

I am a member of Vintage Reds, a group of retired union activists in Canberra. It was at a Vintage Red meeting that I was introduced to IPAN and resolved to devote some time to a submission to your important inquiry.

Background:

As a child during WW2, I thought it was exciting to go to the wharf and to wave off my uncles who were going to war. I remember all the soldiers on the ship and all the streamers that were thrown down to us, stretching and then ultimately breaking as the ship departed. Little did I know!

I witnessed nine members of my mother's and father's family become directly involved in the war. The youngest of these, mother's youngest brother, Lloyd aged 19, suffocated and died whilst tank training on Fraser Island. I can still see my beautiful mother stumble when she got the news. Two other brothers of my father became POWs. Greg was in Germany and Jack was in Changi.

Greg was captured in Crete and went to a series of POW camps in Germany; he was the luckiest in the family and didn't display obvious trauma post war.

Can you imagine for a moment my grandmother's anguish? When Jack returned to Australia from Changi we all went to Concord where the soldiers stood by their kitbags. We were advised to proceed slowly along the lines, looking for their name on the kitbag, as many were so changed in appearance we might have trouble recognising them. Jack left the GPO in Martin Place where he worked as a 19 stone, 6'2", telegraphist, nick-named 'the big fella'. He was 7 stone when he came home. Like many others, Jack became a "gutter lying" drunk, in and out of hospitals, malaria, beriberi, heart failure, until rescued by a pre-war sweetheart who "took him on". Jack died prematurely, some 6 years later.

Concord was our Sunday afternoon outing to visit the psychiatric ward to see another uncle of mine, Nelson. He was co-opted into the New Guinea Rifles whilst working as a civilian. He never recovered and this destroyed the lives of my beautiful Aunty Doll (my mother's sister) and my precious cousins.

The war dominated my childhood and my family. The lesson for me was firstly, a repugnance for war and secondly, the realisation of the devastation of my family for generations to come. I can still see the effects in my family to this day.

Issue: Need for an Act of Parliament

At this juncture in history, there is nothing more urgent for Australia than a firm, clear, stance on war and our involvement in it. I am making this submission because Australia requires urgent action to divert us from this road to self-destruction. This should never be the discretion of the Prime Minister or the Government of the day.

Australia needs Parliamentary approval before any Australians are sent to war.

Issue: The Australia US Alliance

The people who prefer war to peace are those who gain from it – (generally they are not in the firing line). They gain money and/or kudos or self-aggrandising job opportunities from their own circle of enthusiasts e.g. generals, industrialists, megalomaniacs and psychopaths. Since WW2, the U.S.A. is repeatedly driven to making wars and drawing nations like Australia into conflicts; the US does not win these militarily incursions. The only winners are the arms industry who flourish irrespective of the outcome.

The US has its own agenda for war to maintain its primacy. Australia needs to be more careful and consider their actions before blindly agreeing to the dictates of the US. Australia and Australians suffer terribly at the cost of militarism. The U.S.A. spends miserably on the welfare of its citizens (e.g. housing, health, education) but puts trillions into projecting itself

as the unipolar power par excellence.

If anyone has any doubt over the danger of being closely allied with the US they should read "The Pentagon Papers" derived from a report compiled by Robert McNamara. It is a detailed account of lies and deception driven by ideology at the expense of US, Australian, Vietnamese and many other lives. This ideology has as its base fervent opposition to Communism (the enemy of Capitalism), driven by Christianity which fearfully and illogically regards atheistic Communism as an existential threat capable of putting the Christian church out of business. We can blunder into another war if we are not careful and mindful. Time is well overdue for Australia to examine ANZUS and expand our diplomatic service to provide the alternative of dialogue, debate, discussion and pragmatism to counter aggressive militarism.

Conclusion:

For someone like me, I am antagonistic to deceptions and constructs of evil and/or terrorism (eg "weapons of mass destruction") to justify invasions, profiteering and the wholesale destruction of other nations for the insatiable aspiration for US primacy.

The US does not understand "a just war"; what they mean is creating opportunities for exploitation of resources and assets of perceived enemies for US capital prosperity.

To all intents and purposes the U.S.A. is a failing state as exhibited by the shambolic Trump administration and their handling of the Covid crisis.