

Michael Pilbrow

As a citizen, I am a supporter of the principle of alliances between nations - in an interdependent world, cooperation is better than confrontation or isolation. However, I am concerned at the nature of Australia's alliance with the United States and how it has led to Australia joining offensive wars around the world that have led to the tragic loss of life of Australian soldiers, the deaths of countless civilians in other countries and - rather than achieving stated aims around democracy and nation building - have contributed to greater instability and conflict. It is time to reshape the alliance with the United States so that it is focused on defence of our nations, not attacking other nations, takes into account the cost of war and only commits our troops to wars that are worthy of the sacrifice that they make.

I have a very brief submission made up of a single recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION: The Australian alliance with the United States should reflect the spirit and the letter of the ANZUS treaty where each signatory “recognises that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.”

This would mean that the alliance would be about the defence of Australia and the United States when either country faces an armed attack on their own soil. It would mean the alliance could not be used to draw Australia into offensive wars in other parts of the world. Australia's recent experience in joining the United States in wars that have had nothing to do with the defence of either country has been disastrous - the Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq wars caused massive loss of life of soldiers and civilians, cost huge amounts of money, contributed to the mental health burden of our veterans and were disastrously unsuccessful in achieving the objectives set by the United States (which in hindsight look ridiculous as they involved the delusion that foreign military invasion would win hearts and minds, bring democracy and build nations).

Martin Luther King, in one of his less famous quotes, said "be true to what you said on paper" - he was speaking to America during the civil rights era about the freedoms written in the Bill of Rights, but this sentiment could just as much apply to Australia's alliance with the US. We have written on paper that our alliance is about the defence of both countries, plain and simple...it is not asking much to be true to this.