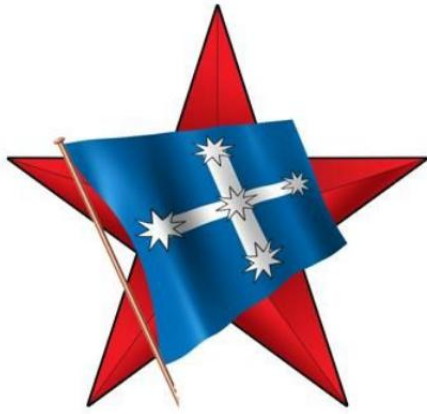




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AUKUS PUBLIC INQUIRY SUBMISSION

Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that wherever this may be read in contemporary Australia, it is being read on the unceded lands of the First Peoples, and that those lands always were and always will be Aboriginal lands. We honour the First Peoples' resistance to colonial invasion and attempted genocide, and their ongoing struggles for self-determination. Their resilience in the face of adversity is a continuing source of inspiration.

1. Although commonly thought of as having been proposed by Scott Morrison, the acquisition by Australia of US nuclear-powered submarines pre-dates his involvement. On 10 October 2013, the *Australia Financial Review* reported on a US proposal for Australia to operate ten or 12 Virginia class nuclear submarines. In his book, *Dangerous Allies*, Malcolm Fraser refers to this as “America’s proposal” (p. 250). It could also have been made by Ross Babbage, a former senior Defence official with close ties to US military and political circles.¹ In 2011–13, Babbage argued that Australia should abandon plans for a new class of conventional submarines and instead acquire nuclear-powered submarines from the United States or Britain. He wrote that “the best submarines for Australia for the coming 40 years would be 10–12 leased or bought Virginia or Astute class boats”, with a preference for the American Virginia-class submarine because of interoperability with the US Navy.

¹ Ross Babbage was identified as a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the US Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA). His work there is frequently aimed at US policymakers and defence planners. RAND Corporation researchers have appeared alongside him at conferences on Indo-Pacific security. He has participated in conferences and policy discussions involving researchers and former US defence officials from US think tank the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

However, the 2013 Defence White Paper explicitly reaffirmed a commitment to conventional submarines as a replacement for the Collins class.

2. Whoever the 2013 proposal originated with, Fraser definitely remembers it is a US proposal and correctly states that “If these submarines end up being the replacement for the Collins-class submarines, our armed forces would end up being integrated ever more closely with that of the United States. We would become even more dependent upon the United States for continuing operations and for maintenance...I am opposed to any suggestion that would end up with Australia becoming even more dependent upon the United States, for the operations of our military forces. This particular proposal would certainly result in greater strategic dependence. One might even ask, is that why the United States proposes it?”

3. There is no reference to Babbage and the earlier proposal in Andrew Fowler’s well-researched book *Naked: The Submarine Fiasco that Sank Australia’s Sovereignty*. Fraser is only mentioned twice, but not specifically in relation to his opposition to the 2013 proposal. Fowler’s focus is on the machinations that led to Morrison ditching the submarine deal with the French in order to create the AUKUS arrangements, but “America’s proposal” of 2013 is further proof of Fowler’s view that “wedding Australia’s military to the United States was always the aim. The submarines became merely the vehicle with which to do that” (p. 71).

A *Washington Post* investigation published on 18 October 2022 reported that two retired U.S. admirals and three former civilian leaders of the U.S. Navy were playing "critical but secretive roles" advising the Australian government during negotiations that culminated in the Morrison government's AUKUS decision. They were:

Name	Former U.S. position	Australian role during AUKUS period
Vice Adm. William Hilarides (Ret.)	Commander, U.S. Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA); former Program Executive Officer for Submarines	Chairman of Australia's Naval Shipbuilding Expert Advisory Panel, advising on naval shipbuilding, submarine acquisition and sustainment, including nuclear-powered submarines.
Rear Adm. Thomas Eccles (Ret.)	U.S. Navy Chief Engineer for Ships and Submarines; Deputy Commander, NAVSEA	Member of the Naval Shipbuilding Expert Advisory Panel, providing technical advice on Australia's shipbuilding enterprise and submarine program.
Donald C. Winter	Former U.S. Secretary of the Navy (2006–2009)	Served as a paid adviser to three successive Australian prime ministers. Earlier chaired Australia's Naval Shipbuilding Advisory Board and later became a special adviser to Prime Minister Scott Morrison.
Gloria L. Valdez	Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Ship Programs	Member of the Naval Shipbuilding Expert Advisory Panel. Worked as a civilian expert on naval shipbuilding.
Howard Fireman	Former senior U.S. Navy civilian responsible for ship design and engineering	Member of the Naval Shipbuilding Expert Advisory Panel, providing engineering and ship design expertise.

In addition to these highly paid US “consultants”, PM Abbott set up the Naval Shipbuilding Advisory Board in 2015 which included Winter from the US and the UK’s David Gould, a former Under-Secretary for Defence. Gould set about drawing up options for the replacement of the Collins class submarines. Fowler, in his book *“Nuked...”* refers to a discussion he had with Gould:

As we sat talking, Gould revealed for the first time what has long been suspected: one of the submarines’ most important requirements would be to work with the Americans in the South China Sea. He explained that the submarine would need ‘to get through the archipelago to the north of Australia and into the South China Sea and operate in the South China Sea for a reasonable period of time and then come back again, without docking or refuelling or anything...’ This statement undermines any argument that the new submarines - whether nuclear or not – would be used primarily to defend Australia or to protect the nation’s shipping lanes...” (p 14-15).

When Gould left the Advisory Board, his replacement was not Australian. Former US Rear Admiral Stephen E. Johnson landed the job and was then further elevated into a full-time position as Australian deputy secretary of Defence.

One of the reasons that the US was able to have such direct influence over the submarine procurement process is the dominant position it holds over the Australian state. The US has Australia enmeshed in a web of economic, political, cultural, diplomatic and military ties. We are not genuinely independent of US imperialism. It has subservient politicians, a comprador media and well-resourced think tanks that work together to shape public opinion. This is explained more fully in our 2018 publication *Who Owns Australia?*²

Fraser’s evaluation of the 2013 proposal serves to condemn the later arrangements as evidence of “the extent of our subservience to America” (Fraser p. 249).

4. For the purposes of a submission within the suggested word limit (3000 words) we will not comment on matters likely to be covered by others, including doubts about AUKUS submarines being delivered on time and on budget, the false claims of a “jobs bonanza”, the irresponsibility of undertaking storage of AUKUS nuclear wastes, the lack of transparency of the whole AUKUS process, the stupidity of surrendering Australian coastal defence for US-inspired “force projection” far from our own waters, and related matters. Instead, we will confine ourselves to an analysis of the so-called “stealth advantage” of nuclear-powered boats, and to some of the dangers of Pillar 2.

5. One of the major advantages, we are told, of nuclear-powered subs as opposed to conventional subs resides in their near-silence and longer period of submergence, in both of which reside their claims to superior stealth. However, studies suggest that emerging technologies will make the seas “transparent”, depriving AUKUS subs of their stealth. Some of those technologies include China’s development of an ultra-sensitive magnetic detector that could pick up traces of the most advanced submarine from long distances away, and the expanding frontier of quantum computing that may be the ultimate nail in the AUKUS submarines coffin.

In July 2016, the Australia government awarded a contract to local company Q-CTRL to develop a quantum navigation system can use the motions of a single atom to precisely determine the course and position of a submarine and maintain accuracy to a remarkable degree. China is conducting research in the same area.

² [Who+Owns+Australia+Booklet+A5+Final.pdf](#)

Even the pro-US Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) published a warning that “the oceans of tomorrow may become ‘transparent’. The submarine era could follow the battleship era and fade into history.” It titled its article on a study of submarine detection by Australian scientists and academics “*Advances in detection technology could render AUKUS submarines useless by 2050.*”

After surveying the new detection technologies, the influential IEEE Spectrum, with the *Foreign Policy* magazine, concluded that “If the most extreme predictions come true, the stealth of Australia’s new fleet of nuclear submarines could be dead in the water less than a decade into their operational lifetimes.” This study quotes one scientist as saying that “submarines that use a newer nonnuclear propulsion, known as air-independent propulsion (AIP), pretty much eliminate that advantage (staying underwater longer than diesel subs can) with their capability to stay submerged for up to 30 to 40 days” (see: *Will even the most advanced subs have nowhere to hide? [Submarine Stealth Vs. AI, Drones, and Sensor Networks - IEEE Spectrum](#)*).

Canada, which has the largest coastline in the world, and faces into three oceans, has just decided to buy 12 conventionally powered submarines from Germany. No official costs have been released but estimates vary from US \$12 billion to Can\$24 billion to €22.8 Billion (or Australian \$17.12 billion, \$24.5 billion and \$37.3 billion respectively). Lifetime maintenance and sustainment costs will further boost these figures, but the Canadian purchase is many times cheaper than the projected AUKUS cost. That means there is an Australian overspend of hundreds of billions that could have gone to housing, education, health, social services, country roads and any of the other areas of social need that will be ignored because of the requirement to reserve funds for AUKUS.

We have always maintained since the Japanese Soryu build proposal that Australian workers should build Australian-designed replacements for the Collins class, and we clearly prefer that to an off-the-shelf overseas purchase.

It is an absurdity to commit Australia to pay an average of \$33 million per day for 30 years to acquire nuclear-powered submarines in the face of new detection technologies and advances in conventional AIP design.

AUKUS must be cancelled and Australian workers employed to produce Australian conventional submarines, underwater drones and other naval assets for coastal defence.

6. AUKUS Pillar 2 is organised under 8 working groups – ‘innovation’, ‘information-sharing’, and the 6 ‘advanced capabilities’ listed in Australia’s National Defence Strategy:

- undersea capabilities
- quantum science
- artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomy
- advanced cyber
- hypersonics and counter-hypersonics
- electronic warfare.

In December 2023, AUKUS defence ministers confirmed that Pillar 2 will also involve boosting ‘space domain awareness’ networks. As confirmed by US Space Command, this will “involve partner integration in space monitoring and will advance space mobility”. These ambiguous references were clarified in the current (2026) Australian National Defence Strategy which lists Space as one of five domains of warfare. This is using AUKUS to position Australia to follow the US into violating the spirit, if not the letter, of the UN Outer Space Treaty (OST) which followed US and Russian tests of nuclear weapons in Space in the 1960s. The Treaty banned them, along with weapons of mass

destruction deployed in Space, but there are many gaps through which other weapons can be used in Space.

The current head of the US Space Command is Gen. Stephen Whiting. In August 2024, he declared that the US Space Command's top priorities for fiscal 2027 include "space fires" to enable "space superiority" and "enhanced battlespace awareness" capabilities. The US *Breaking Defense* website observed that "For many years, Pentagon officials have been wary of discussing even the possibility of utilizing 'offensive' space weapons due to political sensitivities and classification issues." It added that "Capabilities to operate in cislunar space, the vast swath of the heavens lying between the Earth and the Moon, further will become a SPACECOM mission as NASA and commercial firms pursue lunar 'colonization' and other related activities."

In March 2025, Whiting was even more explicit about the meaning of the euphemistic "space fires". "It's time that we can clearly say that we need 'space fires', and we need weapon systems. We need orbital interceptors. And what do we call these? We call these weapons, and we need them to deter a space conflict and to be successful if we end up in such a fight," Whiting told the annual Space Foundation Space Symposium in Colorado. "Weapons in space used to be considered inconceivable, but now space-based interceptors are a key component of how we win," he elaborated. "We are a combatant command, and like all other combatant commands, we must be dominant at war, fighting and war winning. And dominant warfighting in space requires credible, acknowledged, kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities, fires and weapons."

Col. Kyle Pumroy (Ret.) writing in the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies' paper "Military Human Spaceflight: A Key Component to US Space Superiority", places the US at a disadvantage in the race with China for control of Space. Pumroy argues that "now is the time to begin placing Guardians in space to develop the skills, tools, and concepts to build a future capacity to defend core US interests..." The term "Guardians" was adopted by the US Space Force in 2020 for its service members, analogous to "soldiers" in the Army or "sailors" in the Navy. So "Guardians in Space" means actual Space Force personnel physically operating in orbit, on space stations, or potentially on the Moon, rather than controlling satellites remotely from Earth. As a branch of the military, Pumroy argues, the Guardians need the legal protection of the US Congress' Title 10 of the US Code which authorises all aspects of military organisation and operation. "While upholding the OST should be the United States' desire and priority, pragmatically, it must prepare otherwise," writes Pumroy. "Only Guardians can ensure human spaceflight dominance and maintain the strategic flexibility to conduct Title 10 operations in defence of US interests in space."

AUKUS Pillar 2 must not be allowed to tie our country to US militarisation of Space. The danger of this happening is yet another reason for ending the AUKUS arrangements. The OST needs to be tightened to include a prohibition on the deployment of all weapons in Space and the use of Space in any way for military actions. An independent and peaceful Australia would initiate such a move through the United Nations. A subservient Australia, dominated economically, militarily, culturally and diplomatically by the United States and tied to it through AUKUS, will not even contemplate such a move.³

7. We have seen how the Ukrainian resistance to Russian imperialism's invasion has led to new ways of fighting and the application of new technologies, focussing on and not just related to drone

³ For further information, see [Stop+the+militarisation+of+space.pdf](#) .

warfare. Likewise, the Israeli genocide in Gaza has been accompanied by the use of newer artificial intelligence (AI) and large-scale data-driven targeting, autonomous, sensing, and networking capabilities, robotic ground systems and cyber surveillance. We have mentioned the militarisation of Space. Relying on nuclear-powered submarines for “deterrence” in such a rapidly developing technological sphere of military operations, at a cost that is cutting funding in other areas of defence spending, may serve US imperial interests, but they do not serve current or future Australian defence needs.

8. As a Party which took the side of China in the 1960s Sino-Soviet split and was for a long time a supporter of China’s path to socialism, we should make it clear that the restoration of capitalism after Mao Zedong’s death was not supported by us. Nor do we take China’s side in the rivalry between it and the United States. We seek a genuinely anti-imperialist independence for Australia, and do not want it tied to or dominated by either China or the US.

However, the AUKUS arrangements presuppose Australia’s interoperability and interchangeability with US military command as it prepares for war with China.

Such a war will not be fought “over there”; rather, US and Australian military facilities and bases would be subject to Chinese missile attack. Australian cities hosting AUKUS facilities would be likely targets for Chinese retaliation. The war will not just be fought out in the Pacific and over the horizon, but here, at home.

At the present time, and into the foreseeable future, we believe that the danger of war with China proceeds mainly from the belligerence with which the US seeks to maintain its diminishing global hegemony.

In 2022, the Australian Security Leaders Climate Group issued its paper *A Climate-First Foreign Policy for Australia: Human security in the age of climate disruption*⁴ which clearly stated that “climate — not China — is the greatest threat to our future” (p. 3). Yet this obvious truism is ignored by the US Empire loyalists in parliament and the Department of Defence.

It is imperative that Australia withdraws from AUKUS and develops and maintains relations of equality and neutrality in its relations with China and the US, and really practices independent decision-making in matters of foreign policy, including an emphasis on the real threat of global warming.

⁴ [ASLCG-ClimateFirstForeignPolicy.pdf](#)

