



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**The Australia Group**

# **CHALLENGES TO PREVENTING CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS PROLIFERATION: THE AUSTRALIA GROUP**

The 26<sup>th</sup> Asian Export Control Seminar  
Tokyo, 26-28 February 2019

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# WHAT IS THE AUSTRALIA GROUP?

- The harmonisation of export controls between Australia Group participants seeks to ensure their exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons.
- Supports UN Member States to meet their international obligations:
  - Chemical Weapons Convention
  - Biological Weapons Convention
  - United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540.

Fighting the spread of chemical and  
biological weapons

Strengthening global security



# AUSTRALIA GROUP ORIGINS

- In 1984 the world discovered Iraq had produced and used chemical weapons.
- Australia Group was created in 1985 to stop legitimate trade being diverted to chemical weapons production.
- In the early 1990s UN investigations discovered that Iraq had a biological weapons program.
- Consequently, export controls were expanded to include biological weapons.





# SADLY, CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE CONTINUES

- Examples:
  - Iraq
  - Syria
  - Malaysia
  - United Kingdom.
  
- OPCW now has mandate to attribute chemical weapons use.



# 2018 AUSTRALIA GROUP STATEMENT ON CHEMICAL WEAPONS

- In 2018, Australia Group participants issued a statement expressing grave concerns and alarm at the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons.
- They condemned the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria and expressed concerns at the attack using a nerve agent in the UK.
- Full Australia Group statement on chemical weapons at: [https://australiagroup.net/en/statement\\_on\\_chemical\\_weapons\\_180608.html](https://australiagroup.net/en/statement_on_chemical_weapons_180608.html)



# CHALLENGES IN HARMONISING CONTROLS AND ENFORCEMENT

- Each Australia Group country has national controls:
  - Legislation (includes “catch-all” provisions)
  - Implementation (e.g. licences)
  - Enforcement (e.g. customs inspections).



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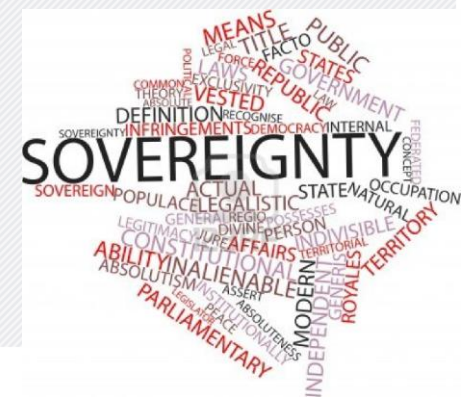






## ONGOING CHALLENGES: DENIALS

- The Australia Group aims to ensure export controls do not hinder legitimate trade, and to legitimise trade in sensitive items.
- There are very few Australia Group export denials.
- Export denials:
  - are a national sovereign decision
  - based on AG Guidelines and Control Lists
  - information shared within the Australia Group
  - “no-undercut” policy.
- Provides confidence to trading partners.





# NEW CHALLENGES: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- Technological developments
  - emerging biotechnologies.
- Methods of trade (e.g. internet, eBay)
- Intangible Technology Transfers (ITT)
  - transfers of knowledge
  - transfers of technical data in non-physical ways.

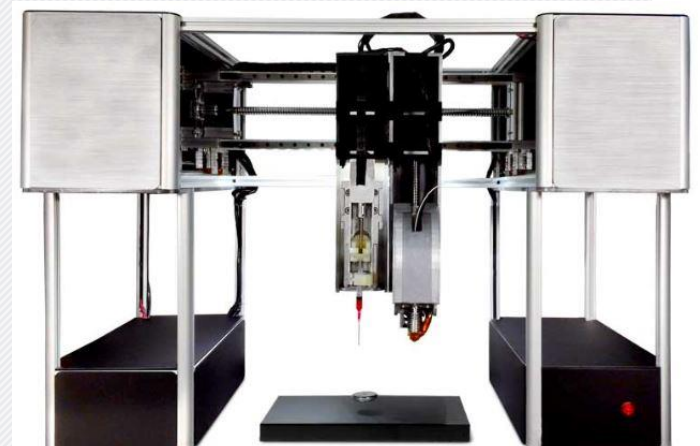




# POTENTIAL CHALLENGES: CASE STUDY

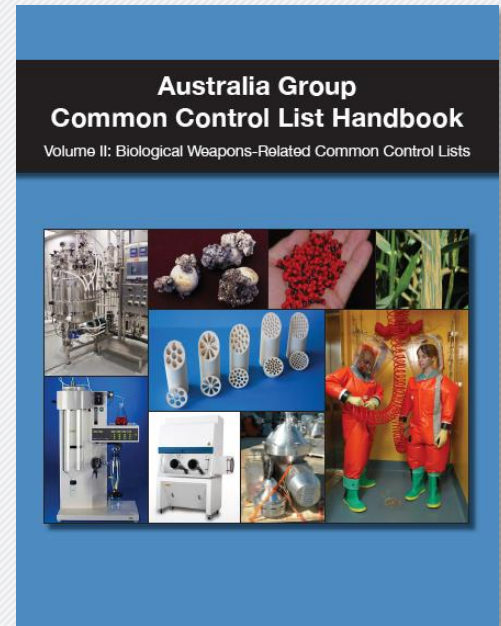
## 3D BIOPRINTING

- 3D bioprinting now allows for the production of organoids (artificially grown masses of cells or tissue that resemble an organ).
- 3D bioprinting is a dual use technology with beneficial applications.
- Computer-aided designs are inexpensive and readily available.
- Bio-inks are commercially available.



# RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES: AUSTRALIA GROUP GROUP ENGAGEMENT

- Engagement with:
  - non-member countries
  - industry, academia and civil society.
- Highlighting the threat of state and non-state actors acquiring chemical/biological weapons.
- Strong export controls provide the business community with confidence and certainty.





# RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES: AUSTRALIA GROUP DIALOGUE AND OUTREACH

- Perth, June 2015 – 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Dialogue
- Buenos Aires, February 2017 - Dialogue with Latin American countries
- London, March 2018 - Dialogue with African countries
- Malta, March 2019 - planned Dialogue
- Regular outreach visits





## RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES: AUSTRALIA GROUP PLENARY

- The Australia Group Plenary in June 2018 focused on:
  - emerging technologies; science and potential exploitation of cyber space;
  - preventing proliferation of chemical/biological weapons-related goods, technologies and information to non-state actors;
  - chemical and biological terrorism;
  - intangible technology transfers; proliferation financing; procurement, transshipment and broader proliferation networks; and
  - expanding outreach to non-Australia Group countries, industry and academia, including Dialogues, to encourage all states to implement robust export controls.

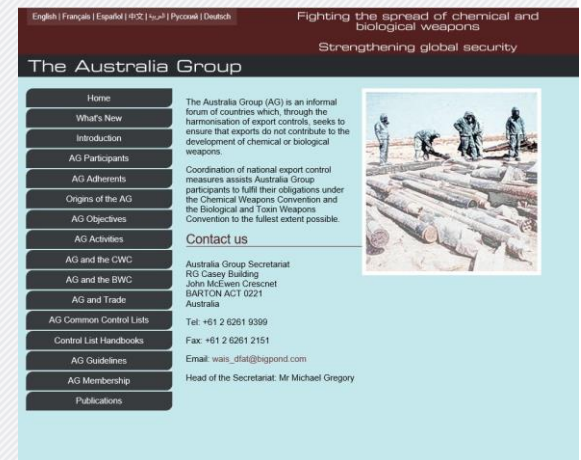




# AUSTRALIA GROUP CONTACT



- Australia Group Secretariat
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- Australia Group website  
[www.australiagroup.net](http://www.australiagroup.net)  
(in English, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Russian and Spanish)



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