

The Secretariat  
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee  
Inquiry into Australia's engagement in Afghanistan

I am a retired army officer.

I write regarding the cost of Australia's involvement in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan supplies about 80 per cent of the world's opium. Not only does it provide for all the support they need for their war activities, but it also results in great damage to the citizens of many countries around the world.

It is a fundamental criteria in committing to a war that it should ONLY be if we are serious about WINNING the conflict – otherwise it costs the lives of our service personnel for nothing, as well as inflicting great harm on their loved ones, and mental stress on the service personnel who survive.

Therefore, the FIRST thing that ought to have been done in Afghanistan was to eradicate all the opium crops in the country! But this was not allowed on the basis that the crops provided a significant part of the country's economy. This is absolutely ludicrous. The allies could have provided the wherewithal for all sorts of other crops for free and still be far better off in every aspect – militarily and financially.

Whilst there are other reasons why the conflict was lost, the above reason is without excuse.

We should have learnt the lesson from the Vietnam conflict where we were not allowed to win, and yet it is repeated in Afghanistan.

Yours sincerely,  
Ian Sarah