A CALL TO ACTION
SEND A SOCK TO STEPHEN SMITH

In the last week, members of the ANBLC committee have sent letters to all Federal politicians regarding the draft legislation on cluster bombs. In addition to the ANBLC and Cluster Munition Coalition (CMCA) logos, the letter also carries logos of nine other peace and humanitarian organizations, making it a powerful document. Enclosed in each letter was a child’s shoe or sock, symbolising the high proportion of child cluster bomb accidents.

The mail out was timed to reach parliament before the bill is debated in the Labor Caucus on Tuesday November 22, highlighting the urgent need for reform of the bill.

We included this photo and story.

This is all that is left of Mohamad Hassan Sultan, cluster bomb victim

When Mohamad and four other boys were innocently watching rubble being removed from a house destroyed in a cluster bomb strike, a truck bumped a tree, dislodging a cluster bomb. It detonated by Mohamad’s feet and blew up into him. He was killed and all his friends were injured. The shoe in the foreground was blown off with part of his foot and ankle still in it.

Can you spare a moment to send a sock to Stephen Smith?

The bill will not be debated in the Senate until the New Year so we want to keep the issue in front of the Minister for Defence between now and then. Can you help during December and January?

Please send a politely worded letter, with or without a sock, to:

The Hon Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Defence
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives, Parliament House
Canberra 2600 ACT

You can write your own letter or download the ANBLC letter here:
https://sites.google.com/site/cmcaustraliapublic/news/send aosoktostephensmith

If you write your own letter here are some points to make:

• You are concerned that the proposed cluster bomb legislation allows Australian soldiers to assist the US in the use of cluster bombs and allows for US stockpiling in Australia. This is particularly significant given the news of a new US base in Northern Australia.

• Cluster bombs were designed for use against massed tanks on the Russian steppes in WWII. They are inherently inaccurate and have no, or limited, military utility in modern theatres of war.

• Cluster bombs are legacy weapons, killing and maiming for decades after a war.

• 98% of unexploded cluster bombs are civilians, 1/3 are children.

If you send a sock ask the Minister to think of a cluster bomb victim next time he purchases a sock, for himself or for a child.
CROSSROADS FOR THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

This week and next, while we are sleeping, the fate of the CCM rests in the balance. At the Fourth Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) now taking place in Geneva, a draft protocol on cluster munitions is being discussed. This is not the first time that these pernicious weapons have been discussed at the CCW. It was in fact because they had been discussed there for so many years with no practical result, that Norway finally took the courageous step of beginning the Oslo Process which led to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) (the cluster bomb ban).

Why is this Review Conference any different from those that have gone before? It is different because Russia, China and the US, (the major cluster bomb manufacturers and users) have banded together to write a new protocol on cluster munitions.

Initially it might sound promising that these major powers are agreeing to a protocol on cluster munitions. But as you suspect, there is a catch, and a major one. The draft protocol bans outright only those cluster bombs manufactured before 1980, i.e. all those obsolete weapons ready for demolition. Anything manufactured after that date, including those used in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Iraq would all be legal. This is despite the clear devastation they have caused, the blatant failure of their so-called self destruct mechanisms and their on-going legacy of death and injury. Photo-journalist and ANBLC committee member John Rodsted has spent more than 20 years documenting the global landmine and cluster munition situation and his photographs taken first hand in Lebanon illustrate this point more vividly than words. [http://bit.ly/johnrostedm85](http://bit.ly/johnrostedm85)

Australia is supporting the draft protocol, arguing that it is a way of “getting the US into the tent” and that “something is better than nothing”. Were the something a step forward, however slight, we would agree. But when the something is a huge step backwards, and when it undermines the CCM and legitimises further cluster munitions use, it most certainly is not better than nothing. As for getting the US into the tent, why wouldn’t they come in? The protocol allows them to continue using cluster bombs and enables them to argue that continued use is justified at the United Nations level. In practical terms is it bringing the US and others closer to the CCM? We think not.


We will update you when we know the result of the Conference debates. If the protocol is accepted then the CCM is weakened. If it is rejected we have a real chance to eradicate cluster bombs once and for all.

UPDATE ON AGM & CONFERENCE

As previously advised, we held our national conference as well as our Annual General Meeting in South Australia over the weekend of 29-30 October. The meeting was very energizing and plans were made for continuing our work in 2012.

We would like to acknowledge the following committee members who have been invaluable to us, and who have resigned from the committee: Sister Patricia Pak Poy, Peter Stewart and Gillian Paxton. They will be greatly missed. In particular, Pat has been instrumental to the campaign. We have included an article on Pat’s significant contribution to the campaign in this issue.

At our AGM we voted for a new committee, half of whom will hold a 12 month term, and the others a 24 month term. We would like to introduce new committee members John Rodsted and Mette Eliseussen, who have been an active part of the campaign for over a decade, bringing a great deal of expertise and energy to ANBLC. We also welcome Mike Sprange, who has been part of the ANBLC network for many years and is now part of the committee filling a casual vacancy.

Welcome John, Mette and Mike.
At the recent National Conference of ANBLC, a special dinner was held to honour Sr Patricia Pak Poy as she retired from the National Committee of the movement which she began just over 20 years ago.

Patricia first met the problem of landmines in 1990 while on sabbatical working with the Jesuit and Mercy Refugee Services in Thailand after retiring from teaching. She heard of Suwin, a farmer whose leg and arm had been blown off by a landmine in a country that wasn't even at war. She started thinking that 'somebody ought to do something about it'!

She became that 'somebody', researching anti-personnel mines around the world; discovering there were over 120 million still-active landmines buried in the soil of at least 62 nations. On her return from Cambodia, Sr Patricia began an Australian campaign to ban landmines.

A public petition was presented to the Australian Parliament in February 1992. The first one-day seminar 'Landmines: a Human Rights Issue', was held in Parliament House, Canberra in November 1993, as part of the action by the Human Rights Council of Australia with Community Aid Abroad. Within hours, the NGOs present committed sufficient funds to kick-start the Australian Network to Ban Landmines with Sr Patricia as Founding Coordinator.

Landmines featured on the agendas of several Australian NGOs in the following months. A small committee of interested people from Adelaide organisations grew into state committees and the movement grew, in membership and influence. The cost of travel, both within Australia and internationally, was funded by donations and bequests. The organization has continued to be active and was renamed to the Australian Network to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munitions in 2010 to reflect the broadening of focus to include cluster bombs.

Patricia believes that one of the keys to the success of the campaign may be that the problem of landmines is presented as an issue of human rights rather than of Defence. It is a people’s movement, using networking on a local, governmental and international level, presenting the plight of the victims, allowing them to speak and putting a human face to the problem. In this work the emphasis should always be on the respect for human life.

Sr Patricia was Honorary President of ANBLC until her recent retirement. She is one of 9 Vice-Patrons of the United Nations Association of Australia. She was former Patron of Catherine House, was founding chair of Hope Adelaide, was formerly actively involved in Mercy Works, and in Mercy and Jesuit Refugee Services. She has been a member of the Government National Consultative Committee on Disarmament and Peace, and is still a member of the Human Rights Council of Australia.
STUDENT POETRY COMPETITION 2011

This is the second year that the SA Group of ANBLC has organised a Student Poetry Competition on the topic of Landmines and Cluster Munitions. This year’s winner is a Year 10 student, Cutie Kannampuzha.

Combat Arms

To be perfectly honest,  
Weapons - land mines, bombs, grenades  
They mean pain.  
They may mean winning,  
But what’s to gain?

Not when the distinction  
The one between innocents and not  
Are completely erased.  
Who's to blame?

Who's at fault?  
Crashing, exploding terror.

Scorched and blackened;  
There lay the nonliving  
And there the injured beyond repair.  
Was that intention or error?

Months, years, decades may pass.  
Walk by, slip under wire, closed gates  
Let's play in a sand dune?  
Ignorance appears  
Child, teen, adult.  
Step closer, just a little more.

How about now?  
Glimpsing heaven, hell or just darkness?  
Limless, lost senses, death  
All part of the plan  
For the enemies.  
Because we're saving the civilians,  
Or trying to.

Can we stop this?  
This destruction, loss?  
Maybe. Because together,  
We can combat arms.

By Cutie Kannampuzha

2011-2012 ANBLC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

National Coordinator: Lorel Thomas (VIC)  
Treasurer: Jennie Price (SA)  
Secretary and Public Officer: Adrian von der Borch (SA)  
Committee Members:  
Anna King (NSW)  
John Heathers (NSW)  
Mike Sprange (NSW)  
Helen Stanger (SA)  
John Rodsted (VIC)  
Mette Eliseussen (VIC)

CLUSTERS, THEN AND NOW

I used to think of cluster as a cosy word  
Part of nature; teats on udder of a cow,  
Eggs warm in a nest beneath a mother bird,  
Clusters of blossom or fruit upon a bough,  
Grouped together, inviting a closer look.

That other, childish self when I look back  
Was ignorant of grim inhumanity  
Devising new improved methods of attack;  
Refinement of fiendish fatal weaponry.  
When I was young, I had no idea of this.

Passing years inform a new reality;  
I've since learnt of cluster bombs, a different sort  
Of cluster, evil named euphemistically.  
The name’s a perversion of my former thought  
Betraying images of intimacy.

The bomblets (false diminutive!) closely packed  
Within an outer casing, ready to deploy  
On release in mid-air, scatter far and wide  
Each one resembling a tennis ball or toy  
Though lethal weapons intended to explode.

Those that explode can kill or maim on impact,  
Heedless of victims; man, woman, child or cow.  
No time to call out or even to react  
Life taken in a flash, dead already now,  
Though high failure rate means other bombs remain

Hidden in vegetation or rocky ground,  
Years after peace; cruel unstable tools of war  
Until some chance of fate ensures one is found.  
Come and witness modern warfare’s fatal flaw:  
A casual accident waiting to occur.