



# AUSTRALIANS FOR WAR POWERS REFORM

Including the CAMPAIGN FOR AN IRAQ WAR INQUIRY

## Legislating for War Powers Reform

### AWPR Public Seminar: Executive Summary

*Australian National University*

*23 October 2015*

The need for Australia to improve transparency and accountability for war decision-making, and thereby avoid bad wars, is a dominant consideration. The means to achieve that is more Parliamentary and public participation, with decisions to dispatch forces no longer left to Prime Ministers, but following Constitutional processes including not by-passing the Governor-General as Commander-in-Chief. A Parliamentary debate could be initiated by a Government statement based on independent legal advice. It would provide:

- a clear basis of legal authority, both domestic and international,
- a strategic justification for an overseas deployment,
- the level of commitment, goals and objectives and limitations of the mission; and
- a date when Australian soldiers could be drawn down and withdrawn.

Parliament would vote upon it, having made a sober and informed evaluation of the rationale for deploying Australian troops, for which all MPs would then be responsible. Other democracies do this successfully. Provision could be made for rapid deployment in an emergency, but generally, requirements for security and speed could accommodate the Parliamentary process. More openness would result in improved media coverage of the issues and democratisation of the responsibility for going to war.