

17th October 2022

Submission into Parliamentary Inquiry into War Powers

In 2003 my life completely changed direction, and the reason for the change in direction was Australia's involvement in the Iraq war, a war that seemed irrelevant and not our business to somewhere around 80% of voting Australians.

The official argument for war by the then prime minister, John Howard, was that Saddam Hussein, Iraq's dictator of the day was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

My personal involvement came about as I was the executive officer for the Chief Defence Scientist. One of the defence scientists, who was an expert on chemical weapons, wrote a letter to the prime minister. In the letter he outlines three possible scenarios if a war with Iraq went ahead:

1. The unlikely supposition that the war is quick and surgical and that a moderate government is quickly installed;
2. Any stockpile would be removed or destroyed during a protracted battle for Baghdad; or
3. After the protracted battle, no WMD are found and it becomes apparent that Iraq was not supplying and had no intention to supply Al Qaeda with WMD.

The defence scientist had debriefed the Australian weapons inspectors after their return from Iraq, so had a high level of both knowledge of the situation in Iraq, and a high general expertise in the area of WMD.

The man was dismissed by the senior public servants and parliamentary aides as "not being in full receipt of the facts".

If anyone in Australia was "in full receipt of the facts", it was this man.

Unable to continue working in an environment that supported such hypocrisy, I sought extended leave and was eventually sacked from the public service.

I moved to North Queensland, where I have remained.

Once the troops were sent to Iraq, no governments or politicians were prepared to question the situation as it would look like they were being critical of the troops who obviously had no say as to whether the war was justified. Some brave souls questioned whether the drugs being experimentally injected into them were safe, but on the whole the forces accept what the politicians foist onto them.

So, when I heard about this inquiry I felt compelled to submit. The Iraq War was unpopular with Australians, but there was no debate in the parliament, nor any vote. There was considerable discussion at the time as to whether the war was legitimate in the eyes of the United Nations, and yet Australians were sent there and while I understand there were four Australian lives lost in Iraq, there has since been suicides and attempts by service people post Iraq.

I urge the committee to extend the powers that allow Australian lives to be lost in war to at least be the entire parliament and an open and transparent debate that allows all Australians to understand the potential effect of the politicians decisions.

I would be happy to add to appear in person should the committee have further questions.