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Submission to the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network People's Inquiry

The Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia) congratulates IPAN for conducting this inquiry on the military alliance between the US and Australia, an inquiry made all the more important by the virtual taboo status that any criticism of the US alliance has achieved among our foreign policy and political elites.

MAPW welcomes this opportunity to contribute.

MAPW President: Dr Sue Wareham OAM

SUMMARY

The values that the US alliance promotes are not those of a more peaceful world, but a militarily aggressive one.

The alliance, as it is currently conducted, has greatly limited Australia's independence in foreign and military policy, with major costs for Australia. They include:

- Complicity with nuclear weapons policies, with Australia becoming a likely nuclear target;
- Involvement in disastrous US wars;
- An unnecessary deterioration of our relations with other nations, particularly China.

Social, economic and other impacts follow.

MAPW recognises that not all the developments outlined in this submission can be directly attributed to the US alliance; some could well have occurred without the alliance. However, we believe that Australia's almost unquestioning obedience to a nation for whom warfare is the normal state of affairs has made us more belligerent and warlike in the process.

An alliance does not need to be thus. This submission concludes with recommendations for a more mature relationship with our ally.

AFFILIATE



FOUNDER



INTRODUCTION – THE ANZUS TREATY

While the alliance between Australia and the US has become much more than the text of the 1951 [ANZUS Treaty](#), that text nevertheless remains extremely important.

Article 1 states: *“The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international disputes in which they may be involved by peaceful means...”*

This has been violated on multiple occasions.

Repeatedly, Australian leaders misrepresent the alliance as guaranteeing our security. In August 2017, PM Malcolm Turnbull [said](#) that Australia and the US are *“joined at the hip”* on national security. In October 2019, PM Scott Morrison [said](#) *“Our alliance with the United States is our past, our present and our future. It is the bedrock of our security”*. However, the ANZUS Treaty gives none of the specific defence undertakings for US allies that are contained in the 1949 NATO Agreement or the treaties that the US has with Japan and the Republic of Korea.

FOREIGN POLICY

Australia’s alliance with the US has eroded any notion of an independent and sovereign Australian foreign policy that can contribute to a safer world. It jeopardises our relationships with other nations and prospects for our own and others’ security.

Paul Barratt, former head of the Defence Department, [wrote](#) in January 2021:

“Our defence and security relationship with the US has become so close as to be unhealthy. Our political leaders have elevated the Treaty to a status in which, rather than serving the national interests of Australia, in practice it is used to determine where Australia’s national interests lie. We must participate in all American-initiated conflicts to show we are a good ally.”

Notions of security for Australia have been reduced to mean simply having a capacity for armed violence that exceeds everyone else’s. Far more meaningful measures of security - such as a foreign policy that promotes the global common good rather than global divisions, a society where everyone’s needs are met, and the protection of the natural world on which we rely – are marginalised or ignored.

Constant state of warfare

The US is nearly always at war, and Australia has joined every major US war since 1945. We have followed the US from one disaster to the next, from Vietnam to Afghanistan to Iraq and elsewhere, seemingly oblivious to the trail of death, destruction and political instability left behind, but simply spruiking our commitment to “freedom” and “democracy”. The 2003 invasion of Iraq was an illegal act of aggression which has had incalculable and long-lasting

human and strategic impacts. Afghanistan has suffered terrible civilian losses since the 2001 invasion. China seems to be next on the list of enemies.

Australia was in each of these wars simply because the US was there, and, unlike other US allies, we have not developed the capacity to say “no”. NATO, for example, had no role in the invasion of Iraq (only NATO member Poland sending a small number of troops).

Australia’s state of being at war for practically all of this century thus far means that our foreign policy has failed. It is therefore time to reassess.

Relationships with other nations

If we are to enjoy good relations with other nations, then consistent application of rules and norms is important, rather than slavish devotion to one nation. It is rare to find instances of Australian leaders displaying towards the US (or indeed towards our own policies) anything remotely close to the criticisms we make of others.

Australian governments have been silent on, or actively supportive of, US policies that undermine peace, human rights and the rule of law. A few examples follow.

- **Iraq.** The disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq (see above) was preceded by over a decade of comprehensive economic sanctions. Although they were strictly “UN” sanctions, they were maintained primarily by the US and the UK, and had a crippling impact on all aspects of Iraqi life, include health. Australia was a willing supporter, long after the humanitarian impacts were extensively reported.
- **Palestine.** Australia, like the US, has consistently ignored the rights of the Palestinian people and the illegality of Israel’s occupation of their land. In 2018, PM Morrison followed US President Trump in the inflammatory step of formally recognising West Jerusalem as Israel's capital (although, unlike the US, did not move our embassy there).
- **Iran.** Australia has supported US hostility towards Iran, despite the risks of war that this carries, and the outright hypocrisy of the US preaching on nuclear weapons. Even President Trump’s reckless unilateral abandonment of the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action (JCPOA) elicited no serious condemnation from Australia. Our leaders failed to protest Trump’s imposition of illegal sanctions against Iran in 2019, despite their risks of adverse consequences for Australian trade. See further information [here](#). Instead, then Defence Minister Reynolds [reacted positively](#) to a US request that year to send an Australian naval presence to help patrol the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Diego Garcia.** In 2017, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled firmly in favour of Mauritius over the UK’s separation in 1965 of the Chagos Islands from Mauritius. The latter process included the forced removal of the people of Diego Garcia from their land. Australia firmly supported the UK, and, in the process, the US who now

lease the land from the UK for large naval and air force bases. It is colonialism writ large.

- **North Korea.** In 2017, as brinkmanship between US President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un escalated, PM Turnbull misrepresented ANZUS and [stated](#) that Australia would aid the US militarily if North Korea attacked our ally. He gave no hint of the far-reaching implications of such a decision, or of having even considered other ways to manage the tensions, such as pursuing multilateral rather than unilateral nuclear disarmament.

China

The most dangerous current example of Australia's adherence to US policies is our support for unending global supremacy by our ally and the resulting failure of our relationship with China.

With the US, and therefore Australia, now firmly focused on preventing China's growing influence in the Western Pacific and beyond – which to a superpower means possible war - the need for Australia to develop independent policy rather than being an outpost of US influence is particularly urgent. While Defence Minister Peter Dutton and other senior leaders have [raised the possibility](#) of Australia going to war to protect Taiwan from China, he gives no indication of why we should join such a war if it occurs, nor of understanding what a monumental catastrophe it would almost certainly become.

Even a decade ago, after the 2011 announcement of the planned stationing of US Marines in Darwin, both China and Indonesia [expressed](#) deep misgivings, saying the move risked creating a "circle of mistrust and tension". Australia's participation in US military exercises in the South China Sea is also seen by China as provocative. In July 2020, Australian warships [encountered](#) the Chinese navy when they were sailing close to the Spratly Islands which are claimed by China. Despite Australia's enormous expenditure on World War 1 commemoration, lessons learnt – especially about how easily great powers can descend into all-consuming wars – are zero.

As with Iraq in 2003, Australia is giving far greater unquestioned support to US policy towards China than that given by other US allies. The ANU's Professor Hugh White [reports](#) that *"Japan aside, no country in East Asia is willing to join Scott Morrison's global coalition to contain China."*

Even the most ardent enthusiasts of military activity recognise that China is threatened by Australia's support for US military policy. Senator Jim Molan wrote (in *The Australian*, 3 May, 2021) *"When China acts, it will act decisively, mainly against US bases in the region....with allies as collateral"*. And yet, rather than taking the glaringly obvious step of

reviewing whose interests those bases actually serve, Molan advocates that we must “*prepare now*”, indicating that a much stronger ADF is needed.

Australia is being used by the US for its own military aggrandisement vis-à-vis China, and Australia’s geographical location makes us ideal for that purpose. War with China is not in Australia’s interests, nor the interests of most of the rest of the world. Its human and environmental impacts would be vast, with - as in all wars - most of them falling on civilians.

The decision to go to war is too easily made

Decisions for war in Australia are made behind closed doors with no accountability; our parliament is not involved. In effect, Australia becomes involved in wars because of decisions taken in Washington DC rather than in Canberra. This is unacceptable. While this is not a direct consequence of the US alliance, the close alliance renders reform of our war powers all the more essential.

Except in the case of an armed attack on Australia, proposals for war should be subject to exhaustive scrutiny and debate in our federal parliament, followed by a vote in both houses. More information is available [here](#).

Foreign Interference

While claims are made of foreign (for which read “Chinese”) interference in Australian institutions, foreign interference from the US is officially encouraged at the highest levels.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) provides advice to the Australian government on defence and related matters, and receives the majority of its funding from the Defence Department. And yet in the 2019 – 2020 financial year, ASPI [received](#) 17% of its funding from overseas government agencies, including the US State Department; there was additional funding from some of the world’s biggest weapons companies (most of which are US-based).

The problem does not appear to be “foreign interference” per se, but *which* foreign interference.

See further comment under “Interoperability”, “Democratic Rights” and “Education”.

MILITARY POLICY

Australia’s military and foreign policies are closely linked, such is the extent to which other ways of relating to the world – such as through skilled diplomacy and a focus on the common good – have become degraded in favour of military strength. However, some additional comments about our military policy are warranted here.

Nuclear weapons

Nuclear weapons and climate change are the two greatest threats to civilisation as we know it. While our alliance partner is finally taking seriously the latter threat, which can only help in getting the Australian government to do likewise, the nuclear weapons threat remains one of complacency and hypocrisy on the part of both partners.

The hands of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock now stand at 100 seconds to midnight, the closest we have ever been to global catastrophe, even including the Cold War period. If nuclear weapons are used again, there will be virtually no humanitarian response possible.

"Extended nuclear deterrence" - the theory that US nuclear weapons protect us from nuclear attack by others - remains a core part of Australian defence policy. It is a threat to have the most extreme suffering and destruction that mankind has devised inflicted in our name. Australian governments have refused to state that nuclear weapons must never be used under any circumstances, a policy that is inconsistent with international humanitarian law (IHL). Weapons that kill indiscriminately, be it by the tens or hundreds of thousands or by the tens of millions if multiple weapons are used, violate IHL.

Nuclear deterrence theory is also deeply flawed, as it relies on perfection – perfect technology and perfect decision-making every time and forever more. There is no room for error. In the real world however, technical errors and mis-judgements occur.

Even if a nuclear "deterrent" did "protect" Australia from nuclear attack by others, would we need such protection were it not for our strong alliance and complicity with US policies? If so, from whom? The Pine Gap base in the NT would almost certainly be a high priority nuclear target in the event of a war with Russia, and probably in a war with China.

Extended nuclear deterrence also provides a pretext for the US to maintain and update its own arsenal. US officials can, and do, claim a role of "reassuring US allies and partners" for their own nuclear weapons.

The Australian government has refused to sign the most promising initiative in recent decades for progress towards nuclear weapons abolition - the 2017 UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). This step would involve a complete rejection of any role for nuclear weapons in our "defence".

In this context, the role of Pine Gap (see below) is often raised, because the base plays a critical role in nuclear weapons targeting which is prohibited under the TPNW. Therefore this aspect of Pine Gap's work would have to cease. MAPW notes the work and expertise of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in advising how this could be implemented. See chapter 2 in ICAN's report "[Choosing Humanity](#)"

One of the problems with Australia's stream of mixed messages – that we are protected by the weapons ourselves but other nations must not have them - is that it grossly undermines any credibility we could otherwise have as a disarmament advocate. With such hypocrisy, it's difficult to regard Australia as having anything useful to contribute.

Australia's position on our ally's own weapons of mass destruction is immoral, strategically dangerous, and now illegal. It's time for Australia to reject outright these instruments of terror, rather than marching blindly into a new Cold War where they could indeed be used.

“Interoperability”

Australia's military relationship with the US has become so close that Australia is technologically dependent on the US.

Twenty years ago, a parliamentary research paper, [*“ANZUS after fifty years”*](#), noted:

“...it is almost literally true that Australia cannot go to war without the consent and support of the United States. This represents a substantial sacrifice of national freedom of action, and must be counted as a significant cost.”

That state of dependency on the US has not lessened in the past two decades. In 2020, Paul Barratt [wrote](#) along similar lines: *“We are not only dependent on the United States for maintenance and resupply of sensitive components of our advanced hardware, we also need access to US systems for the very operation of aircraft like the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and the Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning and Control Aircraft.”*

This reinforces the reality that Australia has ceded far too much decision-making power to a foreign government, albeit an ally, in matters of war and peace.

Military bases

Australia hosts a number of military bases which provide for our ally a critical gateway to the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

Pine Gap

The most significant of them is Pine Gap, near Alice Springs in the NT. It has two primary functions:

- Signals intelligence – the collection of electronic information from a large portion of the earth's surface, including China, Afghanistan and Middle East.
- The detection of enemy missile launches via thermal imaging satellites.

Pine Gap's roles have included early warning of a nuclear attack, which contributes to stability by limiting the possibility of a surprise attack by the enemy. While the base has also played a role in arms control verification, little of that role continues now. On the other

side of the equation however - the risks posed by Pine Gap - its role in the actual *fighting* of nuclear war is expanding. Signals intelligence helps target a first strike, and early warning helps target a second strike (because it provides information on which enemy missile silos still contain a missile).

Pine Gap also plays a critical role in the highly destabilising missile defence systems, such as the US-Japanese missile defence, to which the Chinese response is likely to be the production of more missiles.

In “conventional” warfare, Pine Gap has played key roles in not only the illegal war in Iraq and the wars in Afghanistan and Syria, but also in illegal drone and special forces’ strikes in countries with whom we have not been at war - Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen.

It is the balance of risks and benefits, to Australia and to global security, that should be examined in relation to Pine Gap. Increasingly that balance is skewed strongly towards a more dangerous and unstable world.

North West Cape

North West Cape (the Harold E Holt Naval Communications Station) at Exmouth Gulf in WA was previously important for communications with US nuclear submarines but now serves the purpose of finding enemy (non-US) space satellites in the event of war. Data from North West Cape is transmitted to the Combined Space Operations Centre in the US, “combined” referring to the fact that there are US, Australian, Canadian and British personnel working there. It is of significant concern to China. Its role in promoting and legitimising warfare in space should at the very least be subject to rigorous scrutiny in Australia as to whose interests it serves.

Pine Gap and North West Cape are US military bases to which Australia has access. They can operate only in concert with huge US investment in satellite surveillance systems.

Other bases

Other military bases in Australia that are important in US war preparations include:

- Bradshaw base in the NT, which is by far the biggest training range available to US marines in the western Pacific;
- Delamere bombing range, also in the NT, where the US practice long-range bombing;
- Kojarena, near Geraldton in WA, for military communications and spying;
- Shoalwater Bay multinational training facility in Rockhampton, Queensland

Australia’s roles in the war preparations of another nation implicate us in all the impacts of those wars.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

Several recent publications extend our knowledge of the US alliance's role in undermining democracy in Australia. They include Vince Scappatura's *"The US Lobby and Australian Defence Policy"*, Tim Gilling's *"Project Rainfall: The Secret History of Pine Gap"* and *"A Secret Australia: Revealed by the Wikileaks Exposés"*, edited by Felicity Ruby and Peter Cronau.

Australia has become intimately involved in implementing the foreign and military policies of another nation. Key decisions on what happens at military bases here are decided in a foreign capital, with Australian parliamentarians - not to mention ordinary Australian citizens - kept in the dark. Even the wars we enter are virtually decided in a foreign capital.

An Australian citizen who published evidence of our ally's criminal actions in warfare is being persecuted and the Australian government remains silent. The incarceration of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange stands out as one of the most egregious examples of desperate cover-up of what is done in our name, for the benefit of another nation.

Our alliance with the US has led to a corruption of our own democratic processes as a nation.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

This submission will not comment in detail on the extent to which the US alliance promotes military activities that leave devastating impacts on the natural environment – from vast fossil fuel usage that contributes to climate change, to toxic contamination of landscapes that can last for many decades or longer. The Costs of War project at Brown University in the US provides valuable [information](#) on this.

We note in our own country and region the use of sensitive landscapes for the movement of tens of thousands of troops and hundreds of planes and naval vessels during the course of military exercises such as Talisman Sabre with the US and other allies.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY

Our alliance with the US and involvement in all her major wars reinforces in Australia a culture of insecurity, and fear and suspicion of others who pose no threat to us. This in turn allows political manipulation by parliamentarians who wish to introduce ever more repressive measures at home and ever greater military budgets.

A warrior culture

The alliance also reinforces a warrior culture, whereby we are encouraged to believe that war-fighting is an essential part of our identity as Australians. This of course is not all attributable to the ANZUS alliance, but non-stop wars and their preparation allow it to flourish.

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra, far from being primarily a memorial to our war dead, is rapidly becoming a showplace for military hardware and the reinforcing of our image as fighters. Quite apart from the vast new expansion of the Memorial for which preparatory work is underway, in 2017 the Memorial [argued](#) (successfully) for very large new spaces at its facility in the Canberra suburb of Mitchell also; this was on the basis of a predicted rapid expansion of material for exhibition over the next *century*. In other words, endless wars.

A further concern is the allegations of [widespread illegal conduct](#) by Australian special forces in Afghanistan, as documented by Dr Samantha Cromptoets and set out in the Brereton Report. It is mandatory that the conditions in that alliance war that contributed to such degraded behaviour be examined.

Education

Pressure on universities to comply with an “us” and “them” mentality, rather than the pursuit of academic excellence for its own sake, is emerging.

In January 2021, the Cyber Security Cooperative Research Centre [said](#) that universities should recruit more students from allied nations. In June 2021, it was [reported](#) that the Australian Research Council (ARC) keeps “sensitivity files” on academics. Some ARC grant applications had been withheld from approval in October 2020, pending “security agency advice”; five were vetoed by Education Minister Tehan, with no explanation given. For those with memories of careers destroyed by McCarthyism, this is quite chilling.

Weapons companies - the big ones all being US-based - conduct programs in STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths) for all levels of our education system, with the explicit goal of steering our best STEM students towards a career in the industry. MAPW’s publication “[Minors and Missiles](#)” is an initial examination of this problem.

While these trends are not the sole result of the US alliance, Australia’s enthusiastic support for endless US wars helps to normalise, sanitise and provide a pretext for them.

ECONOMIC

For many years the US has been pressing its allies to increase their military spending to 2% of GDP. Australia’s military budget is rapidly increasing, and is now planned to be [\\$575 billion](#) for the decade 2020 to 2030. This is an average of over a billion dollars every week for that period.

Opportunity costs

This massive increase in spending has impacts on other budget expenditures. There are many areas of financial need in Australia, all of which contribute to very real insecurity in many people’s lives. They include:

- *The alleviation of poverty*

The 2020 ACOSS and UNSW report on [Poverty and Inequality in Australia](#) found that 3.24 million Australians are estimated to be living below the poverty line. Newstart and Youth Allowance had not increased in real terms in 26 years and are both well below the poverty line. The February 2021 increase in Newstart of \$50 a fortnight still leaves most recipients well below the poverty line.

- *Addressing homelessness*

Researchers at RMIT's Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute [noted](#) in 2018 that we have had had 25 years of inadequate investment in social housing. They calculated that the cost of the first year of a program to eliminate this backlog by 2036 would total \$5 billion under a capital grant approach.

- *Aged care funding,*

Problems in Australia's aged care sector funding, while not new, have been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. Far greater investment is needed.

- *Access to legal aid*

The 2019 Law Council report [Legal Aid Matters](#) noted that "*hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts by successive Federal Governments have pushed legal aid to the brink of collapse.*" This is particularly devastating for those fleeing domestic violence.

Some argue that without the US alliance we would actually have to spend more, rather than less, to defend ourselves. However, this argument ignores the fact that our wars are precisely because of the alliance; without it we would not engage in reckless military expeditions. While armed aggression towards Australia would still be a possibility, the risk would become far more remote.

Diplomacy

The opportunity costs of military spending also include diplomacy. This is our main means of influencing world events, not only at a bilateral level but also in international institutions. As one example of how not to do things, Australia's proposal in April 2020 of a WHO inquiry into the origins of COVID was extremely clumsy, politicised and inflammatory towards China. A greater focus on the art of diplomacy could have avoided this.

Over the last quarter century, the proportion of total Commonwealth spending allocated to Australia's diplomacy has fallen by 42%, from 0.38% of Commonwealth spending in 1995-96 to 0.22% in 2018-19. (See [here](#).) The Department of Foreign Affairs has been starved of funds, at the same time as Australian military expenditure has been rapidly escalating. Increased funding, staffing, and training in conflict analysis, negotiation, mediation, and other peacebuilding methods are needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MAPW recommends that Australia:

1. Engage in a serious, objective examination, at the most senior levels, of the costs and benefits of our alliance with the US.
2. Pursue foreign affairs and defence policies that promote the interests of Australia, our region and the broader global community. Such matters should be discussed regularly in our parliament.
3. Reject any role for nuclear weapons in our “defence”, and sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
4. Declare that Australia will not take part in any war over Taiwan, and refrain from taking part in any provocative military operations in the South China Sea.
5. Initiate and encourage peacebuilding and confidence-building measures in our region. As one possibility, Australia could host arms control dialogues.
6. Promote the role and purposes of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security, as set out in the UN Charter and the ANZUS Treaty, to both of which Australia is party.
7. Reduce military spending and invest in genuine human security for ourselves and others.
8. Strengthen our diplomacy.
9. Respect and comply with international law - for ourselves, our allies and others.
10. Cease the pursuit of profit via weapons sales.
11. Reform our war powers so that, except in the event of a direct armed attack on Australia, any proposal for war must be debated and voted on in our parliament.
12. Join with other nations in vigorously addressing the world’s biggest challenges, particularly climate change.

