

## AUSTRALIAN GOVT URGED TO BACK NO FIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Written by John Hallam  
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PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT

EVEN UNDER COVID, NUKES ARE STILL ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD – AND WE ARE CLOSER TO IT THAN WE'VE EVER BEEN.

BUT IS ANYONE PAYING ATTENTION?

AUSTRALIAN GOVT URGED TO BACK NO FIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Even under the threat of the Corona Virus that has successfully bought life in Sydney to a halt and looks like bringing all of Australia and much of the rest of the world to a series of halts for the next decade or so even with vaccines, it is nuclear weapons that can actually end hi-tech civilisation as we know it in less than two hours, and can do so by sheer accident. Further, with the hands of the doomsday clock at 100 seconds to midnight and with nuclear weapons analysts everywhere uniformly pessimistic, the risk of madness, malice, miscalculation or malware actually doing so is as great as it has ever been.

With this in mind, a global campaign has been started urging nuclear armed governments (starting with the two who control 90% of all the worlds nuclear weapons – Russia and the US)- to adopt policies of No First Use. That means refusing to hit the (metaphorical) button first.

This is in part because President Biden, when vice-president, expressed support for No First Use at a time when the Obama administration contemplated it.

Legislation has been submitted to the US Congress supporting No First Use.

More recently, a letter has been written to the Japanese government urging them to support No First Use. <https://nofirstuse.global/2021/08/10/united-states-experts-call-on-japan-not-to-oppose-a-us-no-first-use-p>

[olicy/#letter](#)

And last week, a letter has been written (Below) to Scott Morrison, Peter Dutton and Marise Payne (copied to the entire Senate and House of Reps), urging support for No First Use.

The letter has been signed by a number of Australian peace groups and by former foreign minister Gareth Evans.

COVID rules our lives right now. Nuke weapons could end them.

John Hallam

People for Nuclear Disarmament

Human Survival Project

Co-Convenor, Abolition 2000 Working Group on Nuclear  
Risk Reduction

[johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au](mailto:johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au)

[jhjohnhallam@gmail.com](mailto:jhjohnhallam@gmail.com)

[johnh@pnnd.org](mailto:johnh@pnnd.org)

61-411-854-612

**NO FIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**  
**URGING AUSTRALIA TO SUPPORT NUCLEAR**  
**NO-FIRST USE POLICIES AND POSTURES**

PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT  
HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT  
INDEPENDENT AND PEACEFUL AUSTRALIA  
NETWORK  
MARRICKVILLE PEACE GROUP  
SCIENTISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY  
AUSTRALIANS FOR WAR POWERS REFORM

Scott Morrison, Prime Minister  
Senator Marise Payne, Foreign Minister  
Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Defence  
cc  
Anthony Albanese  
Senator Penny Wong

Senators/HoR members

DFAT

**Dear Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Defence Minister Peter Dutton MP, and Foreign Minister Senator Marise Payne,**

This is to urge the Australian Government to support the adoption by the US Biden administration, of policies of **No First Use (NFU)**. Such policies and postures are already, with whatever caveats, in place in India and in China. In both cases, they seem to be built into actual force structures and postures, the recent flurry of news regarding silos construction in NW China notwithstanding.

Proposals for the adoption of **NFU** policies, and their implementation through confidence-building and operational measures, are attracting increasing political, media and public attention.

This is reflected, for example, in an Open letter signed by 1200 prominent individuals including former prime ministers, generals, and diplomats, promoting **No First Use**, which was sent to Presidents Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden just prior to their June 16 Summit in Geneva.  
[http://baselpeaceoffice.org/sites/default/files/imce/articles/2021/open letter on no first use to presidents putin biden for the june 16 summit .pdf](http://baselpeaceoffice.org/sites/default/files/imce/articles/2021/open_letter_on_no_first_use_to_presidents_putin_biden_for_the_june_16_summit.pdf)

In addition, there are initiatives supporting **No First Use** policies in a number of legislative/parliamentary bodies including the US Congress and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

A letter has recently been sent to the Government of Japan, signed by nuclear weapons experts and former US defence secretary William Perry amongst others, urging

that Government support the adoption by the Biden administration of a **No First Use** policy. <https://nofirstuse.global/2021/08/10/united-states-experts-call-on-japan-not-to-oppose-a-us-no-first-use-policy/#letter>

DFAT has expressed its concern over the growing risk of nuclear war, whether by deliberate intent, or (far more likely) via madness, miscalculation, malfunction, or malware.

With the Doomsday Clock at an unprecedented 100 seconds to metaphorical 'midnight', closer than it has ever been even in the depths of the Cold War, concern by DFAT over 'strategic stability' is well-placed. Australia must do more to reduce nuclear risks, worldwide and to ourselves.

<https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time/>



In this context, the commencement of strategic stability talks by the US and Russian Governments, and the reaffirmation by Presidents Putin and Biden of the Reagan-Gorbachev statement of Geneva (1985) that 'A Nuclear War Cannot be Won and Must never be Fought' is very welcome.

A letter was also sent to participants in the Strategic Stability talks urging that they prioritise **No First Use**.

<http://www.pndnsw.org.au/articles/flashpoints/455-memo-on-no-first-use-to-integrated-strategic-security-dialogue.html>

A wide menu of nuclear risk reduction measures ranging from de-alerting to data-sharing to improved or resumed mil to mil hotlines communication, to

avoidance of potentially provocative military exercises with nuclear-capable forces, is on the website of the Abolition 2000 Working Group on Nuclear Risk Reduction.

<https://www.abolition2000.org/en/working-groups/nuclear-risk-reduction/>

In December 2020, that working group wrote to President-Elect Biden with a series of such recommendations:

<https://www.abolition2000.org/en/news/2020/12/25/usa-president-elect-biden-urged-to-take-action-on-nuclear-risk-reduction-and-disarmament/>

As Vice-President Biden said in Jan. 2017, “Given our non-nuclear capabilities and the nature of today’s threats—it’s hard to envision a plausible scenario in which the first use of nuclear weapons by the United States would be necessary. Or make sense.” Biden wrote in March 2020 in Foreign Affairs article that: “I believe that the sole purpose of the US nuclear arsenal should be deterring—and, if necessary, retaliating against—a nuclear attack. As President, I will work to put that belief into practice, in consultation with the US military

and US allies.” The Democratic Platform he ran on for President also featured NFU.

There are crucial reasons that **No First Use**

is the front-runner amongst nuclear risk reduction measures. They apply with equal force to Australia. It is profoundly in Australia's interest to do what it can to decrease the risk of global or regional nuclear war. **NFU** would not mean an end to

'extended deterrence'  
only the type of deterrence  
which the US extends. Clinging  
to nuclear-war-initiating options  
simply prolongs and intensifies  
Australia's exposure to potential

global or regional nuclear war  
which

poses a critical existential risk  
to Australia. Nothing is more  
important than avoiding  
nuclear war.

There simply cannot

**BE**

more important geopolitical considerations than this. A First-Use posture does nothing to decrease that risk and manifestly increases it.

At a very minimum, US ('joint') installations at Pine Gap and Northwest Cape will vanish in the first minutes of a large-scale nuclear confrontation, both

because they are direct nuclear targets of the highest priority, and via HEMP. (High Altitude Electromagnetic Pulse). It is highly likely that, when further escalation follows, major Australian cities will also be targeted, putting at risk most of Australia's population.

**No possible interpretation**

# of Australia's national interests can risk such an outcome

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## NFU

postures and policies will do much to diminish the probability of this catastrophe. Discouraging

## NFU

will increase, not decrease, the likelihood of this outcome.



Support for **No First Use** as well as for a wide menu of nuclear risk reduction measures, and for the abolition of nuclear weapons are more than profoundly in Australia's interest. They are of existential import for all Australians and for the whole world.

**Signed:**

**John Hallam**

Nuclear Disarmament  
Campaigner, People  
for Nuclear  
Disarmament  
Human Survival  
Project  
Co-Convenor,  
Abolition 2000

Nuclear Risk  
Reduction Working  
Group,  
[johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au](mailto:johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au)  
[jhjohnhallam@gmail.com](mailto:jhjohnhallam@gmail.com)  
[johnh@pnnd.org](mailto:johnh@pnnd.org)  
61-411-854-612

**Nick Deane,**  
Marrickville Peace  
Group (identification  
purposes only)

**Prof. Frank**  
**Hutchinson,** Human  
Survival Project,

# Chris Hamer, Scientists for Social Responsibility,

# Dr Alison

# Broinowski AM Acting President, Australians for War Powers Reform

0422 608 580

**Prof. Gareth Evans,**  
**Asia Pacific**  
**Leadership Network**  
**for Nuclear**  
**Non-Proliferation and**  
**Disarmament,**

# Annette Browlie,

Chair, Independent  
and Peaceful  
Australia Network  
(IPAN)