

Sisters of St Joseph Media Release January 2018

‘Merchants of Death’: Profiteering from the arms trade

The Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the religious Congregation founded by St Mary MacKillop, challenges the newly released plan of the Federal Government to increase weapons exports.

"Weapons are designed to kill and maim human beings," said the Congregational Leader, Sister Monica Cavanagh. "We completely reject the philosophy which finds it acceptable to boost industry, create jobs, increase exports and protect local manufacturing via the arms trade."

"We agree with Pope Francis that those who seek to benefit from trading in weapons are 'merchants of death'," she concluded.

Six major issues concern the sisters:

- The "mutually assured destruction" of the last forty years cannot guarantee deterrence in the future. Violence is escalating in proportion to the availability and destructive effect of new weapons.
- There is enormous difference between a defence manufacturing industry to protect Australia and the development of a weapons export industry.
- It is a matter of great concern and sorrow that Australia's overseas aid has dropped to its lowest level ever, while at the same time plans are underway to increase the sale of weapons.
- The government's assurances about establishing and maintaining "controls" over which nations access Australian weapons lack detail on methods of oversight and on how such controls would be policed.
- Australian capacity to deal in arms ethically is not evident in Australian history. Australia continued to provide military hardware and training to Indonesia between 1975 and 1999 during the occupation of East Timor in which up to 182,000 people died violently.
- Australia's considerable design and production expertise would be better used in projects which promote peace among nations and care of earth, particularly in places and electorates where people lack employment opportunities.

The Sisters of St Joseph call on the Australian government to prioritise education, health and good governance initiatives among the deprived peoples and nations of the world, rather than spending billions of Australian people's dollars on producing and exporting the means of destruction.

"We strongly urge the government to resist the hypocrisy of talking about peace while financing and supporting the arms trade," Sister Monica reflected. "Over 90% of those who die in war zones are not soldiers, but civilians, including so many of the most defenceless humans - the children. It is reprehensible for government and industry authorities to pursue

financial and electoral gain through promoting the weapons which enable the escalation of violence."

For immediate release.

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