

# Marrickville Peace Group

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Mr Angus Kirkwood  
Assistant Secretary Major Powers  
International Policy Division  
Russell Offices  
Department of Defence  
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600

Dear Mr Kirkwood

Thank-you for your letter of May 4, 2016 (and for your earlier correspondence). It is encouraging to feel that we can conduct a cordial dialogue on these extremely important matters.

We both understand that the alliance between Australia and the United States of America remains at the core of Australia's defence planning. The question that remains unanswered (and to which no-one in the government appears able to provide a cogent answer) is *why* this should be so.

From the perspective of the Marrickville Peace Group (MPG), the primary feature of any independent nation should be its willingness to stand up and take full responsibility for its own defence. Anything short of that betrays a lack of true independence. Historically, Australia has displayed a tradition of reliance upon a greater power (first the UK and, for the past 70 years, the US). In the meantime, the nation's capacity to look after its own affairs has grown enormously. Surely the time has been reached when Australia can 'stand on its own two feet' and rely on itself for its own defence.

In this regard, the recent White Paper itself confirms that there is no likely threat to Australia, which is well protected through its geographical form and location. So where is the need for over-arching dependence upon the United States?

MPG also questions the assertion that stability on our region would not be achievable without the involvement of the US. On the contrary, to us the US appears to be a destabilising influence. We acknowledge the expanding role that China is taking in the South China Sea, but question the wisdom of responding to China's actions in the confrontational and militaristic manner that the United States is adopting. The stationing of US marines in Darwin is but one example of this militaristic stance. We sincerely hope that Australia will not follow the US in confronting China, but, based on recent history, it appears likely that it will.

Indeed, as Malcolm Fraser pointed out in 'Dangerous Allies', Australia has reached a situation in which it is impossible for it to remain neutral, should hostilities break out between the USA and China. To the best of my knowledge, no-one associated with the Australian government has been able to refute Fraser's point.

Certainly, as you say, Australia has a legitimate interest in peace and stability, international law and unimpeded trade. The question is, will these objectives be obtained by joining the US in military posturing and escalation? In MPG's view, threats or implied threats of military action, exemplified by sailing naval vessels close to territory controlled by China, militate against peace and stability.

For the time being, no persuasive arguments are being put forward that might convince any peace group such as MPG of the value of the alliance. MPG is not opposed to an alliance with the United States *per se*. What concerns us is the depth of the alliance; the inequality within it; the lack of independence that it imposes, and the possibility that it could lead Australia into yet another disastrous military action.

Yours sincerely

Nick Deane (for Marrickville Peace Group)

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