

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What is the U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?

The TPNW, also known as the nuclear weapon ban treaty, was negotiated and adopted at the United Nations with the support of 122 nations in 2017. It is the first instrument of international law to clearly outlaw the development, possession, hosting, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. The ban treaty is a crucial element in efforts to stigmatise and eliminate nuclear weapons. It will enter into force when 50 nations have ratified, which is expected within the next two years.

The TPNW follows the path that is proving effective for biological and chemical weapons, landmines and cluster munitions. A treaty prohibiting and providing for the elimination of these weapons has been crucial, indeed no other approach has worked.

To date, 70 nations have signed and 23 have ratified the TPNW. While nuclear-armed states are yet to join the treaty, their support was not expected straight away. Like the treaties prohibiting other abhorrent weapons, the TPNW will work over time to strengthen the stigma against nuclear weapons, de-legitimising nuclear deterrence and the very possession of the weapon.

Why should Australia sign and ratify it?

Australia has joined the treaties prohibiting chemical and biological weapons, landmines and cluster munitions. Australia has already agreed to most of the provisions within the TPNW by joining the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the South Pacific Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, and has long claimed to support nuclear disarmament. The Australian public supports action on nuclear disarmament. Recent polling indicates 79% of the public want Australia to join the TPNW, with only 8% opposed (Ipsos, November 2018).

Current Australian defence policy supports the threat and potential use of nuclear weapons by the United States on Australia's behalf. Australia can end this policy while maintaining a strong military alliance with the US, as other nations have done. The supposed benefits of nuclear deterrence are ultimately unproven, yet nuclear weapons work to undermine international security and diplomacy. The ban treaty provides the best pathway forward to strengthen the norm against nuclear weapons and pursue their total elimination.

Why should councils in both urban and rural areas be involved?

Cities and towns are champions in challenging the world's most urgent existential issues. As cities worldwide are nuclear targets, councils have a special responsibility to their constituents to speak out against these instruments of humanitarian harm. The support of cities and towns worldwide will contribute directly to the success of the TPNW.

The effects of nuclear weapons do not stop at the city limits, and neither should positive efforts for change. With your participation, we can ensure that Australia gets on the right side of history by signing and ratifying the nuclear weapon ban treaty.

How do we endorse the Cities Appeal?

After the Council or Mayor has decided to endorse the Cities Appeal via a decision or motion, please email info@icanw.org. Councils that have already endorsed, and suggested further actions are listed at: www.icanw.org.au/cities.