

HARMFUL INFLUENCE IN TASMANIAN EDUCATION

BRIEFING PAPER

JULY 2023

Companies that make weapons and profit from war are interfering in STEM education programs across Australia.

Weapons companies sponsor STEM competitions, education materials, exhibitions, mentorships, camps, tours, internships, scholarships, and more, with the explicit intention of creating positive brand association amongst children.

The influence of weapons companies on children is harmful, and prevents progress towards peace and disarmament.

WHICH STEM PROGRAMS ARE AFFECTED?

Some of Australia's **best and most popular** STEM programs are associated with weapons companies. This includes: National Youth Science Forum, FIRST LEGO League, FIRST Robotics, Code Quest, Space Camp, Engineering is Elementary.

WHICH COMPANIES ARE INVOLVED?

Some of the **world's biggest** weapons companies seek to influence students to have a positive view of their industry.

Some of these companies are associated with **weapons of mass destruction**, crimes of war, **human rights breaches**, corruption, and corporate misconduct.

Amongst them are: Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, BAE Systems, Northrop Grumman. The Australian Department of Defence is also increasingly a major actor, using STEM education programming to create a pipeline for defence force recruitment.

PEACE & DISARMAMENT

The weapons industry seeks to generate **social licence**, and secure a workforce, through association with education. The proliferation of weapons, and the **socialisation of children** to war, is a major barrier to progress on peace and disarmament.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- TAS education department policy be strengthened by explicit prohibitions on association with companies that produce, sell, promote or are associated with weapons or munitions
- TAS education unions adopt resolutions to advocate for this policy update
- Schools be properly informed about which companies produce, sell, promote or are associated with weapons or munitions, and which STEM programs are affected.

TASMANIAN POLICY

Existing Tasmanian education department policy shows sensitivity to the issue, recognises the risks of normalisation of violence and desensitisation to weapons, and the need to prevent harm, but does not fully protect children from being targeted by weapons companies.

Department policy can be strengthened by explicit prohibitions on association with companies that produce, sell, promote or are associated with weapons or munitions.

EDUCATION UNIONS

TAS education unions can advocate for the recommended policy update. Unions, schools, and teachers can ask STEM programs to reconsider their association with companies that cause harm.

TEACHERS FOR PEACE WAS FORMED IN 2022 IN RESPONSE TO THE GROWING NORMALISATION OF WAR IN AUSTRALIA & BEYOND.

We're building on the rich history of teacher advocacy for peace, and taking concrete action on key issues.

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