

Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends - Aotearoa/New Zealand

Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri

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30 July 2014

John Key, Prime Minister

David Cunliffe, Leader of the Opposition

Jonathan Coleman, Minister of Defence

Timothy Keating, Chief of Defence

WW100 organising committee

We are writing on behalf of this Yearly Meeting, our national Quaker body, to express our distress at the proposed use of a 100-gun salute in Wellington on Monday 4 August to mark the centenary of the outbreak of World War I.

The notice circulated to Wellington householders notes the potential risks to hearing, and to those with breathing difficulties, from the planned activity. It seems to us unnecessary to cause such potential harm.

More particularly, multiple gun salutes are understood by the public to be an act of celebration – for example, the reference to the last 100-gun salute in Aotearoa New Zealand being on the occasion of a coronation. We hold that there is nothing to celebrate about the centenary of a murderous war which brought terrible destruction to Europe, and loss of life to many Kiwis and people of other nations.

We recognise the courage and commitment of many who went out to fight, believing they were doing right, and equally the courage and commitment of those who have stood against war and violence. We join in remembrance of all who have died or been harmed as a result of war, and those whose urgent needs for the basics of life cannot be met because of the waste of resources on military preparation. We recognise and are grateful for the work of New Zealand defence forces in development and relief, particularly in the Pacific.

In voicing our opposition to the use of a 100-gun salute as part of public commemoration, we stand upon the Quaker commitment to peace and non-violence which has endured from the mid-17th century until today.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Thompson & Elizabeth Duke

Co-clerks, Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand