, South Korea and NATO, the United States has publicly reiterated earlier assurances. In the case of Australia, the United States has never made any such public assurance, and there is none inherent in the ANZUS treaty.

2.3 Since such claims of U.S. nuclear protection began to appear in Defence White Papers in 1994, no government has ever made a claim about a credible near-term or medium-term direct nuclear threat to Australia. Reference to “remote contingencies” involving a North Korean or Iranian missile attacks on Australia are simply not credible.

2.4 Despite these obvious limitations and the lack of a credible threat and the fundamental dangers of a nuclear-armed world, Australian government enthusiasm for the threatened use of nuclear weapons by the United States appears to have actually increased.

2.4.1 During a closed session of the Congressional Commission on the United States Strategic Posture, Australian ambassador to the United States, Dennis Richardson, encouraged the U.S. to maintain a strong and effective nuclear arsenal, and boasted of Australia's 'vital' and 'enduring' contribution to the U.S. nuclear force posture through joint facilities such as Pine Gap. With the express approval of the Minister for Defence and his senior advisors, Mr Richardson urged the United States "to make clear that it would respond in kind to nations that employ nuclear weapons against friends and allies of the U.S., even where there is no existential threat to the U.S. itself".³

2.4 Successive Australian governments have stated their commitment to a process of ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction, and Australia played an important role in the establishment of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Nuclear weapons, of all kinds and belonging to any country, whether enemy or ally, whether nominally a matter of offense or deterrence, are always the most destructive and inhumane weapons of mass destruction. It is both hypocritical and diplomatically damaging to Australia's national interest to maintain the weapons we claim our ally will use for our defence against an adversary we cannot even name are anything other than what we condemn in the possession of other countries.

2.5 There is also a strategic cost to Australia by encouraging other countries, particularly those in our region, to share Australia's apparent view of the utility and legitimacy of a nuclear defence of Australia, mirage though it may in fact be. Why would we expect other countries in our region, particularly those who face more credible threats than Australia, to not deduce from Australia's enthusiasm for nuclear deterrence that nuclear defence, either indigenous or borrowed, is appropriate for them? Such considerations also fuel acquisition of capacity to produce and accumulate fissile material. Life in a regional nuclear-armed or nuclear-threshold crowd will not be more strategically advantageous for Australia.

2.6 Extensive, peer-reviewed and widely published scientific evidence accepted by the vast majority of the world's governments now establishes conclusively that even a regional nuclear war involving a tiny fraction of the world's nuclear arsenal targeted on cities would produce severe and long-term global climate disruption. Smoke and soot lofted and stabilised high in the stratosphere would cool, darken and dry the earth's surface, which would also be subject to extreme ultraviolet radiation levels as a result of drastically depleted stratospheric ozone. These effects would persist over decades. The combined effect - even leaving aside disruption to agricultural inputs,

transport and trade - would deplete agricultural production, causing starvation on a scale never before witnessed, with billions of people at risk.⁴

2.7 Such an outcome could arise from use of the nuclear arsenals of India, Pakistan, Israel, China, France or the UK, or the targeting of cities with a fraction of the nuclear missiles aboard a single Russian or U.S. nuclear-armed submarine. It is now clear that any use of nuclear weapons, invoking a high probability of escalation, poses not only a global existential threat, but is effectively suicidal. It follows that no long-term security interests can be served by the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

2.8 A further essential part of the evidence base that should inform policy, particularly on an issue of such extreme importance as nuclear weapons, is the risk of accidental or inadvertent nuclear war through technical failure or human factors, or the growing danger of cyber attack. These risks are real and well documented.⁵ Continued reliance on nuclear weapons, especially with continued high alert status of an estimated 1,800 deployed nuclear weapons in both the Russian and U.S. arsenals; a growing number of nuclear-armed or threshold states; and a large, complex and widely-dispersed nuclear weapons infrastructure, including, as outlined above, in Australia, makes the use of these weapons a credible and very real threat.

2.9 Consequently, Australian policy of reliance on a non-existent assurance of extended nuclear deterrence from the United States is absurd, immoral, and strategically reckless.

3. A non-nuclear defence of Australia

3. Australia's defence policy should be entirely non-nuclear, abjuring extended nuclear deterrence and the hosting of nuclear war-related military and intelligence facilities.

3.1 The minimal requirements of a non-nuclear defence of Australia include

- permanently abjuring the hosting, acquisition or development of indigenous nuclear weapons;
- abandoning reliance on extended nuclear deterrence;

- setting limits on the purposes for which foreign (or nominally 'joint') military and intelligence facilities hosted by Australia may be used, including a prohibition on their contribution to the conduct of nuclear war; and
- should it prove impossible to establish such limits, these facilities should be closed.

3.2 Australia's pursuit of nuclear weapons during the Cold War, firstly by attempted acquisition from Britain and then by indigenous development, is now well documented. Moreover, that history has not been forgotten by our regional neighbours. Australia needs to take resolute and principled steps to assure the region and the world that it will never take that path again.

3.2.1 Australia should make formal domestic commitments to reinforce and render permanent its commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty never to acquire or host nuclear weapons in this country. The most effective way to do this would be through the passage of legislation comparable to the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act 1987. As the post-Cold War history of relations between New Zealand and the United States has shown, the U.S. is perfectly capable of accepting and respecting New Zealand's preference for non-nuclear defence while maintaining military and intelligence cooperation.

3.2.2 Movement away from the conflicted and dangerous policy of reliance on United States extended nuclear deterrence will require resolution, careful planning and diplomatic sophistication, but need not involve any great rupture in Australia's relations with the United States. As the New Zealand case shows clearly, the U.S. no longer takes the view it did in the mid-1980s at the height of the New Cold War that its provision of extended nuclear deterrence is globally indivisible. On the contrary, U.S. strategic policy now emphasizes the need for "tailored deterrence", recognizing that threats and capabilities amongst its allies vary considerably. Australia faces no credible direct nuclear threat other than from our hosting of U.S. military command, control, communications and intelligence facilities; and indeed, there is no public U.S. assurance of nuclear protection to be rejected.

3.2.3 Since Australia is currently a major producer and exporter of uranium, a commitment to non-nuclear defence of Australia would be well-served by a firm commitment to not construct either further nuclear reactors or a uranium enrichment

facility, the latter being understandably likely to be viewed by our neighbours as a nuclear bomb starter kit.

3.3 The most difficult aspect of establishing a non-nuclear foundation for Australian defence policy is clearly that of establishing binding conditions on United States-Australian military and intelligence facilities in this country that ensure those facilities do not in any way contribute to the future use of nuclear weapons in combat by the United States, whether with or without the Australian government's knowledge or consent. The most important such facility in Australia is the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap. The only alternative to establishing such limits is the closure of such facilities within a finite period.

3.3.1 Pine Gap is a very large and complex facility of great importance to the United States. There is some reason to believe that earlier technological considerations that led the United States to maintain that Central Australia was the only feasible place for the location of such a facility may no longer apply. Many of the technical requirements in satellite technology that dictated the location of the facility in the 1960s have fallen away, allowing properly planned relocation outside Australia. Moreover there is substantial redundancy in the systems of which Pine Gap is a part that would ease the way. In other words, to the extent that new technologies in the ground and space segments of both OPIR and signals intelligence systems remove the necessity for Pine Gap in its present location, then U.S. objections to restriction of its activities, or shifting in whole or part to an alternative location, should be diminished.

3.3.2 The key question is whether it is conceivable that the United States would agree to an Australian government placing limits on the uses to which the two systems at the facility are put. There are few precedents. Moreover, there are also few precedents for an Australian government making such requests of an ally. Difficult though it may be, the more realistic alternative is to commence a process of closing the facility. To shut the facility down forthwith would leave a gap in America's strategic capabilities, but a requirement to close it within several years would provide for a measured exit.

4. Australia's international contribution to a nuclear-free world

4. The 2013 DWP reiterated the Australian government's position of "strongly

supporting ongoing efforts towards global nuclear disarmament” (§3.41). There are considerable opportunities for Australia to strengthen global moves towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and in so doing enhance its security.⁶

4.1 Above all, ICAN urges the Australian Government to work towards a nuclear weapons ban treaty, including by exploring the necessary political, legal, procedural and technical and verification options, and supporting the early commencement of negotiations for a legally binding agreement to prohibit and verifiably eliminate nuclear weapons. Such a treaty, based on sound humanitarian, security and environmental arguments, has gained considerable support through intergovernmental meetings in recent years. We urge the Australian Government to vigorously join international efforts to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons as a near-term priority.

4.1.1 In international and multilateral forums over many decades, Australia has called on the nuclear-armed states to reduce their dependence on nuclear weapons in military doctrines, but has not yet done so itself. This submission has already argued that reliance on claims of assured U.S. extended nuclear deterrence is absurd, immoral and strategically reckless. Claims that the ANZUS Treaty contains or implies such a guarantee are simply unsupported. Moreover, as the New Zealand example shows, adopting a nuclear-free defence policy does not mean the end of military alliance with the United States. There continues to be an official reluctance to confront and discuss our own nuclear hypocrisy in relying on the same weapons that we state must be abolished. ICAN Australia asserts that strengthening our official and strategic opposition to nuclear weapons within our own and regional defence policies will both strengthen our commitment to nuclear abolition and provide encouragement to our allies to act similarly.⁷

4.1.2 Put simply, by claiming protection from the worst weapons of mass destruction and contributing to their possible use, current Australian policy undermines the security of people everywhere, including making Australians less secure. The evidence base that should inform policy regarding nuclear weapons makes it unequivocally clear that nuclear weapons threaten those who would use them or claim protection from them just as much as they threaten others.

4.1.3 In addition, the Australian government’s walk is fundamentally inconsistent with its talk, fatally flawing the veracity and credibility of the Australian government’s position and diplomacy. Australia’s walk should align with its talk, and with

eradicating the greatest immediate threat to human health and welfare identified by World Health Organization – the continued existence of nuclear weapons.

4.2 There are a wide range of other measures that Australia can and should support that would both strengthen Australia's security and encourage movement towards a nuclear-free world, as envisaged by President Obama in his Prague speech in April 2009.

4.2.1 These include measures to support:

- the Humanitarian Initiative on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons;
- ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by the United States, as urged by the 2014 Pacific Islands Forum, of which Australia is a member⁸;
- encouraging the United States to end sub-critical nuclear weapons testing;
- reform of the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, and ratification of Protocols 1, 2, and 3 of the Treaty by the United States⁹;
- establishing a Northeast Asia NWFZ and a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East;
- reform of Australia's uranium export safeguards, particularly to nuclear-armed states, including India¹⁰;
- strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty; and
- passage of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

4.3 ICAN recognises the work done by Australia and other countries for the entry-into-force of the CTBT, and the conclusion of a FMCT. However these and similar initiatives suffer from three major limitations as tools to help achieve a nuclear weapons free world.

4.3.1 A number of these measures have shown little progress – or have been blocked outright – for many years, while our urgent need to progress to a nuclear weapons free world languishes on the global security agenda.

4.3.2 Secondly, they all entrench both the nuclear armed status of the nations that

already have these weapons and the deeply dangerous ideology of nuclear deterrence they uphold.

4.3.3 While Australian governments have on occasion supported some of these measures, successive Australian governments have voted against UN General Assembly resolutions calling for negotiations towards a nuclear weapons ban convention, or abstained.

5. Conclusion

5.1 ICAN maintains that without a deep, comprehensive and determined commitment by the Australian government to a non-nuclear defence of Australia and to rapid progress towards a world free from nuclear weapons, the value of interim steps, however necessary, is limited.

5.2 ICAN is concerned that pursuit of these limited policies may well divert and impede profoundly important progress toward the fundamental goal of a ban on nuclear weapons.

5.3 ICAN has been dismayed at the reluctance of the Australian government to contribute its support and good offices to the gathering movement of many governments around the world to recognize the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons whatsoever.

5.4 We repeat our calls for the Australian Government to play a leading role in negotiations for a nuclear weapons ban, to adopt a nuclear-weapon-free defence posture, and to cease the export of uranium, especially to nuclear-armed states.

¹ For example, the 2013 Defence White Paper stated, clause 3.41, "...Australia is confident in the continuing viability of extended nuclear deterrence under the Alliance, while strongly supporting ongoing efforts towards global nuclear disarmament."

² For further discussion and sources on the joint Australia-United States facilities see Richard Tanter, [The "Joint Facilities" revisited – Desmond Ball, democratic debate on security, and the human interest](#), Special Report, Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, 12 December 2012.

³ Proposed Australian Presentation to US Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, Submission to the United States Nuclear Posture Review 2009, Department of Defence, Ministerial Submission, Approved 23 February 2009, Attachment C, A640 11973. Released under Freedom of Information Request 357/10/11.

⁴ For recent peer-reviewed scientific studies see Michael J. Mills, Owen B. Toon, Julia Lee-Taylor, and Alan Robock, 'Multidecadal global cooling and unprecedented ozone loss following a regional nuclear conflict', *Earth's Future*, Volume 2, Issue 4, pages 161–176, April 2014, DOI: 10.1002/2013EF000205, at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/2013EF000205/full>; and David Pimentel, Michael Burgess, 'Nuclear War Investigation Related to a Limited Nuclear Battle with Emphasis on Agricultural Impacts in the United States', *AMBIO* 2012, 41:894–899, DOI 10.1007/s13280-012-0295-0, at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3492557/pdf/13280_2012_Article_295.pdf. See also Unspeakable suffering – the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, 2013 Reaching Critical Will, a programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 2013, at <http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Unspeakable.pdf>.

⁵ Patricia Lewis, Heather Williams, Benoît Pelopidas and Sasan Aghlani, *Too Close for Comfort: Cases of Near Nuclear Use and Options for Policy*, Chatham House Report, April 2014, at <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/199200>.

⁶ This section draws substantially on the work of Nic Maclellan, Michael Hamel-Green, and ICAN Australia. For further details see the following work:

- Nic Maclellan, [Submission No. 36 the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties Inquiry into Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament](#), January 2009.
- Michael Hamel-Green, [Australia's Nuclear Disarmament Dilemma: Nuclear umbrella or Nuclear-Free?](#) International Law and Policy Institute (ILPI), Nuclear weapons project, Background Paper No. 8, June 2014.
- [Australia's opposition to a ban on nuclear weapons](#), ICAN Australia Briefing Paper, 28 August 2013.
- [Undermining disarmament: the Australian way](#), ICAN Australia Briefing Paper, March 2014

⁸ *Forum Communiqué, 45th Pacific Islands Forum, Koror, Palau, July 2014*, item 24.

⁹ See Nic Maclellan, [Submission No. 36 the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties Inquiry into Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament](#), January 2009.

¹⁰ See the important criticism of the security consequences of the [Australia-India Nuclear Cooperation Treaty \(September 2014\)](#) by Dr John Carlson, former head of the Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office, in Michael Safi, ["Australia's uranium deal with India 'risks weakening safeguards'"](#), *The Guardian*, 3 October 2014.