

Make Peace A Priority - Talking Points

Core Messages

1. Peace as Policy Priority

Key Message: Australia needs to institutionalise peace as the central organising principle of our foreign policy.

Talking Points:

- Peace is not just the absence of war—it's the active presence of justice, cooperation, and security for all nations
- Australia has a unique opportunity to lead by example in the Asia-Pacific region
- Diplomatic solutions are more cost-effective and sustainable than military interventions
- Peace-building creates long-term stability that benefits trade, tourism, and regional cooperation
- Historical examples show that addressing root causes works better than managing symptoms

Supporting Evidence:

- Every \$1 spent on conflict prevention saves \$7 in post-conflict reconstruction (World Bank)
- Diplomatic negotiations ended conflicts in Northern Ireland, Bougainville, and East Timor without military victory
- Australia's successful mediation in Cambodia (1980s-1990s) demonstrates our peace-building capacity
- 67% success rate for UN preventive diplomacy missions vs 16% for unmediated conflicts

2. Economic Benefits of Peace

Key Message: Investing in peace delivers better economic returns than military spending.

Talking Points:

- Global military spending reached \$2.4 trillion in 2023—resources that could transform lives
- Australia's defence spending is \$50+ billion annually—imagine the impact on healthcare, education, and climate action
- Peace dividends include increased trade, tourism, and foreign investment
- Conflict disrupts supply chains and increases costs for Australian businesses
- Peaceful countries achieve twice the GDP per capita of less peaceful nations

Supporting Evidence:

- Countries with higher peace rankings have 2x higher GDP per capita (Institute for Economics and Peace)
- Military spending has lower economic multiplier effects (0.6-0.8x) than education (1.5-2.0x) or healthcare spending (1.7-2.2x)
- The global cost of violence is \$16.5 trillion annually—11.5% of world GDP
- Costa Rica's peace dividend: highest literacy (97.9%) and GDP per capita in Central America after abolishing military

3. Environmental Imperative

Key Message: Military activities are a major contributor to climate change that we cannot ignore.

Talking Points:

- Global militaries produce 5.5% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions—larger than most countries
- The US military alone emits more CO₂ than 140 countries combined
- Wars destroy ecosystems, contaminate water sources, and create long-term environmental damage
- Climate change is a threat multiplier that increases conflict risk
- Peace-building addresses climate security through cooperation, not competition

Supporting Evidence:

- Military carbon footprint: 1,600-3,500 million tonnes CO₂ equivalent annually
- Ukraine conflict: 6.6 million tonnes CO₂ in first 12 months, 30% of protected areas damaged
- Environmental degradation displaces 21.5 million people annually, creating conflict potential
- Climate change affects 1.2 billion people by 2050, requiring cooperative responses

4. Human Security Focus

Key Message: True security means protecting people, not just borders.

Talking Points:

- 110 million people are currently displaced by conflict worldwide
- Human security includes freedom from poverty, disease, and environmental threats
- Australia's security is enhanced by stable, prosperous neighbours
- Peace-building addresses root causes of instability: inequality, injustice, and resource scarcity

- Modern conflicts affect 90% civilians vs 10% in WWI—military approaches fail to protect people

Supporting Evidence:

- Forced displacement has doubled in the past decade (UNHCR)
 - Countries with higher human development indices have lower conflict rates
 - Regional stability correlates with Australia's trade and security outcomes
 - 426 million children live in conflict zones—72% increase in civilian casualties since 2019
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Audience-Specific Messages

For Politicians and Policy Makers

Frame: Strategic advantage and leadership opportunity

- "Australia can lead the Asia-Pacific in demonstrating that peace is profitable"
- "Peace-building enhances Australia's soft power and diplomatic influence"
- "Voters increasingly support leaders who prioritise diplomacy over military solutions" (73% support diplomatic engagement - Lowy Institute)
- "Peace policies create jobs in education, healthcare, and sustainable development"
- "Middle-power diplomacy can be decisive—look at Australia's success in Cambodia"

For Business Leaders

Frame: Economic opportunity and risk management

- "Peace creates stable markets and predictable trading conditions"
- "Conflict disrupts supply chains and increases business costs"
- "Stable regions have 40% more trade than conflict-affected areas"
- "Peace-building industries offer new economic opportunities"
- "Corporate social responsibility increasingly includes peace advocacy"
- "Australia's \$1.7 trillion Asia-Pacific trade depends on regional stability"

For Community Groups

Frame: Values and local impact

- "Peace reflects Australian values of fairness, cooperation, and helping others"
- "Resources spent on weapons could fund schools, hospitals, and climate action"
- "Peace-building creates safer communities for our children"
- "Every family benefits when conflicts are resolved through dialogue, not violence"

- "81% of Australians believe we should be peace-building leaders"

For Young People

Frame: Future-focused and empowerment

- "Your generation will inherit the consequences of today's peace or conflict choices"
 - "Peace-building offers meaningful career opportunities in diplomacy, development, and mediation"
 - "Climate action and peace are interconnected—we need both for a liveable future"
 - "Young voices are powerful in demanding peaceful solutions"
 - "The Bougainville and East Timor examples show peace processes can work"
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Responding to Common Objections

"We need strong defence to protect Australia"

Response:

- Peace-building strengthens our security by addressing threats at their source
- Diplomacy and development aid prevent conflicts before they require military intervention
- Strong defence and active peace-building are complementary, not contradictory
- The best defence is a peaceful neighbourhood—look at our \$1.7 trillion regional trade
- **Evidence:** Preventive diplomacy has 67% success rate vs costly military interventions

"Peace is naive—the world is dangerous"

Response:

- Peace-building is pragmatic—it works and saves money
- Most international disputes are resolved peacefully through existing mechanisms
- Military solutions often create more problems than they solve
- Peace requires strength, courage, and strategic thinking
- **Evidence:** Northern Ireland, Bougainville, East Timor all resolved through addressing root causes, not military victory

"Other countries won't cooperate"

Response:

- Australia can lead by example and encourage others to follow

- Many countries are already prioritising peace-building (Costa Rica, Switzerland, Norway)
- Regional cooperation benefits everyone—it's not zero-sum
- Peace initiatives create positive momentum that spreads
- **Evidence:** ASEAN Way, Mekong River cooperation show regional frameworks work

"This will make Australia weak"

Response:

- Peace-building demonstrates strength and leadership
- Diplomatic influence is a form of power that lasts longer than military force
- Australia's reputation as a peace-builder enhances our international standing
- Strong institutions and alliances provide security without aggression
- **Evidence:** Countries like Switzerland and Norway punch above their weight through peace leadership

"It's too expensive to change course now"

Response:

- Current military spending trajectory is unsustainable—\$75 billion by 2033
- Peace investment has superior economic multiplier effects
- Prevention is 7 times cheaper than post-conflict reconstruction
- The cost of doing nothing is higher—look at global violence costing \$16.5 trillion annually
- **Evidence:** Just 10% reallocation (\$5 billion) could fund 50,000 teachers or 25 hospitals

Key Statistics to Remember

Military Spending

- **Global:** \$2.4 trillion annually (2023)
- **Australia:** \$50+ billion annually, growing to \$75 billion by 2033
- **Opportunity cost:** Could fund universal healthcare, education, or climate action
- **Multiplier effect:** Military 0.6-0.8x vs Education 1.5-2.0x vs Healthcare 1.7-2.2x

Environmental Impact

- **Military emissions:** 5.5% of global greenhouse gases

- **Conflict environmental damage:** Decades to recover
- **Climate displacement:** 21.5 million people annually
- **Ukraine example:** 6.6 million tonnes CO2, 30% protected areas damaged

Human Cost

- **Displaced people:** 110 million globally
- **Conflict deaths:** 238,000 in 2022
- **Economic impact:** \$16.5 trillion annual cost of violence
- **Children affected:** 426 million in conflict zones

Peace Dividend

- **Prevention vs reconstruction:** 1:7 cost ratio
- **Peace correlation:** 2x higher GDP per capita
- **Trade benefits:** Stable regions have 40% more trade
- **Success rates:** 67% for UN diplomacy vs 16% unmediated conflicts

Australian Public Opinion

- **Diplomatic engagement:** 73% support (Lowy Institute 2024)
- **Negotiated solutions:** 68% prefer over military intervention
- **Peace leadership:** 81% want Australia to lead
- **Spending priorities:** 59% support reducing military for social programmes

Case Study Examples for Conversations

Bougainville Success Story

"The Bougainville conflict lasted 10 years and killed up to 20,000 people. But the 2001 Peace Agreement didn't demand the rebels disarm first. Instead, it gave them autonomy, then weapons disposal followed naturally. The 2019 referendum saw 98% vote for independence. It worked because they addressed the root cause—self-determination—not just the symptoms."

East Timor Independence

"East Timor was occupied by Indonesia for 24 years. When the UN finally organised a referendum in 1999, 78% voted for independence. Indonesian forces withdrew after the

political decision, not before it. Addressing the root cause—denial of self-determination—led to peaceful resolution."

Northern Ireland Model

"The Good Friday Agreement didn't demand IRA disarmament before talks. It created political frameworks that made armed struggle unnecessary. Disarmament followed as a consequence of political progress. The result? £30 billion GDP increase and 300% tourism growth."

Costa Rica Peace Dividend

"Costa Rica abolished its military in 1948 and redirected the money to education and healthcare. Result? Highest literacy rate in Central America (97.9%), longest life expectancy (80.3 years), and highest GDP per capita. Peace pays."

Sample Conversation Starters

At Community Events

"Did you know that Australia spends over \$50 billion on defence each year, growing to \$75 billion by 2033? Research shows that every dollar spent on conflict prevention saves seven dollars in post-conflict reconstruction. Imagine if we invested just 10% of that in peace-building—we could prevent conflicts before they start and create a more secure region for everyone."

With Business Networks

"Peace isn't just morally right—it's economically smart. Stable regions mean stable markets, predictable supply chains, and better business conditions. Australia's \$1.7 trillion trade with Asia-Pacific depends on regional stability. Countries with higher peace rankings achieve twice the GDP per capita. That's why smart businesses support peace initiatives."

On Social Media

"🌱 Peace isn't passive—it's an active choice that requires courage, strategy, and investment. Australia can lead the Asia-Pacific in showing that peace is profitable. Every \$1 in prevention saves \$7 in reconstruction. #MakePeaceAPriority"

With Young People

"Your generation faces climate change, economic uncertainty, and global instability. Peace-building addresses all these challenges by creating cooperation instead of competition. Look at Bougainville and East Timor—addressing root causes works. You have the power to demand better."

With Sceptics

"I understand the concern about security, but look at the evidence: UN preventive diplomacy succeeds 67% of the time, while unmediated conflicts only resolve 16% of the time. Northern Ireland, Bougainville, East Timor—all resolved by addressing root causes, not military victory. Peace-building is pragmatic, not naive."

Call to Action Messages

Individual Actions

- "Contact your MP and ask them to support peace initiatives and conflict prevention funding"
- "Join local peace organisations and amplify your voice for diplomatic solutions"
- "Share peace messages on social media to build awareness of alternatives to military approaches"
- "Vote for candidates who prioritise diplomacy and peace-building over military spending increases"

Collective Actions

- "Support organisations working for peace and conflict prevention in our region"
- "Advocate for peace education in schools and universities to build next generation of peace leaders"
- "Demand transparency in military spending and peace-building investments"
- "Build coalitions across different sectors and communities for peace-centred policy"

Policy Actions

- "Establish a dedicated Peace-Building Division within DFAT"
- "Create a peace-building fund within foreign aid allocation"
- "Implement peace impact assessments for all foreign policy decisions"
- "Invest in conflict prevention and early warning systems for regional stability"
- "Expand Australia's mediation and diplomatic capacity"

Resources for Further Information

Key Organisations

- Institute for Economics and Peace (Global Peace Index): <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/>
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI): <https://www.sipri.org/>
- United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/>
- Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies: <https://www.uq.edu.au/acpacs/>
- International Crisis Group: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/>

Essential Reading

- "The Better Angels of Our Nature" by Steven Pinker
- "Getting to Yes" by Roger Fisher and William Ury
- "The Anatomy of Peace" by The Arbinger Institute
- "Why Civil Resistance Works" by Erica Chenoweth
- "Light Intervention: Lessons from Bougainville" by Anthony Regan

Online Resources

- Peace Direct: <https://www.peacedirect.org/>
- Conflict Prevention Network: <https://www.conflict-prevention.net/>
- Australian Peace Committee: <https://www.australianpeace.org.au/>
- Independent and Peaceful Australia Network: <https://www.ipan.org.au/>
- Lowy Institute: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/>

Key Reports and Data

- Global Peace Index 2024: <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/GPI-2024-web.pdf>
 - SIPRI Military Expenditure 2023: <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2024/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2023>
 - World Bank Conflict Prevention Research: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence>
 - Lowy Institute Poll 2024: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/lowy-institute-poll-2024>
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These talking points are designed to be adapted for different audiences and contexts. The key is to listen to your audience's concerns and frame peace-building in terms that resonate with their values and interests. Remember: peace-building is not passive or naive—it's an active, strategic, and evidence-based approach to creating lasting security and prosperity.