

# Marrickville Peace Group

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The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP  
Minister for Defence  
PO Box 6022  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Andrews

Marrickville Peace Group has received a letter, dated July 2, 2015 (ASMP/OUT/2015), from Mr Angus Kirkwood of the International Policy Division of your Department, in response to our letter of May 26, 2015.

We note his remark that *'Australia's alliance with the United States ... is the foundation of Australia's security arrangements'*.

We find it interesting that identical wording was used in a letter to the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (NSW), from Mr Chris Birrer of your Department, dated December 7, 2012 (MPGI/OUT/2012/162).

Clearly, this notion – that the alliance forms the foundation of Australia's security – is entrenched as the 'received wisdom' within the Department.

We find it necessary to remind you that in the time between the two letters mentioned above, ex-PM Malcolm Fraser published his book *Dangerous Allies*. As it makes such a significant contribution to debate on the topic, we imagine that Fraser's work would be required reading for senior staff with your Department.

We put it to you that the arguments put forward in Fraser's book make it important to re-consider Australia's strategic stance. Fraser argues that Australia's current position is paradoxical, in that we need the 'protection' of the super-power *simply because* our military forces are now so very closely entwined with those of the USA.

Mr Fraser, before he died, was good enough to write an introduction to MPG's submission to the 2015 Defence White Paper. In it he wrote: *"(B)ecause of our close association with the United States, we have been dragged into a number of wars which have caused great hardship, great loss of civilian life and which have been of no direct benefit to Australia."*

With that in mind, we reject Mr Kirkwood's assurance that Australia's support of US engagement in our region has promoted peace and stability.

We are of the view that the alliance has been 'enhanced' to a point where it now places our nation at risk of involvement in war. As Fraser has convincingly argued, there is no longer any way for Australia to 'opt out', should hostilities break out in the China Sea. Fraser writes: *"In the Western Pacific, there is every sign that America is getting ready for armed conflict to continue her own supremacy over all others. To be virtually captive of such a power represents the utmost strategic folly for Australia."*

We also wish to take issue with Mr Kirkwood's assertion that there are no foreign military bases on Australian soil. We find the argument expressed, for example, by Professor Richard Tanter, far more convincing than Mr Kirkwood's assertion.

In an article entitled 'Memo Stephen Smith: there are US bases in Australia and they are expanding' (<https://theconversation.com/memo-stephen-smith-there-are-us-bases-in-australia-and-they-are-expanding-8622>), Professor Tanter writes:

*"Pine Gap and North West Cape are in fact US bases to which Australia has access. They were built by the United States, the core facilities are paid for and maintained by the United States, and the facilities only function in concert with the huge American investment in military and intelligence satellite and communications systems. Take the last away, and nothing of significance is left."*

In another article, 'The Higher Management of Pine Gap' (<http://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/the-higher-management-of-pine-gap/>), the opening line is: *"The higher management of Pine Gap is and always has been an entirely American affair."*

In the light of well-researched articles such as these, it must be becoming increasingly hard for senior staff in your Department to maintain the pretence of 'no foreign bases on Australian soil'.

In its letter of May 26, 2015, MPG invited you to contradict two points:-

- That events in early May indicate that the USA has the intention of stationing military assets in Australia on a permanent basis;
- That it will be impossible for Australia to remain neutral if hostilities break out in the China Sea.

Neither point has been persuasively contradicted by Mr Kirkwood's letter.

Marrickville Peace Group therefore remains convinced that Australia lacks true independence. Its current alliance arrangements with the USA place the nation at risk of involvement in unnecessary wars that serve the interests of a foreign power.

We agree with the late Mr Fraser that this is "the utmost strategic folly", so urge you to re-assess the value of the alliance between Australia and the USA.

Yours sincerely

Nick Deane

For Marrickville Peace Group

August 14, 2015

(A copy of MPG's submission to the Defence White Paper is enclosed.)