

Marrickville Peace Group

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The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600.

Dear Prime Minister

War Powers

The Chilcot Report was released in the United Kingdom on July 6 2016. It has been praised for its thoroughness but has raised very serious questions about the decision-making process that resulted in the UK joining the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The focus of the report is on the actions of Prime Minister Tony Blair, but it is impossible for Australians not to draw parallels with the process that took place here, under Prime Minister John Howard.

Marrickville Peace Group (MPG) expressed concern about the Howard government's decision to go to war in 2003, fearing that it was based on misinformation about Weapons of Mass Destruction. Those concerns have been proved correct, and they remain with us.

What the Chilcot Report has made absolutely clear is that the procedures followed, both here and in the UK, are woefully inadequate, in that they lack features to protect against poor decision-making. Taking the nation into a war is one of the most serious things that any government can do; it therefore requires the most exhaustive process possible. However, in the case of Iraq, this most crucial of all decisions was taken by just a very small number of influential individuals.

Our group hopes that you, as our Prime Minister, will never be faced with a similar decision. If, however, you are, you would do well to reflect on the situation Mr Blair now finds himself in. No individual holder of high office should bear the weight of such responsibility alone. It is a decision that should be made collectively by all member of the parliament.

Tensions are growing in our region (particularly in the South China Sea) and finding a peaceful resolution of these tensions is a matter of urgency. In view of these tensions and the findings of the Chilcot Report, the group urges you to support moves to introduce 'war powers' legislation into the new parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Deane
(for Marrickville Peace Group)

cc.
Senator Scott Ludlam
Mr Adam Bandt MP
Senator Lee Rhiannon