

Matilda Byrne on Australia's position on Killer Robots

John Rodsted:

Welcome to SafeGround, the small organisation with big ideas working in disarmament, human security, climate change and refugees. I'm John Rodsted

Thank you for tuning in to our series Stay in Command where we talk about lethal autonomous weapons, the Australian context and why we must not delegate decision making from humans to machines.

Matilda Byrne is the national coordinator of the Australian Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is an international effort to preemptively create a binding treaty that will bring restrictions and the ban to a concept of weapons system that would have no meaningful human control - lethal autonomous weapons or killer robots. She holds a master's degree in international relations and is presently working on a PhD, on international security and global governance. Welcome Tilly.

Matilda Byrne: Thank you for having me!

John Rodsted: Killer robots! Can you tell me what they are and why do you want them banned?

Matilda Byrne: Killer robots or lethal autonomous weapon systems are essentially weapons that are using artificial intelligence. And so for their selecting of targets and the decision to deploy lethal force, this is all done by the AI algorithms. So there's no human that oversees or intervenes or controls the targeting of people and then deciding to kill those people as targets. And so as for why we would like to ban these weapons, there's a whole host of different concerns across moral, ethical, legal, security concerns. For me, I think one of the most compelling things is this idea of delegating the decision making over life to a machine. And so seeing that as humanity, we are not prepared to have this decision done solely by an algorithm and that a human has to control this question of life and death of another human being.

Is Australia for or against killer robots? [00:03:20]

John Rodsted: So, where does Australia sit on this subject? Is Australia for killer robots or against them?

Australia, regrettably has this position where they say it's premature to support a ban. They've been saying this for years now. And essentially what this means is that Australia would like to have the option to potentially develop lethal autonomous weapons in the future. And so beyond that as well, they have suggested many times in public forums, so at the United Nations and in their own sort of reports and things that these weapons could potentially be also desirable. And so we need to research more. We want to look at developments in this direction and see how it could be really positive for our military.

Obviously this is an incredibly disappointing position, especially because there's been no attempt by the Australian government or defence to engage with the idea of human control and actually to maintain human control in the decision making.

There are strong diplomatic efforts from civil society to get a ban on these weapons before they are developed and deployed, in short a treaty. Is this movement gaining any traction? And if so, with who?

Matilda Byrne: Yes, it definitely is. We've been seeing growing momentum towards these calls for a ban. And so first you have the different governments of the world. There is a grouping of 120 different countries called the non-aligned movement who have declared their support for a ban. In addition, there's also 30 different countries who have explicitly stated that they support a ban in the talks at the specific forum that deals with this issue of lethal autonomous weapons.

And as well as that, you've mentioned the civil society movement. So we have a lot of tech workers that are speaking up about having a ban and why that's really important for their work. So people in software, AI design, robotics, et cetera. There's also a lot of academics across different areas; so morality, ethics, philosophers, international security. They, I would say are the main sort of people, in addition to the kind of coordinated non-government organizations of the world that are working as part of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

Is Australia creating killer robots? [00:05:36]

John Rodsted: Australia has a large research and development facilities in many universities and they do exceptional work in software and engineering along with medical advances. Are we working on creating killer robots or at least the software and the technology?

Matilda Byrne: The short answer is probably. So, what we know is that in a lot of our universities, there's a lot of research that's done in partnership with the department of defence and as well as defence industry. In a lot of those programs, there's a lot happening at the moment in autonomy; autonomous capabilities, autonomous systems, the kind of sensors that you would need for these weapons. Because we haven't explicitly stated at the department of defence that we are in fact, creating lethal autonomous weapons systems, it's impossible to know for sure the extent to which university research is being incorporated into such weapons. But what we do know is that the capabilities are there and that it would be very easy through these programs for those to be used for these weapons if that was the direction the Australian government decided to take.

How would kiler robots benefit Australian universities?

[00:06:44]

John Rodsted: So if a university gets involved in research and development, how would it actually benefit the university?

Matilda Byrne: So I think one of the large incentives for universities to be involved with these programs is money. So they have received funding from the government, pretty

simply. And I think a couple of the other things are more around reputation and marketing for the university. So they're involved in cutting edge and innovative programs, language like this, which is true. And, it's not an issue in and of itself for the university to do great groundbreaking research in AI and software and things like this. What's important is that they do have policies in place that say, as a university, we oppose lethal autonomous weapon systems and do not want our research being then contributing to the development of these weapons.

An ethics issue [00:07:35]

John Rodsted: So with the sort of technological advances, it really turns into an ethics issue, to draw the line between where a certain technology or algorithm can be used for, or effectively good or for weapon systems. So it does turn into ethics.

Matilda Byrne: Yeah, that's exactly right. If you put it really simply, just because something can be developed, it doesn't mean that it should. And I think you could retrospectively apply this to a lot of other weapons. So the creation of the atomic bomb or agent orange that we saw had devastating impacts. And having kind of learned from the past, we can then ask ourselves, well, what's the onus on us at present to prevent the development of something that would be abhorrent. And I think that there is an onus, and that it is really important to take into consideration these ethical dimensions.

John Rodsted: So what are the thoughts of some of the developers that their technology might be used to kill masses of people?

Matilda Byrne: So I suppose in terms of developers, you could put them in three categories. You have the people that are developing in these programs with defence and looking at lethal autonomous weapon systems. And I'm sure from their perspective, they're not thinking about how, what they're doing could cause mass civilian casualties. They're thinking about how they're contributing to the national security of Australia, things like this, but it is really problematic when there's then no controls or real consideration and reflection within those programs as to what it is that they are exactly doing and what the repercussions are.

Then you have developers in the sector that are just unaware that this is something that's taking place. They're a really important group that they sort of go about developing whatever is they're doing, sensors, algorithms, unaware that in the future, perhaps, this work that they're doing could be used for a lethal autonomous weapons system.

And then of course you have the people that are aware that this is a real concern and that are really troubled by this prospect. And they sort of face really tough decisions. The things like having to turn down a project that could be really positive for say, Agriculture, because it looks at targeting pests and eliminating pests in the native Australian environment, which they feel uncomfortable to do because they know that that system could be repurposed and turned into a lethal autonomous weapon in the absence of any real regulation.

John Rodsted: So regulation really is such a key factor to controlling and keeping a cap on these technologies?

Matilda Byrne: Yes, that's right. It's a key point in terms of delineating what is acceptable and what's not.

How much money? [00:10:13]

John Rodsted: Have you got any idea what kind of money is floating about within Australia at present developing various components or platforms for autonomous weapons?

Matilda Byrne: It's actually a very alarmingly high amount of money. The main area where we know that autonomous weapons or autonomous systems development is happening is 'trusted autonomous systems', which is quite an ironic name, also -'trusted systems'. This is a defence cooperative research centre. What that means is it's a partnership between the department of defence, research institutions like universities and also arms manufacturers or the defence industry. Trusted autonomous systems was the first research centre like this to be launched and it was awarded \$50 million for its first seven years of operation. That's an area where we know a lot of the development is happening around autonomy for defence. But in addition, for example, just at the beginning of this year in January, the Royal Australian Air Force announced \$40 million for a project with Boeing to make an autonomous combat aircraft. So that one project of these prototypes was 40 million, as I said.

We know since the release of the defence strategic update, that there's an \$11 billion investment also in our land vehicles and autonomy specifically, to be made over the next 10 years. And as well as that, I think lastly, and sort of most problematic of all of these, it's less money, it's \$9 million, but this is for a project that Australia says is to research how we embed ethics into killer robots. Which is a very bizarre and just problematic concept. The fact that this is something that Australia sees is good to do or important to do instead of just drawing a line and saying, we accept that fully autonomous weapons or lethal autonomous weapons will never be lawful, I think quite appalling.

Why do defence want them? [00:12:08]

John Rodsted: defenceWhy would the Australian defence force want these weapons systems?

Matilda Byrne: There's a few reasons why lethal autonomous weapons could be desirable. One of the main ones is in terms of response time. So this idea that there'll be much faster to make decisions. Some of the other things are around longevity. So if you have a person that's having to make decisions, fatigue and things, whereas these machines could just go and go and go.

And also, there's been arguments by the military, that they'll also be good for precision. Which I think as well as a bit of a flawed idea, when we think about how they do their targeting and we know that they will not be successful in targeting actual military targets correctly. And that there's this huge room for error where they could falsely or, or wrongly engage civilians instead.

But one of the huge ones, is that idea of response time in that it's beyond human endurance to do certain things. I think though on that point, what it really means is that we're prepared to then have all of these machines that then just escalate the pace of warfare. Because if we don't need a human to react, then machines can go much faster, which will ultimately cause more devastation and severe impacts.

Can they escalate conflicts? [00:13:27]

John Rodsted: One of the points you made there was about how it would escalate a conflict, because it would be response versus response and things would keep going faster and faster. And one of the roles of a commander is to take into account all sorts of things that are changing battlefield and try to de-escalate a conflict because that's part of a command responsibility.

And, and I think of an analogy to this would be the Russian Colonel back in the early eighties who held off doing a nuclear strike on America when their instrumentation to all intents and purposes showed that a full nuclear strike was heading to Russia. What's his name? Stanislav Petrov. He wouldn't launch the counter attack because he just believed something was wrong with the system. And he was proved to be right. And if it was left to a machine, it would have been a full nuclear response on America. And that would have been world war three. And it was one person in that loop who stopped the reaction. So, yes, the concept escalation or deescalation is a very important point to consider.

So could you paint me a picture of a battle using autonomous weapons? Now, what would they do instead of how would they do it?

Matilda Byrne: So I think the thing about fully autonomous weapons or having these killer robots in battle, it's a lot more insidious than what we might think about, which is, ultimately having these little robots, driving around an area at war and firing at each other. It's much closer to what we see at the present in sort of context of urban warfare, where you have drones circulating around. And then these are ones that are able to strike. You're able to have more of them go into areas. I think, initially, it's going to look not totally dissimilar to how warfare looks now. But just with a lot less accountability. And a lot less humans actually having to make these hard decisions and exercising and evaluating the current context and making sort of thoughtful decisions. Instead, it's going to be these robots flying around going, "Oh yeah! That fits my parameters. So I'm going to fire" without looking at things like; collateral damage. Is this really worth it for the strategic gains? All of these really essential evaluations that commanders do have currently, and that they have to take into account in order to maintain international humanitarian law.

Is there any human control? [00:15:47]

John Rodsted: So where's the point of human command and control in the targeting of autonomous weapons, or is that a set and forget, technology or is there a point that they can intervene to pull things off?

Matilda Byrne: What's incredibly concerning, in particular about the Australian position, is some of the remarks that they've made recently when pressed on this idea of human involvement. One of the things that the Chief of the Defence Force, General Campbell has stated is that there's never one answer for where a human would be involved. And we're one of the only countries that has stated something like this in the world, if the only. And I think what that means is we're trying to leave the door open and say, well, maybe it's at the very beginning when we choose who the target is, or maybe it's a little bit later. Or, you know, we just don't know, we're not committing to where the human's going to be involved or where if there will be any human control over targeting and selecting and choosing to deploy lethal force.

What can go wrong? [00:16:49]

John Rodsted: So what could go wrong with autonomous weapons?

Matilda Byrne: One is machine error, which I think you touched on, is definitely a huge concern. As well as that you have also a great risk of hacking, and the security of these systems which is very troubling. Because the more these machines are capable of, if they are hacked, the more negative the ramifications are. So there's other concerns also around if they could be used as a tool of oppression. So for committing genocide or other sort of atrocities and oppression. Because it isn't hard to set a certain set of parameters for the targets and all people in this one kilometer radius or whatever, into these systems and just send them off and go; 'okay - go'. And these robots don't have a conscience. So it's not like military personnel turning around and saying, no, we're actually not comfortable to fire on our a hundred thousand people that are gathered in this square protesting against the government. It's just this tool where it's free of any sort of human conscience or decision making. And so it's very, very problematic. And I guess that's not so much an instance of it going wrong, but about it being used for nefarious reasons that we hadn't necessarily thought about when we're thinking about just utilizing these systems in warfare.

Can killer robots be used for civil oppression? [00:18:07]

John Rodsted: I suppose it brings you to the point where how would the cross over into civil oppression be with autonomous weaponry? If you chose to use that to, for instance, the riots that are happening in various parts of the world at the moment, what would that look like? If people chose to use autonomous weapons against those civilians?

Matilda Byrne: Exactly. And I think though the risk that these systems could be used for domestic policing is really alarming. And the reality with these kinds of systems and the way the technology works is that if it is developed in one area, then it's easy to then change how it's used. But if it's never developed at all, because there is a ban in place, for instance, that it's much harder for people to conjure up these systems separately.

John Rodsted: So you take away the industrial manufacturing component, which can give you the ability to create masses of well-produced machinery. And it turns it into more of an ad-hoc method. So you won't get the saturation point.

Matilda Byrne: Right. Exactly.

Can killer robots follow international laws of war? [00:19:05]

John Rodsted: Battle fields are rapidly changing and confusing place. Hence the term, the fog of war. Much of how orders are given and followed depends on ethics, international humanitarian law, rules of war and engagement, Geneva conventions, et cetera. Could autonomous weapons be programmed to perfectly navigate such a space?

Matilda Byrne: The simple answer to that question is no. I want to break down one element of those parts of international law that you touched on, which is international humanitarian law. And even just two key elements of that, which is the principles of distinction and proportionality. So distinction is how a combatant and a civilian, are differentiated between. And that a soldier or whatever military personnel has to decide if someone is a civilian or not. The issue with a lethal autonomous weapon system trying to do this is that, that's not something that can be very easily understood or quantified. So what is it that they would be looking for? How do they understand that a child playing in the street who has picked up a gun, for two seconds and going; 'what's this?', - in that moment, isn't actually a combatant, and therefore a lawful target? It's these kinds of contextual knowledge and things that we have to understand and evaluate and judge. That are crucial in getting the decisions right in warfare and that a machine just simply could not.

Proportionality is similar because what proportionality asks is, is this particular kill decision and the gains that we will get from this strategically, will they outweigh any damage that's caused? And so to understand that you need to have knowledge of the whole conflict that is being fought, where it's being fought, these sort of different values, as I said before, are not quantifiable. And so for a lethal autonomous weapon system, to be able to do this, it's practically impossible.

Earlier I mentioned the initiative by the Australian Defence Force to do a project, to look at if we could embed ethics and embed these laws into these robots. And the sort of things that they've said publicly about this is for instance, that, well, we know that the red cross symbol is a civilian target. And so we will teach the machine that if there is a red cross symbol, they will not fire on that target. But then I think the question is, well, it could be much more complicated than that. It's very easy to confound and confuse these systems. So for instance, if you are a non state actor, that is an enemy actor, so say a terrorist group, you then put a red cross symbol on your van and are suddenly immune. And I think there's just all of these complexities that as much as we might try to make a system of rules and a list of things that will help the systems, it's never going to be enough and it's going to cause other problems also.

Does Civil Society have any input into the process in Australia? [00:21:54]

John Rodsted: So it comes down to making that individual judgment for the specific situation that you're looking at on that specific time and day and the machinations of what that fight may be. So I gather the Australian military claims they're conducting ethical debates that will solve these issues. But these discussions are only within defence, developers and the government - all stakeholders wanting autonomous weapons. Where's civil society in this discussion? Civil society traditionally is the ethical voice and the ethical conscience of government.

Matilda Byrne: So there have been defence ethical workshops where they've been talking through these kinds of ethical considerations of using AI in defence and things like that. But as you say, they're closed groups. And so they're defence personnel or researchers in ethics that work with defence. They're not independent voices or any of the academics with great knowledge in this area that have a different opinion that might alter how defence needs to take its approach. And so this is one thing that's really problematic that civil society very much is on the outside. And if we're the checks and balances, and we're not part of those conversations, it's about us then waiting for instance, for the defence department to release their new chapter. Which is forthcoming of the military doctrine, which talks about how they are going to use AI ethically. And then read this and find all those flaws and say, well, no, this is a problem. And what we've found is that in the lead up to this, in any time where the defence department has spoken to this in a public forum, it's this constant ambiguity that where human control is shirked they will say that we're really understanding that there's ethical considerations and that we have to understand what we can and cannot automate. Or statements like sometimes we want to up the amount of AI, but other times we will pull it back, but they'll never make a commitment to rule out having no human control over the decision making. How we change that, I guess is the really big question as concerned civil society in Australia, because that is a policy that is not good enough for our defence force.

That is if they had to conduct themselves in that way, as Australians, we should be really concerned about what that says for how we hold international law in regard as a country.

Responsibility and Liability [00:24:06]

John Rodsted: I suppose that brings us to a point of responsibility and liability cause any action that has taken place on a battlefield, whether it's a standard battle or if it's going to be the use of lethal autonomous weapons, someone is always held accountable. And even under the current situation of drones, there's still a drone operator. There is somebody who is making the final decision to strike and liability will go there. So how do they see it? If you rest that liability across to a machine and the machine makes an incorrect decision and kills a lot of civilians, as simple as that, who then is responsible?

Matilda Byrne: That is a very good question. And I think that is the whole point, right? So the robot itself cannot be held accountable. That is just totally insufficient. Victims have no form of recourse. But the other problem is that it's also really hard to hold a commander or the person that deployed the weapon accountable under international law as it is currently. So what it says at the moment is that if a person can foresee that an event is going to occur, that will break international law and does nothing to intervene or allows it to go ahead, they

can then be found responsible and accountable. The problem is with using AI in particular and these lethal autonomous weapons, the person in question deploying the weapon could never know the way it functions. there's this black box phenomenon. So that essentially means that the way the weapon decides how it's going to target, why and who, as humans looking at the system, we can never understand that. And so there's no way to foresee an error or no way to know that it's going to go wrong. And so in terms of legally under international law, then being able to apply accountability, there is this massive gap, which is a huge problem.

The Guilty Act and the Guilty Mind = Responsible Individual [00:25:59]

John Rodsted: That, negates the basic legal concept with law, 'actus reus' and 'mens rea', which is the guilty act and the guilty mind and the combination of the two create a responsible individual. I suppose that when you give that to the artificial intelligence and lethal autonomous weapons, they negate that responsibility and they're passing it off into the ether for whatever.

What are the nations that are developing autonomous weapons and how far advanced are they?

Matilda Byrne: There's just a handful of countries really that are developing. So these are the US, the UK, Russia, China, Israel, South Korea and Australia. And so these are quite wealthy countries. There are countries that tend to be allied with each other in little blocks. and in terms of how close we are, it's actually really hard to tell because obviously they don't divulge all of this information publicly. But what we do know is that autonomous systems are in place. We know we can have some kind of targeting done by sensors and sort of the fact is that a crude version of the lethal autonomous weapon wouldn't be hard to make. And so for instance, professor Toby Walsh, who is an AI expert has said that in his belief, it would only take probably four weeks from what we have at the moment to throw together effectively, what is a lethal autonomous weapons system. The reason why we're not seeing this is because those systems would obviously be breaking international humanitarian law. So there's this lag time in trying to find a way to build a system that looks to be adhering to international humanitarian law that could be then used. And so this is kind of the main element that is, I think holding back the escalation from where we are now with our current autonomous systems and weapons and sort of where they're going to actually having a lethal autonomous weapon system used in a battlefield.

Asymmetric Wars and Global Insecurity [00:27:53]

John Rodsted: That list of countries that you just gave, there's a lot of wealth in that list. Lethal autonomous weapons, killer robots, artificial intelligence. Is it only really going to benefit the countries with the wealth and the manufacturing potential to develop these and then manufacture at a high rate and build up large stockpiles? I guess what that creates is a

situation of asymmetric warfare, where you've got the powerful, the wealthy, and you've got everybody else. So it creates a very uneven, geopolitical situation for conflicts.

Matilda Byrne: Yes in terms of contributing to asymmetry in warfare, having those countries that are well able to mass produce and just have a sort of constantly replenishing force of autonomous weapons that they send to warfare. What it also means is that it then becomes easier to wage war, especially if you are one of those countries.

And so in particular, for wars, it might be considered imperialist or interventionists. When you don't have the risk of having to send your own troops anymore, because you can just mass produce autonomous weapons. You don't have the same political risk of announcing to your country that you're sending your peoples to war. That also plays into this idea of asymmetric warfare.

On the other side, however, the interesting thing about this weapons is that they can also be made in a really crude form and done so relatively cheaply, depending on what you have at your disposal and the real concern about this is how they could be then repurposed to fall into the hands of non-state actors in particular. So terrorist groups utilizing a very rudimentary form of these weapons to then send out and enact various forms of violence. So it's a funny one because it, in fact, is this risk of being used in two very different ways by two very different sets of actors in a way that is problematic for global stability and the safety and security of people across the globe.

Can civil society drive a disarmament treaty? [00:29:55]

John Rodsted: There's some pretty strong examples of civil society leading the creation of disarmament treaties, such as the treaty that banned landmines, the one that ban cluster munitions and nuclear weapons. Has the stop killer robots campaign drawn much from these movements?

Matilda Byrne: Yes for sure. So I think the strength of civil society is something that we have seen be very effective and be really important. Really it's up to civil society to create the political will and the impetus to actually have action by our governments at an international level. And we've seen the success, as you mentioned, with that in the campaign to ban landmines, also for cluster munitions, and more recently with nuclear weapons. And so this idea that a coordinated civil society effort that spans countries all across the world from all continents coming together for a common cause and working to lobby for action and for a new treaty does have success and can then reduce harms to civilians in conflict by stopping the proliferation of, and use of these weapons.

Is a preemptive ban possible? [00:31:03]

John Rodsted: I guess one of the differences between autonomous weapons and for instance, landmines, cluster bombs, nuclear weapons, is they were all created and they were all deployed, they were used so effectively. The genie was already out of the bottle and

trying to create treaties that could then bring about an elimination of a weapon system that already existed was very difficult.

We're trying to create a treaty that would deal with artificial intelligence, lethal autonomous weapons, killer robots, is trying to create something before it actually is deployed and creates a humanitarian catastrophe. Are there any precedents for dealing with a weapon system, which has been effectively on the drawing board, but not yet deployed?

Matilda Byrne: Yes there is actually. And I think it's quite a positive and exciting thing that we can preemptively ban a weapon before it takes any victims. And I think it's something that we really need to be working tirelessly towards. And it has been done before. So for instance, in 1995, blinding lasers were preemptively banned. Listeners might not have heard of a blinding laser, because they were never made. And what's also important is that laser technology has still advanced. So it's just a great example, because often what people say is that, well, if we ban lethal autonomous weapons, then that's a big problem for the advancement of autonomy in general - so this would be proponents of lethal autonomous weapons, giving this kind of idea. However, we know that other applications aren't affected because we've seen that in lasers and laser technology after the effective ban of blinding lasers. And actually the protocol to ban blinding lasers was done at what's called the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which is a forum of the United Nations. And this is the same forum that's been discussing lethal autonomous weapons systems. **We hope that like blinding lasers** they would be able to take leadership within that forum and come to an agreement to preemptively ban lethal autonomous weapons systems also. But as talks have gone on, certain States like Russia have blocked progress in terms of launching a phase of negotiations for prohibiting lethal autonomous weapons systems. That's looking more and more unlikely in this particular forum. So it's the same forum where landmines were also discussed initially and then moved outside of the forum to effectively negotiate a really strong and robust treaty, which prohibited landmines.

US influence on Australia? [00:33:34]

John Rodsted: So how much influence does the US desire to develop autonomous weapons have on Australian policy and involvement in development?

Matilda Byrne: Obviously Australia doesn't stand up and say, "We are developing these weapons because the US is also, and we want to make sure we're on the same standing as them. And we are creating weaponry in the same league" or anything to that effect. However, I think it's quite naive to think that there is no link between the Australian and the US Alliance and why we have the stance that we do. So what we know is that Australia and its defence and foreign policy is so linked and influenced by the sort of reliance, I would say, that we have on the US. I've actually heard one of our senators. Senator Jordon Steele-John put it that Australia has a 'realpolitik' to feel needed. And I think this quote in particular speaks to lethal autonomous weapons. This idea that Australia can innovate and be 'cutting edge' and do these extra research to put autonomy and autonomous weapons forward, that it can then funnel to the US, is this sort of big reason why Australia conducts itself in the way

that it is. And I also think it's quite a shame because I think there's no reason why Australia couldn't be closely allied with the US and still a partner in certain endeavors, but have its own independent policy and thought processes around things like disarmament. So we've seen before Australia take the lead in the Arms Trade Treaty, in negotiating some really, really constructive new international law there. But then on an issue like this, why can't Australia continue to do so and stand separate from the US and say, whilst we are looking at some autonomous capabilities in defence, we know that there must always be human control over decision making. And therefore we will support a ban in an international setting. And we will create these commitments within our defence force. And differentiate itself a little bit and be its own moral compass and take a stand internationally. Because I think really that's what Australians would like to see Australia do. I know, certainly from my perspective, in terms of our policy choices, it should be driven by what's in the best interest of Australia and what's in the best interest of the world, and that shouldn't be influenced by choices of another country.

What can people do to help bring Australia to a ban?

[00:36:07]

John Rodsted: So where to from here and what can ordinary people do?

Matilda Byrne: Civil society's role is to create political will. And that's the same here in Australia. What we know in Australia is that this issue has had very little parliamentary attention, which means it happens behind closed doors at the department of defence and in the military and what we really need to see is more discussion in parliament, more scrutiny on Australia and what it's doing. So the best things for an ordinary person to do is one) to become educated or informed on this issue. So you can look at stopkillerrobots.org, a website with all the information from a global point of view.

Also, you can follow what the Australian campaign is doing and sort of our content. We have a report that's available that you will be able to download, and have all sorts of information about different sectors of society.

And as well as that, I think if you are really compelled and you feel really concerned about this issue, one of the best things you could do is write to your local MP and say as much as a constituent of their area, this is an area where you feel the parliament needs to examine more and sort of raise it on their radar so that we can have more attention on this issue throughout the country.

John Rodsted: So basically it comes down to get educated and get your thoughts to the people who are legislators within our country?

Matilda Byrne: That's exactly right. And also share amongst your own networks and friends, so that there's a snowball effect of more people finding out.

Well, thanks, Tilly. We've been talking to Matilda Byrne who's the national coordinator of The Stop Killer Robots Campaign and good luck with your endeavors. And we will keep an

eye on how things are changing over the next few months. Thanks for talking to us on SafeGround.

Thank you very much.

How to connect with the campaign and SafeGround.

[00:37:59]

John Rodsted: If you want to know more look for us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram - Australia Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, or use the hashtag “AusBanKillerRobots”

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