

Marrickville Peace Group
c/- 17 Riverside Crescent
MARRICKVILLE
NSW 2204

15 April 2013

Senator the Hon Bob Carr
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Carr

The use of drones.

Marrickville Peace Group (MPG) has received your letter of 6 February 2013, in response to ours of 1 December 2012, on the topic of Australia's position on the question of drones.

At meetings of the group members have expressed appreciation to you for your letter. However, the group is not happy with your response and has asked me to write again, to emphasise certain points.

In your letter you state that drones have been '*an effective tool in global counter-terrorism efforts*'.

As a group, MPG would question this. The reports we have read indicate that drones have, on many occasions, killed innocent civilians. We do not question whether or not they may also have killed terrorists. The point we wish to make is that armed drones, by their very nature, are indiscriminate in the violence they deliver. They may kill terrorists and people who might have become terrorists (without ever knowing whether or not they would). They definitely do also kill non-terrorist civilians, including children. They are thus, in a very real sense, weapons of terrorism, themselves.

We fail to understand how a weapon *of* terrorism can be considered 'effective' in any effort *against* terrorism. Rather, we see drones as perpetuating the root causes of terrorism. These causes must lie in the high level of resentment felt by those who suffer violence at the hands of more powerful powers. By compounding this resentment, the use of drones actually pushes otherwise peaceful people towards acts of terrorism. At best, therefore, we consider the use of drones in the futile 'War on Terror' to be counter-productive. We cannot agree that they are effective. We are dismayed at the apparent proliferation of their use in modern warfare.

The White House has issued a convoluted, legal justification for the extra-judicial killing of its own citizens (presumably by the use of drones, if expedient). Meanwhile, we understand that there remain serious, unanswered questions about the legality of the use of armed drones that are currently being considered within the UN organisation. We also draw your

attention of an item in the Sydney Sun-Herald of 14 April 2013, where it is reported that US drone killings are under the spotlight.

Surely Australia should be taking a principled approach to the use of armed drones. No-one can say with any degree of certainty that they do not kill the innocent. Why, then is their use condoned (silence against their use being tacit approval of it)?

Has Australia reached a moral position where it is acceptable to condone the use of weapons that kill the innocent?

Australia should examine just how far the use of drones has complied with international law. We respectfully suggest that any such examination would find that the use of drones falls well short of the laws on the inter-State use of force that you mention in your letter.

Why does Australia not use its position on the UN Security Council to speak out against this utterly barbaric, and probably illegal, use of highly sophisticated technology?

Some members of MPG have raised the suspicion that Australia may, by default, be involved in drone warfare. They note the ongoing 'enhancement' of the alliance with the US and the increased use of Australian military facilities by sectors of the US armed forces.

On their behalf, may I ask you to give your assurance that Australian facilities that are shared with the US, such as, for example, the communications centre at Pine Gap, play no role whatever in the guidance or control of armed US drones?

Yours sincerely

Nick Deane
On behalf of Marrickville Peace Group.