

## **Inquiry into international armed conflict decision making**

We came to Australia in 1984 from Zimbabwe, the resultant mess of a pointless war. Our evening news commenced with, "Combined Operations Headquarters announces the death in action of..." and the names and numbers were reeled off. Australian news talked of Hawkie and sport. We specifically chose Australia and, having not been born into its wonderful democratic way of life, appreciate it all the more.

War is best avoided. It should certainly not be entered into on the demand of the Prime Minister and his cabinet without proper parliamentary debate and checks and balances – if at all. This is just not democratic. The ability to do this renders Australians at risk from foreign influences who do not put Australian interests first. Rather they see us merely as resources at their disposal to achieve their interests. Australians would stand a better chance of avoiding this with a robust sovereign and democratic process.

As a mother and wife, I do not want my loved ones sent to die in a foreign land for dubious causes. Even if my loved ones were lucky enough to return, I know from experience that they would not be the same people. No less loved but less than they were before being exposed to the horrors of war.

Most Australians do not want to be forced into war, particularly those that have been drummed up to benefit a tiny few. I am familiar with propaganda. I didn't recognise it for what it was growing up in Rhodesia, but I do now and it appears to be driven by an even wider genre of influence. It is because of this that any decision to commit Australia to war must be in the hands of many. Not just the Prime Minister and his cabinet. Australians are at the mercy of the government who serve them; democratic process is our only protection.

Civilians are always the victims of war. This includes civilians who may be conscripted to fight war. Ordinary people are the victims of war. Never the leaders nor their kin.

Australia needs to strengthen its democracy and diplomacy. We should be trading with our neighbours not poking them because a bully ally has told us to. Just like playground alliances, these bullies are not friends, just people who befriend us to use us. Australia has much ground to make up with diplomatic discussions with our neighbours. Is it racism that prevents this? Why are our allies mostly white? The world is a small place now, and the planet is struggling. Resources are getting scarce. We need our neighbours now more than ever and we certainly cannot afford to waste resources on war that can be so easily committed to.

If the Prime Minister and his cabinet can send us to war on their own, then they should be held accountable and have to attend themselves. Perhaps then diplomacy would be seen as a greater asset and first action.