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To the Public Consultations Team, White Paper Taskforce

Since 2003 Australia's foreign policy has pursued narrow national and corporate interests at the expense of public interest.

This approach has been profoundly counter-productive and short-sighted. The impacts of Australian foreign policy activities are now being felt today in terms of a rise in ethno-populism, unilateralism and global insurgency, and by ongoing and intensifying climate, food and financial crises, to name a few.

By pursuing Australia's own narrowly-defined security and corporate interests, the Australian Government has made the world less safe and reneged on its responsibilities to its own people. It is time for a major evaluation and rethink.

Australian foreign policy should not be focused on the US alliance and militarism, promoting corporate interests, undermining self-determination and climate policy. The cynicism towards refugees and asylum-seekers has resulted in abusive treatment of people fleeing persecution, breaching human rights of those caught up in Australia's border security policies.

Instead, Australia should focus on making the world a safer place through collective and peace security arrangements. It should pursue fair trade arrangements – no market access and 'free trade'. It should be an exemplar of effective climate policy, both in international policy and at home. It should become a beacon for democratisation and self-determination, and enable development rights, not financial freedoms for speculators. It should respect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. And it should recommit to global targets for development aid, and focus Australian aid on addressing the local needs, not Australian interests.

Australia should agree to redraw the maritime boundary with East Timor along the median line between our countries. Australia's exploitation of our closest neighbour is shameful. It is unjust and unconscionable for the Australian Government to continue to receive royalties from oil and gas that rightfully belongs to East Timor, a country with significantly less resources than us. We must redraw the boundary based on justice and international law.

A Foreign Policy guided by such principles would take Australia closer to achieving the goals of peace and security that it claims should be our uppermost priority. For this, a root and branch rethink of Australian foreign policy is required.

Sincerely

Justine Conaty

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