

7 February 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

RE: Australia's position on the use of anti personnel landmines by the United States

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to express deep concern over the recent announcement by the United States (US) to expand the use of anti personnel landmines, a decision that will endanger the lives of thousands of people living in conflict zones, especially children. As members of the [Australian Arms Control Coalition \(AACC\)](#), we are writing to urge the Australian Government to condemn this decision in the strongest terms.

The US announcement undermines years of international effort to protect civilians from indiscriminate explosives in conflict zones. The use of Anti Personnel Mines is clearly prohibited in the Anti Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) which has been signed by 164 States. By committing to a wider roll-out of anti personnel landmines, the US has reversed a 2014 policy to limit their use to specific areas. It goes against thirty years of international cooperation to ban landmines, since the signing of the APMBC in 1997.

The majority of people killed by landmines and explosive remnants of war are civilians (71%) and more than half of all the civilians who are killed are children (54%). This is a tragedy, which can be avoided through ending the use of anti personnel landmines – munitions to which children are particularly vulnerable.

Australia has long been a strong supporter of mine action and is a state party to the APMBC and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Australia is also supporting efforts to reduce the number of deaths and injuries from landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war through bilateral aid partnership and through the United Nations Mine Action Service. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has committed to advocate for universal accession and adherence to the international mine action conventions through its international diplomatic engagement, including supporting efforts towards the goal of a world free of landmines by 2025. Given Australia's actions, the announcement by the US is a retrograde step which must be condemned by all countries concerned with the horrific humanitarian impact of landmines.

We are calling on the Australian Government to:

- Register Australia's grave concern with the United States over its new policy allowing the increased use of anti-personnel landmines;
- Guarantee that Australia's military cooperation with the United States does not involve the transhipment or storage of anti-personnel landmines through US military bases on Australian soil;
- In the case of joint-operations, guarantee that Australian forces will not be involved in the facilitation of landmine placement
- Continue to champion the ban of landmines internationally, including by funding de-mining programs and by complying with Australia's own international commitments; and

- Guarantee that Australia's ambition to become a top-10 defence exporter will not include the manufacture or export of anti-personnel landmines or components.

We look forward to a timely public statement clarifying Australia's position on these matters.

We have also written in similar terms to your colleagues, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Defence.

Kind regards

Australian Arms Control Coalition (AACC)

