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Australian ventures of war and militarism inflict harms on women and children that take forms like prostitution, sex trafficking, sexually transmitted disease, abandoned offspring, and pornography. These harms accrue to women and children both within Australia as well as abroad. They are already prevalent in 'peacetime' Australian society due to sex industry deregulation and male-dominant social conditions, but war and military venture in Australian history has contributed to their development.

Australian men prostituted women and girls through Australian army-licensed brothels in the Middle East in the Second World War,¹ but their first foray into industrialised sex-buying came with the occupation of Japan between 1946 and 1951. Then they got sexual access to local women during the Korean War, as well as women in Japan again while on recreation leave. Ten years later, they prostituted a range of Asian women during the Vietnam War between 1962 and 1972. This prostitution extended to women in Okinawa, and Australian troops are noted in historical materials as enthusiastic patrons of the island's local sex industry during the Vietnam War.

While this history of Australian military prostitution in Asia goes back more than forty years, there is evidence that the Australian army continues to exercise permissive attitudes to the sexual exploitation of women. In a 2018 online article titled 'Sex and War – A Conversation Army Has To Have', an Australian army captain proposed that 'the Army could contract Australian male and female sex workers to service troops in forward operating bases and air bases' much like the French military did in the 1950s with their 'Field Mobile Brothels'. This proposal was significant because it was drafted immediately after the captain had returned from an official Australian army 'study tour' to Vietnam.

The US military has entrenched problems of pornography usage among male recruits, and sexual assaults against female personnel. There is evidence of pornography circulating also among Australian military personnel. The documentary film 'Armadillo' captures in confronting terms pornography consumption and female sexual exploitation by male allied forces deployed to Afghanistan in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It is difficult to imagine this problem of military pornography usage has declined since that time, and it poses a mayor safety risk for female military personnel as well as populations of women in countries abroad where troops are deployed. Australian military personnel have already been caught with child exploitation and other materials.

Australia in 'peacetime' pursues state-level programs and policies against gender-based violence, and makes the issue, in rhetoric at least, a national government priority. Australia's military does not enact, however, any similar policy to that of the US military (since 2005) in officially barring personnel prostituting women wherever they are in the world. The prospect that Australian military personnel will again be stationed in Japan is concerning in light of the country's failure to recognise its military past as incorporating the prostitution of Asian women. Prostitution is often a topic of humour among Australian men, and especially military men, at the same time that the Japanese military 'comfort women' of the Second World War are understood as sympathetic victims deserving redress. But female sexual exploitation is the same no matter who male perpetrators, and the deployment of Australian personnel abroad with permissive attitudes towards the crime endangers both Australian female recruits as well as civilian women abroad who must suffer its consequences.

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