



18th April, 2008

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Voices Join World-wide Protest

Exactly one month before major international negotiations to ban cluster bombs, Australian campaigners are taking action to encourage the Federal Government to become a world leader on the issue.

Australia's Week of Action is part of a series of coordinated international protests designed to encourage world governments to deliver the strongest possible treaty when they meet for final talks in Dublin next month.

Beginning on the Global Day of Action tomorrow (Sat), community events will be held across the world. In Australia they include Saturday's 'Market Stalls Against Cluster Bombs', a day featuring speakers and entertainment adjoining Hobart's famous Salamanca Markets. In Melbourne's legendary Hi Fi Bar the 'Clusters Busters' gig will provide a 'hard rocking' end to the Week of Action, next weekend.

Activities around the world include a concert in Berlin, a public petition in France, a candlelight ceremony in Lebanon and a street performance in Barcelona. Over 50 religious leaders, including Desmond Tutu have already signed a public letter calling for an end to the suffering caused by cluster bombs.

"Australia has the chance to be a leader in the most significant disarmament treaty in a decade, but it's up to all of us to show the Federal Government we want a ban with no loopholes and no exemptions," says Cluster Munitions Coalition of Australia Coordinator, James Turton.

Cluster munitions are weapons that open in mid-air and release dozens, and often hundreds, of bomblets over wide areas. They are hard to control, can cover an area the size of three football fields and don't distinguish between combatants and civilians. It's estimated these weapons have killed or wounded up to ten thousand people. One third of victims are children.

"The Australian Government's involvement in the Oslo Process to date demonstrates their recognition that cluster munitions need to be banned. While the CMCA welcomes Australia's participation in the treaty talks in Dublin, we urge our Government to avoid taking any action that would weaken the treaty", says Mr Turton.
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Australia's Week of Action begins with the Global Day of Action on April 19th & runs until April 27th.

Vision and stills of cluster munitions are available upon request.

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