



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Australian position allows us to ‘load the gun, just not pull the trigger’**

**(Dublin, Ireland)** There are fears Australia is threatening the integrity of the most significant disarmament treaty in more than a decade.

For the past week intense negotiations have been underway in Dublin to develop a comprehensive worldwide ban on cluster munitions. While Australia has been leading on some issues, such as victim assistance, they have been unwilling to lead on the single most important one.

The aim of the treaty is to ban cluster munitions, however some countries are attempting to weaken the text of the treaty and allow states who sign the treaty to continue to assist those nations still using cluster munitions.

“Given that Australia says it has never had, never used and will never use cluster munitions, it is totally inconsistent for us to be advocating for other States to be able to continue using this weapon. Australia’s position effectively puts our national security concerns above other people’s human rights,” says Austcare Chief Executive and former UN Mine Action Advisor, Archie Law, who arrived in Dublin overnight.

“This new treaty text effectively means that we can load the gun, we just can’t pull the trigger,” says veteran Australian Campaigner, John Rodsted.

“Unfortunately the Rudd Government has failed to even meet with civil society on this issue. Over the past few months repeated attempts to meet with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Defence have been consistently rejected,” says CMCA Coordinator, James Turton.

Campaigning organisation “Get Up” has led a major push against the current Australian position and in only five days 35 thousand Australians have petitioned the federal government to drop its stance on operating in coalitions with other countries that will be using cluster munitions. The Australian people are saying to the federal government that they want the strongest possible treaty and our delegation in Dublin should do everything possible to achieve that.

With only 48 hours remaining to negotiate this treaty Australia must take a lead and work towards the strongest possible ban.

#### **For more information and interviews please call (in Dublin):**

***Television overlay of clusters in the field was linked from SBS on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May & a pool crew is operating from the negotiations that may be able to assist with specific requests.***

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