

Australian Medical Association Limited

ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



AMA CALLS ON THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO SIGN UN TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The AMA today called on the Australian Government to sign the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

“Today is International Human Rights Day, and the 70th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that *‘everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person’*,” AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today.

“It also marks one year since the Australian-led International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

“In April 2018, the World Medical Association called on all countries to sign, ratify, and implement the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, based on the devastating long-term health consequences of nuclear weapons.

“The AMA supports this call, and strongly encourages the Government to sign the Treaty.

“Nuclear weapons have catastrophic consequences for human health, both when tested and when used in conflict situations.

“In 2015, the AMA resolved to encourage the Australian Government to continue to work to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons.

“Although the Australian Government ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1973, it has not yet signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, introduced in July 2017.

“This Treaty bans signatories from storing weapons for their allies, and compels signatories to help individuals who have been adversely affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons.

“It is time for Australia to join nations including South Africa, New Zealand, Indonesia, Austria, and Nigeria, and become the 70th state to sign the Treaty.”

Background

- The AMA adopted the following resolution in 2015 – “That Federal Council agree that the AMA urges the Australian and all national governments to continue to work to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons, and will collaborate with relevant stakeholders to increase public awareness and education on the medical and environmental consequences of nuclear war.”
- The direct impacts of a nuclear explosion on humans include: deaths from heat and blast injuries, and asphyxiation; severe burns; blindness caused by retinal burns; and deafness caused by eardrum rupture.
- Exposure to radiation from a nuclear explosion can also cause: central nervous system dysfunction; nausea; vomiting; diarrhoea; uncontrolled bleeding; and infections.
- In the longer term, individuals exposed may develop radiation sickness, leading to an increased risk of developing some cancers, including leukaemia and thyroid cancer.

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CONTACT: John Flannery 02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761
 Maria Hawthorne 02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753