
Sent: Wednesday, 1 October 2008 15:16
To: White Paper
Subject: WWW Submission: 1. Strategy/International [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Name: Simon Moyle
Organisation: Urban Seed

Submission: This submission proposes to answer the three major questions posed for public consultation:

1. What role should our armed forces play?
2. What kinds of armed forces should we develop?
3. Can we afford such forces?

I will take each question in turn.

What role should our armed forces play?

1. Conflict transformation and peacekeeping

David Johnson, a Quaker from Queensland, has put together a proposal for an Australian Nonviolent Force, a proposal which I support fully. This would see the role of the Defence Forces as one which builds communities and which confronts and transforms injustice where necessary but without the use of violence which is always counter-productive in creating stable, peaceful societies.

2. Earth defence force

With climate change being the most significant challenge facing us (as reflected by the Australian people's placement of it as first priority at the last election) our Defence Forces should be taking the lead in protecting us by tackling the causes and symptoms of climate change.

3. Diplomacy and international relations

Not only our armed forces but defence policy should focus on regional diplomatic relations and a shared sense of security with the other countries in our region and the rest of the world. This could take the form of direct poverty reduction, building schools and hospitals and other infrastructure in places that need them, and a general foreign policy of generosity.

In particular we should drop our alliance with the US, maintaining friendly relations with them as with all other countries, but refusing to be militarily connected to them. Our alliance with their mostly belligerent foreign policy has endangered us and taken the world down a dangerous path. Alliances that shore up a sense of the necessity of nuclear weapons should most certainly be avoided. If it is true, as the page 28 of the Defence Public Discussion Paper says, that "the protection of Australian sovereignty is the core Defence mission" then we need to be far more independent of Britain and the US, including removing all joint facilities such as Shoalwater Bay Training Area and US bases such as Pine Gap and Geraldton.

What kinds of armed forces should we develop?

Violent defence forces cannot create a peaceful world, as violence creates only bitterness and hatred. Therefore we need to look carefully and seriously at the power of nonviolence, which has proven extremely effective in hundreds of instances in the last century. An Australian Nonviolent Force would enable us to intervene in situations of injustice without killing or hurting others or giving them a reason to feel threatened.

The Public Discussion Paper references small non-state groups characterised by "...extremist ideologies, terrorist groups, and others that refuse to be bound by, or that challenge the existing basis of, international order and the rule of law." This could just as easily apply to the United States, Britain and Australia and our so-called "war on terror," and particularly our illegal and immoral invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. If we are to have security, we must be consistent in practicing what we preach in this regard.

As Professor Kevin Clements rightly notes Australia has not been threatened, let alone threatened with invasion, for more than 60 years, and there is therefore no basis for belligerent foreign policies that bolster our violent capabilities. Such capabilities not only dehumanise those we see as our 'enemies' but they also dehumanise the people who use them.

Our forces should therefore not be armed at all, but instead provided with tools that will enable our neighbours and others to 1. not feel threatened by our presence in the world and 2. be grateful for the existence of Australia in the world. This can be achieved by greater generosity, by actively working to alleviate global poverty and inequality (including here at home, particularly in our indigenous communities), and by such measures as scholarships and relationship building.

Can we afford such forces?

In my opinion, we can't afford not to. Spending more than \$60 million a day on weapons procurement while people in this country and overseas lack sufficient food, water and services such as education is obscene.

Our current policies spend billions of dollars on weapons that are never used, and are only tested on our own soil including places like Shoalwater Bay, destroying our own valuable wilderness areas! Can we really afford to continue with such policies?

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

I agree to my submission being quoted in the Community Consultation Report