

2011 New Zealand Election – Analysis of party policy on landmines and cluster munitions

22 November 2011

In late October 2011, the New Zealand Campaign Against Landmines (CALM) and the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition (ANZCMC) wrote to seven New Zealand political parties seeking their response on five policy questions relating to landmines and cluster bombs. The questions related to party policy on aid, defence, disarmament, finance, and foreign affairs.

National (government) and the Greens and Labour (opposition) submitted written responses. The MANA Party replied, “Unfortunately we have not yet developed policies on the questions you asked” and shared a copy of its draft foreign policy statement. No responses were received from ACT, Maori, or United Future. A summary analysis follows of the responses received from National, the Greens and Labour, which are annexed and available online.

CALM and the ANZCMC welcome the strong commitment that all three parties confirmed for the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, international humanitarian disarmament treaties that New Zealand played a leadership role in creating. New Zealand has signed, ratified, and enacted legislation to enforce the provisions of both treaties.

Promotion of the treaties banning landmines and cluster munitions

National, the Greens and Labour all expressed their commitment to New Zealand’s continued promotion of these treaties, including their universalization through diplomatic outreach especially in the Pacific. Labour said that it would promote treaty accession “within bilateral relationships and through multilateral fora such as the Pacific Islands’ Forum.” Labour and the Greens agreed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade should be adequately resourced so that New Zealand can meet its existing on treaty commitments and work to advance the disarmament agenda on conventional weapons. Labour said that it would “rebalance the Ministry’s priorities to ensure that relationship building and independent diplomacy were an integral part of the Ministry’s work programme. Without these strengths, New Zealand’s advocacy in areas such as disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation will continue to diminish.” National said that New Zealand’s existing treaty commitments are implemented through legislation and policy as well as participation in treaty processes, but did not mention resources.

Cooperation and assistance in mine action

All three parties confirmed their commitment to ensuring that New Zealand continues to support clearance of unexploded remnants of war, including landmines and cluster munition remnants. National highlighted a July 2011 decision to fund \$2.8 million over two years for the establishment of a national mine clearance capacity within the Palestinian Authority and clearance of up to 18 mined areas across the West Bank. National also confirmed that it “does not plan to reinstate” a long-standing contribution of New Zealand Defence Force military personnel serving in the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in New York. The government terminated the support in October 2011 because, according to National, “New Zealand has other priorities for demining resources.” The Green Party said it favors retention of the seconded staff at the UN, as “We see this as part of our on-going obligations as a responsible global citizen, and consistent with the national interests of our

application for Security Council membership in 2015.” Labour committed to “consult with the United Nations about how best to support the work of UNMAS both in New York and in the field.”

Disinvestment from financial investment in the production of cluster munitions

On, the Green Party said it would take measures to ensure that New Zealand investors, including state owned enterprises and crown financial institutions, fully comply with the disinvestment provisions of the Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act 2009. National said the New Zealand Superannuation Fund “has not been found to be in contravention of the provisions of the Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act 2009.” Labour said: “All Crown Financial Institutions, and State Owned Enterprises with the capacity to invest, will be reminded by a Labour-led government of their responsibilities with respect to New Zealand’s reputation as an international good citizen. While a government should not direct CFIs to invest in particular enterprises, Labour believes it is possible to engage with them over enterprises in which they should not invest, because of inconsistency with government policy or potential damage to New Zealand’s reputation.”

The ANZCMC and CMC welcomes the responses received from National, the Greens and Labour. We are grateful for their strong commitment to the Mine Ban Treaty and Convention on Cluster Munitions.



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New Zealand Election 2011 - Responses received to questions on landmines and cluster munitions

20 Nov. 2011 (questions available: <http://bit.ly/tsXhpu>)

LABOUR	GREENS	NATIONAL
<p><i>1. Adequately resource our diplomats so that New Zealand actively engages with and supports our existing treaty commitments, while working with like-minded governments to advance the disarmament agenda on conventional weapons?</i></p>		
<p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has not been immune from public service cuts imposed by this government. Many of MFAT's divisions are functioning with reduced staff numbers and the Minister's priorities have narrowed to that of trade and economic development. Labour would rebalance the Ministry's priorities to ensure that relationship building and independent diplomacy were an integral part of the Ministry's work programme. Without these strengths, New Zealand's advocacy in areas such as disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation will continue to diminish.</p> <p>Our policy explicitly states that we will join the emerging like-minded group of nations promoting negotiations to prepare for an Ottawa/Oslo-style treaty to prohibit the threat or use of nuclear weapons. But for conventional weapons specifically, we undertake to be an active supportive of and advocate for a global Arms Trade Treaty, working with South Pacific nations and civil society in particular to control better the export and transfer of conventional weapons in and around our region.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The global expenditure on conventional weaponry is completely unacceptable in a world that seeks to promote strategic stability through pacific settlement measures.</p> <p>The Green Party would ensure that the NZ Government is adequately resourced to advance the agenda on control of conventional weaponry, with special attention to the Pacific area.</p>	<p>New Zealand's existing treaty commitments are implemented through legislation and through Government policy. We also actively participate in the review processes, where they exist, of treaties to which we are a party.</p>
<p><i>2. Direct New Zealand officials to promote universalisation (accession, ratification) of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions and 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, especially with our Pacific neighbours?</i></p>		
<p>New Zealand has been at the forefront of international discussions on dealing with the humanitarian impacts of landmines and cluster munitions for several decades. A Labour led government would advocate universal accession to the cluster munitions convention and the mine ban treaty. We will use our influence in the Pacific to promote accession within bilateral relationships and through multilateral fora such as the Pacific Islands' Forum.</p>	<p>Yes. See above.</p>	<p>New Zealand uses appropriate opportunities to encourage relevant Pacific Island states and other non-State parties to accede to both treaties.</p>
<p><i>3. Continue and expand New Zealand funding support to the clearance of unexploded remnants of war, including landmines and cluster munition remnants?</i></p>		
<p>The fifth Labour Government formally signed up to the international Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War in October 2007. Explosive remnants of war – such as unexploded bombs, shells and cluster munitions – that are not cleared continue to damage communities long after the conflict has ended. They present a significant on-going threat to the safety of civilians and they prevent communities from rebuilding their economic livelihoods.</p> <p>Labour supports the work of the international community to clear the ground of mines and to dispose of cluster munitions wherever they pose a risk to communities. A Labour-led government will assist Pacific nations with their</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Landmines and cluster munitions are regarded as morally repugnant and have no place in the military arsenals of responsible states.</p>	<p>New Zealand has participated extensively in operations to clear landmines and cluster munitions, particularly in Asia (Afghanistan, Lao PDR, Cambodia) and the Middle East (Egypt)</p> <p>In July 2011 the New Zealand Government approved a contribution to the UN Mine Action Service of \$2.8 million over two years for the</p>

Forum led initiative to implement an unexploded ordinance strategy.

establishment of a national mine clearance capacity within the Palestinian Authority and clearance of up to 18 mine fields across the West Bank (oPt).

4. Reinstate the contribution of New Zealand Defence Force military personnel to serve as seconded staff in the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in New York?

Labour believes that personal representation is an important component of its international advocacy on landmines and cluster munitions. Labour will consult with the United Nations about how best to support the work of UNMAS both in New York and in the field. The New Zealand Defence Force has a proud record of representing New Zealand's interests at UNMAS and of contributing to international mine clearance operations in former conflict zones.

In addition, Labour's Defence Spokesperson, Iain Lees-Galloway replied on 14 Nov 2011 - This certainly is an unfortunate development. This is the type of international action New Zealand prides itself on taking part in and, as you say, is an efficient way that we can play our part. Labour is committed to continuing our international commitments where we can see we are making a positive difference. This is certainly an example of such a commitment.

Yes. The Green Party is on public record as favouring the retention of the seconded staff at the UN.

We see this as part of our on-going obligations as a responsible global citizen, and consistent with the national interests of our application for Security Council membership in 2015.

National does not plan to reinstate this. New Zealand has other priorities for demining resources.

5. Take measures to ensure that New Zealand investors, including state owned enterprises and crown financial institutions such as the New Zealand Superannuation Fund, fully comply with the disinvestment provisions of the Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act 2009?

In April 2008, the Labour-led government welcomed the New Zealand Superannuation Fund's announcement that it would divest from companies involved in the production of cluster munitions when New Zealand signed up to the Treaty on the weapons.

While the Board of Guardians is independent and may not be directed by the Government, Labour acknowledges that the Board adheres to a policy of responsible investment and is aware of New Zealand's support for a ban on weapons such as mines and cluster weapons.

All Crown Financial Institutions, and State Owned Enterprises with the capacity to invest, will be reminded by a Labour-led government of their responsibilities with respect to New Zealand's reputation as an international good citizen. While a government should not direct CFIs to invest in particular enterprises, Labour believes it is possible to engage with them over enterprises in which they should not invest, because of inconsistency with government policy or potential damage to New Zealand's reputation.

Yes. The Green Party has led the movement for best practice in regards to the NZSF ethical investment actions.

The New Zealand Superannuation fund has not been found to be in contravention of the provisions of the Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act 2009.

Email from Paul Grant, Advisor and Team Leader, Office of Hon Phil Goff, 14 Nov. 2011. <http://bit.ly/tPfkKkM>

Email from Dr. Kennedy Graham, MP, Green Party, 14 Nov. 2011. <http://bit.ly/tCoLte>

Letter from John Hayes, MP, National Party, 17 Nov. 2011 - <http://bit.ly/tsXhpu>