Letter/Email Text

Dear ….

I am writing today about something that I and many others care deeply about. Like any parent, I look at my children and envision for them a world of opportunity, safety and happiness. Our children are precious and our collective future rests in their hands.

Yet, what is happening to the children of Gaza is abhorrent. We are witnessing the brutal and callous collective slaughter of Palestinian children and now the intentional starvation of Gazan, men, women and children, on masse. It is impossible not to think of these children, and imagine them as our own... no child should have to suffer in this way.

It was with utmost disgust and disbelief that I learned that some Australian children are being engaged within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs sponsored by weapons manufacturers; companies who are actively aiding war crimes including the genocide in Gaza. Australian children should not be participating in activities that support war economies, or the recipients of programmes funded by the proceeds of sales of weapons/parts fuelling violence.

I am writing thus with *extreme* concern that weapons manufacturers may have snuck their way into our school through its STEM program. I understand that teachers have called for a ban of these programs, but **I would like your reassurance that none of these companies and their supported programs (listed below) currently run in our school community.**

Companies:

- **BAE Systems**
- **Boeing**
- **Northrop Grumman**
- **Lockheed Martin**
- **RTX (formerly Raytheon)**

Programmes:
FIRST LEGO League, Beacon, Concept 2 Creation, ME program, YMCA Space Squad, First Robotics Competition, Above and Beyond, Aerospace Gateway, Northrop Grumman Foundation Teachers Academy, Space Camp, STEM Camp, Cyber Taipan, Code Quest, National Youth Science Forum, Maths Alive, and the Advanced Technology Industry School Pathways Program.

There has never been a more important time for our educational leaders and system to ensure that decision making that affects our children reflects the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) the main principles of which point to 1. Non-discrimination; 2. Right to life, survival and development; 3. Doing what is in the best interest of the child; and 4. Meaningful engagement and respect for children's views.

While I write to support children, **I also write in support of teachers** - teachers who understand the harm done to children by a system that tells them to look away from Gaza while the eyes of the world are and should be upon it. Teachers understand that their job is to guide students to pay attention, to look with empathy, with respect for human rights, and with critical literacy. They know that this is their obligation. I hope you understand that it is also an obligation of education system leaders as well.

So I ask, respectfully, for a confirmation of our schools non-involvement in and active opposition to the implementation of STEM programmes sponsored or affiliated with these companies and affirm my position that I do not accept my child/children's involvement in these programmes.

I remain hopeful that my children will be afforded, through the education provided at this school and the active support of school leadership for its teachers, to engage and learn thoughtfully, critically and respectfully about the rights of all people, including Palestinians, to life and justice.

Warm regards,

NAME.

Supplementary Information (for attachment to email or cut paste)

1. Stance of Education Sector - Australia

Educational Policy Leadership Out of Touch:
The ethical stand taken by our teachers in support of Palestine is not respected by the Minister for Education Ben Carroll and the Education Department, who have repeatedly and publicly warned teachers and school staff against expressing solidarity with Palestinians. They even go so far as to falsely suggest that teaching about Palestinian human rights is outside of the curriculum parameters and in breach of the Code of Conduct. This is clearly a falsehood, as standing up for human rights is a key aspect of their everyday teaching.

Exceptionalism to Set Department Policy & Unjustifiable Links to Aggressors
At the same time, the Department of Education does not demand that principals conform to its own Teaching and Learning Resources Policy. Specifically, it contravenes this policy by allowing STEM programs that are sponsored by weapons manufacturers to operate in schools. Indeed, consolidating the connection between the defence industry and school students is an open agenda of both the Victorian and Federal governments. There are even clear links between our own Education Minister, the Israeli Defence ministry and Israeli arms manufacturers.

Victorian and Australian government support for weapons companies, and government alliances with the Israeli Defence Ministry, together with the budget draining AUKUS deal are distorting educational priorities, from school funding through to classroom resources. Government militarism is undermining our ability to provide students a rigorous education built on principles of equality, justice and human rights.

2. Detailed Overview of STEM Supporting Companies Links to Supporting Genocide in Gaza (and conflict elsewhere)

Weapons Company	Role in plausible genocide in Gaza	School Sponsorship Programs
BAE Systems	Produces the M109 howitzer, a 155mm mobile artillery system that the Israeli military has been using extensively, firing tens of thousands of 155mm shells into the Gaza Strip. Some of these shells are white phosphorus bombs, the use of which is forbidden in densely populated civilian areas and potentially amounts to a war crime. BAE also manufactures electronic missile launching kits and other components for Israel's F-15, F-16, and F-35 fighter jets, which the Israeli Air Force has used extensively in all of its attacks on Gaza, including in 2023.	BAE Systems is a major sponsor of STEM education programs, targeting children as young as four years old. Programs include FIRST LEGO League, Beacon, and Concept 2 Creation. Involved in the production of nuclear weapons.
Boeing	Manufactures F-15 fighter jets and Apache AH-64 attack helicopters, which the Israeli Air Force has used extensively in all of its attacks on Gaza and Lebanon, including in 2023.	Boeing is associated with ME program, YMCA Space Squad First LEGO League, First Robotics Competition

	Boeing also manufactures multiple types of unguided small diameter bombs (SDBs) and Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) kits, which convert these bombs into precision-guided munitions. Israel has been using these bombs extensively, including in a Nov. 1 bombing of Gaza's Jabalia refugee camp, which killed hundreds of Palestinian civilians and could amount to a war crime, according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. On Oct. 10 and 22, the Israeli military used bombs equipped with Boeing JDAM kits to carry out what Amnesty International calls "unlawful air strikes on homes full of civilians in the occupied Gaza Strip." The attacks, which could amount to a war crime, killed 24 people of the al-Najjar family and 19 people of the Abu Mu'eileq family. Immediately after Oct. 7, Boeing expedited delivery of 1,000 smart bombs, and another 1,800 JDAM kits, to Israel.	Above and Beyond, Aerospace Gateway. Involved in the production of nuclear weapons.
Northrop Grumman	Supplies the Israeli Air Force with the Longbow missile delivery system for its Apache attack helicopters and laser weapon delivery systems for its fighter jets. It has also supplied the Israeli Navy with Sa'ar 5 warships, which have participated in the assault on Gaza.	Northrop Grumman is involved with Northrop Grumman Foundation Teachers Academy, Space Camp, STEM Camp, Cyber Taipan. Involved in the production of nuclear weapons.
Lockheed Martin	Lockheed Martin supplies Israel with F-16 and F-35 fighter jets, which Israel has been using extensively to bomb Gaza. Israel also uses the company's C-130 Hercules transport planes to support the ground invasion of Gaza. Lockheed Martin manufactures AGM-114 Hellfire missiles for Israel's Apache helicopters. One of the main weapon types used in aerial attacks on Gaza, these missiles have been used extensively in 2023. Some 2,000 Hellfire missiles were delivered to Israel sometime between Oct. 7 and Nov. 14. On Dec. 11, the Israeli Air Force used a Lockheed Martin C-130-J Super Hercules aircraft to drop approximately seven tons of equipment to Israeli soldiers engaging in ground attacks in Khan Younis, located in the southern Gaza Strip. This was the "first operational airdrop" that Israel has carried out since the 2006 Lebanon War. On Nov. 9, an Israeli missile hit journalists sitting near Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. The missile was reportedly a Lockheed Martin–made Hellfire	Lockheed Martin is a major sponsor of STEM education programs, including Code Quest and the National Youth Science Forum. Involved in the production of nuclear weapons.

	R9X missile, a version of the Hellfire that was developed by the CIA for carrying out assassinations. Instead of exploding, the missile shreds its target using blades, allowing for a direct hit without collateral damage. The target in this case was not a military one.	
RTX (formerly Raytheon)	RTX supplies the Israeli Air Force with guided air-to-surface missiles for its F-16 fighter jets, as well as cluster bombs and bunker busters, which have consistently been used against Gaza's civilian population and infrastructure. RTX subsidiary Pratt & Whitney manufactures engines for F-15 and F-16 fighter jets.	RTX is a sponsor of Maths Alive, FIRST LEGO League and the Advanced Technology Industry School Pathways Program. Involved in the production of nuclear weapons.

Sources:

***Teachers for Peace Inc**., an Australian professional not for profit group that works to promote peace and disarmament. Incorporated in NSW INC#2300363. Member of the Global Campaign for Peace Education. https://teachersforpeace.com.au/stem/#programs

***American Friends Service Committee:** AFSC works for a just, peaceful, and sustainable world free of violence, inequality, and oppression. It joins with people and partners worldwide to meet urgent community needs, challenge injustice, and build peace. https://afsc.org/companies-2023-attack-gaza