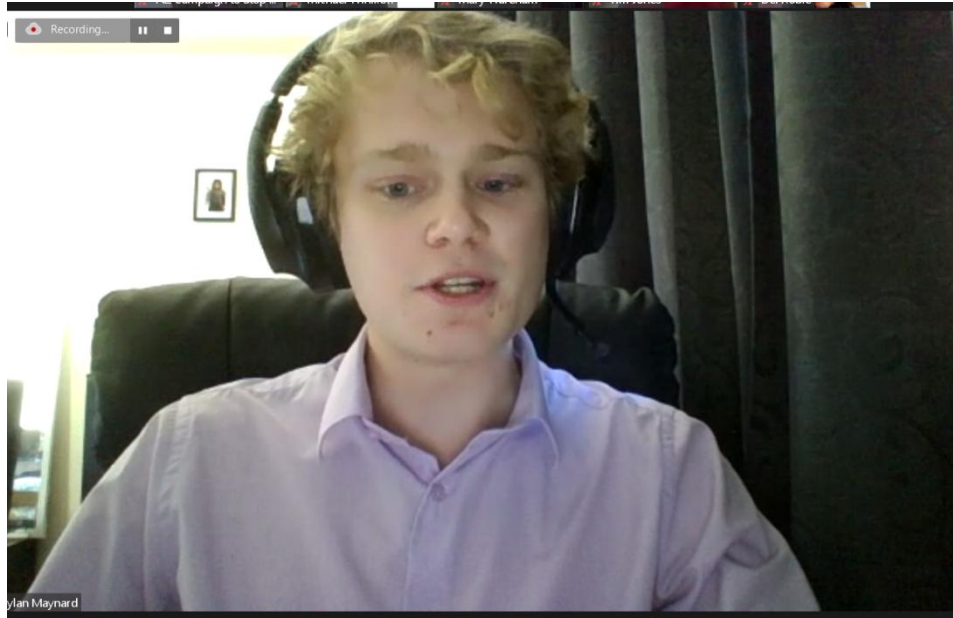


Dylan Maynard speaking notes: Online handover of the Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign to Stop Killer Robots petition to parliament, 29 September 2021



Dylan Maynard. Credit: Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

Thank you, Edwina - I really appreciate the opportunity to speak at this event today. Thank you too Minister Twyford, for accepting this petition on the behalf of the government. I feel very grateful to have a government which is taking proactive measures against the threat of Autonomous Weapon Systems.

It is on feelings of gratitude that I would like to centre my comments around today.

I found out most of what I now know about Autonomous Weapon Systems while studying my bachelor's degree and working at an internship with the New Zealand Red Cross. Before then, the idea of mechanised weapons of war autonomously making decisions over life and death, seemed like something out of science fiction to me. Coming to learn that, not only was this a prospect that was very much real, but something that could prove to be a real threat in my lifetime or my future children's lifetime, was definitely a big wakeup call.

Growing up as part of a generation that has been so overtly aware of the major threats we face in our future - many (like climate change) being existential in nature - it is easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of seemingly insurmountable challenges that we face. Autonomous Weapon Systems was another that definitely made me feel very concerned and quite frightened.

But, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, also very grateful.

You see, my generation was not there at the advent of the nuclear weapon. We did not get the chance have our voices heard before those weapons were refined and upgraded into even more destructive devices, and proliferated to countries across the world. Nor were we there at the advent of the landmine or the cluster-bomb - we did not get a chance to have a say before those indiscriminate methods of killing and maiming brought indescribable pain to thousands.

My generation gets this chance with Autonomous Weapon Systems. We get a chance to have our say on the next evolution of warfare, and express our abhorrence at its potential ramifications. The chance to take action before we see the widespread suffering that these technologies have such a potential for causing. The chance to push for international and domestic legislation, to ensure that the devastating potential of these weapons doesn't impact our futures here in Aotearoa, or the futures of so many people across the globe.

We have such an amazing opportunity to change the world for the better, proactively - before destruction and devastation force us to.

And that opportunity is something I encourage everyone to take up, with both hands, and be truly grateful for.

Thank you

- Dylan Maynard 29/09/21