



# Marrickville Peace Group

E: [marrickvillepeacegroup@gmail.com](mailto:marrickvillepeacegroup@gmail.com) W: [www.marrickvillepeacegroup.org](http://www.marrickvillepeacegroup.org)

## Media Release

### Questioning the Value of the Australia/US Alliance

Marrickville Peace Group (MPG) has joined the process of public consultation in preparation for the 2015 Defence White Paper.

In August, the public was invited to write submissions. MPG, which also wrote submissions to the 2009 and 2013 Defence White Papers, has responded with a 5,000 word document.

A synopsis of MPG's submission follows. The full text can be read on the Department of Defence's website at <http://www.defence.gov.au/Whitepaper/ReadSubmissions.asp> . It is number 71 on the list.

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**'Questioning the Value of the Australia/US Alliance'** is the title of a document the Marrickville Peace Group has submitted as part of the public consultation process in preparation for the 2015 Defence White Paper.

In its submission, the group points out that Australia's defence policy currently rests on the premise that the US alliance is indispensable. The group questions this, very premise. It argues that the alliance, so far from offering Australia protection or security, has needlessly led the country into wars and actually increases the chances of us becoming involved in more conflicts.

The submission takes the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as illustration of a pattern followed in earlier wars, in all of which Australia fought in countries that posed it absolutely no military threat. It characterises the invasion as possibly contrary to international law, and says that Australia was led into it on the strength of intelligence that was later found to be false. It goes on to say that the outcome of the Iraq war was the turmoil currently apparent in the Middle East.

The submission states *"Getting involved in war is as grave a step for a country to take as any that can be imagined. For a country to be led into a futile war on the basis of falsehoods, as Australia was, is a terribly serious matter."*

According to the submission, Australia's experience in the Iraq invasion (against the backdrop of earlier wars) should have provoked thinking people within the defence establishment to question whether or not the alliance works in Australia's best interests. (Clearly the authors of the submission think that it does not as they announce that they have lost confidence in the wisdom of the 'defence establishment'.) The Iraq war is portrayed as a conspicuous failure of defence policy that should have brought that policy into question.

The submission then goes on to argue that, rather than there being any questioning of the basic premise of reliance on the US alliance, the process of further strengthening it has proceeded without pause. To illustrate this, a number of examples are provided that indicate further strengthening of the military ties between Australia and the US – the prime one being the stationing of US marines in Darwin.

In this connection, the submission quotes questions asked in the Senate by Senator Lee Rhiannon and answers provide by the government. The explanation provided in this exchange

does not satisfy the authors, who see no strategic benefit in the marines' presence. The submission suggests that the benefits actually go to the US. It says that the answers given to Senator Rhiannon's questions are "devoid of logical substance". The submission indicates that the marines could be used in some military action without the prior approval of the Australian government (there being no assurance provided against that possibility), a view it backs up by reference to sources close to the US government. It concludes that the presence of the US marines benefits the US and not Australia, strategically.

The submission argues that, rather than increasing stability in our region, the US 'pivot' to the Asia Pacific is increasing tensions, especially between Japan and China. It points out that the Abe government is becoming more assertive and that the US has stated its intention to support Japan. It says that, should hostilities ever break out between Japan and China, Australia would automatically become involved (as an enemy of China) because of the closeness of its alliance with the US.

The submission highlights the role of Major General Richard Burr, a senior Australian army officer, who currently holds the position of Deputy Commander of the US Army in the Pacific. The general was reportedly photographed in Mongolia during joint US/Mongolian exercises, wearing his Australian uniform.

Australia's involvement in the guidance of weaponised, US drones and the role of Pine Gap are also raised – as is Australia's connection with NATO and its purchase of expensive (US-made) weapons systems. Even Australia's position on nuclear arms is brought into question, where it is argued that Australia deliberately thwarted an initiative calling for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, because of the alliance.

The authors of the submission have clearly been influenced by Malcolm Fraser and his book 'Dangerous Allies'. The arguments they put forward run on parallel tracks to those put forward by Mr Fraser and his work is acknowledged through several references.

The group concludes by expressing the view that the US alliance compromises Australia's independence and threatens regional stability, whilst the 'defence establishment' can do nothing but make it tighter and closer, as evidenced by each succeeding AUSMIN conference.

The submission ends with a question that it says is more vital than the alliance itself. Using an old-fashioned term, it asks:-

"Where is the *wisdom* in Australia being so totally dependent on the US and on US-made policy in the matter of its strategic defence?"

**Contact:** Nick Deane on 0420 526 929

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