

# Secrets and Lies Destroy Democracy?

Forum held Monday 3 May, 2004

Kevin Rudd MHR (Labor), Senator Marise Payne (Liberal)

Senator Kerry Nettle (Greens), Senator Aden Ridgeway (Democrats)

Chair: Shelley Reys, Reconciliation Australia



## Program:

Introduction: [Transcript](#)

## The Questions:

1. We were told the invasion of Iraq was necessary because of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. "If Iraq had genuinely disarmed, I couldn't justify on its own a military invasion of Iraq to change the regime" – John Howard, 14 March 2003. How can we trust future justifications for war in the light of what we now know? (Tina Jackson) [Transcript](#)
2. There has been little informed democratic debate in Australia about the causes of terrorism – in particular Israel's occupation of Palestine. The War on Terror cannot succeed by dealing with the symptoms alone. How can Australia work to address the causes? (Brendan Doyle) [Transcript](#)
3. Does a request for support from the US automatically and always pre-empt Australian policy and budgets at the expense of education, health and welfare, and if not, how should we decide which requests to refuse? (David Roffey) [Transcript](#)
4. The present rigid control of Australian political parties over members effectively hijacks much of the decision-making process from open debate in the parliamentary chambers to behind the closed doors of party rooms, and is more coercive than in the US and UK. Why should this be permitted? (Jim Wilks) [Transcript](#)
5. Australians are very cynical about the political process, and the extent to which secrecy and falsehood are used to justify policy decisions. How can our faith in the system be restored? (Lindsay Wood) [Transcript](#)
6. First question from floor: Should the allegations of Andrew Wilkie, Ms Errey and Col Lance Collins be examined in the interest of Australia's national security? Isn't a Royal Commission which examines

the veracity of the claims of the whistleblowers the only way of establishing the truth of their claims?  
(Mervyn Murchie) [Transcript](#)

7. Second question from floor: How can any Australian government presume to instruct other governments on human rights or the cause of terrorism when they have failed patently to address structural disadvantage of our indigenous peoples, the gross racism they are subject to, the racism Muslims and Arab people are subject to, and continue to lock up asylum seekers in indefinite detention? (Anne Picot) [Transcript](#)
8. Other questions submitted from floor: you are invited to provide your own answers to these, and we will invite the panellists to respond: [full list](#)

**Closing remarks:** Shelley Reys and Sue Roffey, Convenor, NSPD: [Transcript](#)

**Other Questions Submitted from the Floor:** [Full list](#).

## Introduction:

**Shelley Reys:** Let me thank the organisers for inviting me here today, and I do appreciate the invitation, and it's great to see so many of you here. I didn't expect to see so many, although I must admit that I heard the last forum was well attended, and created a bit of a stir, so I was looking forward to being here. Don't let me down.

We have a terrific line-up of people for you here tonight, and I think that this kind of a discussion forum comes at a perfect time for many reasons. I'm very interested that the North Shore Peace and Democracy group have a keen interest in the right to have opinions, express those opinions, the notion of peace and finding peaceful outcomes to conflict and difficult situations, and as I said I think that there's no better time to look at that, and to think about some of the questions that have been posed to the speakers tonight.

What we're hoping to do is to inject a bit of civilised and intelligent conversation to the issue of the War in Iraq, and I think that there has been quite a dumbing down of the issue in many respects, not just in recent times but for a very long time, so I'm looking forward to that. It's largely about listening to each other: it's certainly not about attacking one another, or challenging each other in a grandstanding kind of a way. It's all about looking at the issues and seeing if we can explore them, as I said, in an intelligent and civilised fashion. It's a complex issue, and it covers many different issues, and I think that the wealth of information that we will receive from these speakers, and the high calibre of people on either side of me has got to contribute to that.

What we're going to do is start out by putting a few of the questions to our speakers, that have been submitted by some members of the NSPD group, and I will ask each of our speakers to respond to that question formally, then I'll look to the person that put up that question in the first place and see if there's any other issue that they would like to add to that, or any other question or if they feel that their question hasn't been answered appropriately, give them the opportunity to explore some other avenues if needs be. And then I will also give the speakers the opportunity to make any comment they see fit after they've spoken in the light of what other speakers have said.

There's three questions all up [NB - there were in fact five] and I'm hoping after that time to be able to hand it over to all of you, and see if there are any questions from the floor, perhaps there's some issues that you would like to discuss, or for some of our speakers to answer, that they haven't had the chance to do at that point. So, we will move right along.

Let me begin by introducing our speakers to you, and I'll start with Aden to my left here.

**Aden Ridgeway**, many of you would know, is from the Gumbayngirr people of Northern NSW, is the only Indigenous member of the Federal Parliament and the Australian Democrats Senator for NSW. After stints as a boilermaker and a park ranger, - I didn't know that about you, Aden - he moved on to managerial positions, including Executive Director of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council from 1995 to 1999, when he entered parliament. Aden has a passionate commitment to human rights and an ongoing interest in philanthropic and arts organisations, for example as the Chair of Bangarra Dance Theatre. Many of you would know him for his political aspirations and his interest in indigenous issues, but you would also know that his interests also go well beyond that in a much broader world.

**Kerry Nettle** is the Australian Greens Senator for NSW. She first got involved in campaigning during protests to stop the M2 private tollway from being built in her local area. And in May 2000, Kerry left her job as a youth worker and headed to East Timor, where she worked for two months as a volunteer with the Asia Pacific Support Collective. She was elected to Parliament in 2001. Kerry joined Senator Bob Brown in protesting against President George Bush during his 2003 visit to Australia, over his treatment of Australians held at Guantanamo Bay, and the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

Before his 1998 election as Federal member for Griffith, **Kevin Rudd** has been a diplomat in the Australian embassies in Stockholm and Beijing, and Director-General of the Cabinet Office of the Queensland State Government. He has written extensively on Chinese politics, Chinese foreign policy, Australia-Asia relations and globalisation, and is currently Labor's Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Security.

**Marise Payne** has been a Liberal Senator for NSW since 1997. Prior to entering the Senate, she worked as an advisor in the finance industry. She is one of the most active foreign policy-focused parliamentarians. Currently she is Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (Legislation), and of the Human Rights Sub-committee. She is involved in the Parliamentary Group of Amnesty International and is President of the Parliamentary Association for UNICEF.

Would you please welcome all our speakers here tonight. (Applause)

Our [first question](#) tonight comes from Tina Jackson, and it's on the screen behind me to my left, and I'll read it out to you

## Question 1:

**We were told the invasion of Iraq was necessary because of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. "If Iraq had genuinely disarmed, I couldn't justify on its own a military invasion of Iraq to change the regime" – John Howard, 14 March 2003. How can we trust future justifications for war in the light of what we now know?** (Tina Jackson)

Panel Responses: [Aden Ridgeway](#); [Kerry Nettle](#); [Kevin Rudd](#); [Tina Jackson](#)

**Marise Payne:** Shelley, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. I'm pleased to be here tonight representing my colleague Brendan Nelson who asked me if I'd come along for him. It's a certain irony on my part, me being here on behalf of the government, and whilst I'm not expecting to get an enthusiastic reception, I hope I can at least have a fair hearing.

I want to put this particular quote in context to start with. Michelle Grattan asked the Prime Minister in a Q and A session at the Press Club in March last year: "If as you advocate, countries in the Security Council got behind the resolution and a miracle happened and Iraq said yes it would say the game was up and disarmed, but Saddam Hussein was still there, would this be enough for peace given the strong case you've made today for regime change in the name of the Iraqi people?". The Prime Minister's full response was: "Well I would have to accept that if Iraq had genuinely disarmed I couldn't justify on its own a military invasion of Iraq to change the regime. I've never advocated that. Much in all as I despise the regime, but what I was really trying to say today, and perhaps it has had some effect, is that I get a bit tired of humanitarian argument all being on the one side. It's about time that the humanitarian argument was put into a better balance and people understand what a monstrous regime we're dealing with."

What I wanted to talk about briefly was three points in relation to this question. First of all, that you can't in fact ignore the humanitarian argument, you can't ignore the travesties and human rights obscenities of the Saddam Hussein Iraqi regime. And you might think that it's headline grabbing, if you like, to reiterate those, but it is important when you're talking about a regime which routinely, as a penalty for slander against the president's family, would remove peoples' tongues, crush the feet of children to extract confessions from their parents, who in fact legislated unrestricted honour killings of women, who subjected detainees to mock executions, who suspended them from ceilings by their hands with their hands tied behind their backs, and so the list goes on. So I would have argued in the first place that any regime that imposes its will through torture, is in fact, illegitimate.

But let's go back to February 2003, a month before the quote, when the Australian federal parliament debated at length the prospect of military intervention. Only days before that the head of the UN weapons inspection body for Iraq, Hans Blix, said: "Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance, not even today, of the disarmament which was demanded of it and which it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world and to live in peace."

We all know that they routinely and categorically ignored UN resolutions for over 12 years, we know about their support for training and supporting regional terrorist groups and their relationships with those organisations. On the basis of the intelligence available, at the time, the British Joint Intelligence Committee has judged that Iraq had a usable chemical and biological weapons capability which included the recent production of chemical and biological agents. The director of US Central Intelligence reached similar conclusions, and I have of course greater detail on that.

The world wanted to know what had happened to Iraq's pre-1998 weapons and material, when they claimed to

destroy them the world sort proof, and proof was not provided. And there is a list of an extraordinary amount of chemical, biological, radiological weapons that Iraq possessed at that time which were never, and still have not been, accounted for.

Take for example their program for developing offensive biological weapons, four years of enquiries and searches, weapons inspectors didn't even know of its existence until Hussein Kamal, Saddam's son-in-law, actually defected [in 1995]. Those sorts of issues are still in many cases outstanding. So if you look at the intelligence that was available at the time, and our actions weren't based only on British and American intelligence, because intelligence can only tell you so much, can only illuminate the situation. We relied also heavily on our assessment of his record in forming a judgment as to whether military intervention was necessary.

So on the humanitarian basis, on the intelligence basis, and on the WMD basis, that is, what was never accounted for, the decision was made to intervene, and ultimately, where do we now find ourselves? We find ourselves with a more difficult reconstruction than was envisaged. I absolutely acknowledge that, it would be ridiculous not to do so, but we have eliminated Iraq's WMD and related activities. We have ended their sponsorship of terrorism in the Middle East. We have encouraged a country like Libya to abandon their weapons of mass destruction and other states of concern have considered their activities, and we have given them some hope of a democratic future, and I think that it is important to contemplate all of those things as we consider these issues tonight.

**Shelley Reys:** Thank you, Marise. If I could ask the audience to please give some respect to our speakers tonight. I'm not asking you not to respond, because I think that is what this forum is indeed about, but please give them the opportunity to at least finish their statements. Thank you. Now, on to Aden, and if I can ask our speakers to try and limit their responses to two or three minutes, and I know that's hard for politicians to do, but I am going to ask you to try and do it. Thank you.

**Aden Ridgeway:** Well I think the first thing that has to be said is that it's absolutely appalling that we ever went to war in the first place. Because it seems to me that ... I think hindsight is always a bitter pill to swallow, and this government hasn't learnt the art of swallowing the injustice of what it's done, particularly in relation to the whole notion of truth and that is about having the moral authority to make a decision - certainly in this particular case we're talking about a government that relied upon the intelligence, most of all from the United Kingdom and United States, least of all upon our own agencies, and if you look at what has been spoken about lately, just about every second intelligence agency in this country is calling for a royal commission and we've still got this falling on deaf ears.

Now it seems to me that the Howard government were the first government to go to war in this country without any reference to the parliament or to the people. And I think that whilst we can't do much about what has been done, we can still keep our eye on the future about avoiding these travesties ever occurring again and playing out, I think, male ego upon other countries and dominating ourselves, not just in other parts of the world, but in this region.

I think we need to keep in mind that the government already made the decision to go to war before the parliamentary debate ever begun. By the time that the debate got to the Senate, bombs were already being dropped on Baghdad. That's how real it was from the government's perspective about being able to listen to the debate that took place in the parliament, let alone listening to the hundreds of thousands of people that marched in this country and right across the globe. I think in many respects from a Democrat's perspective, we had introduced back in 1981 the need for ratification and debate for decisions about going to war. It does need to occur. We've reintroduced that bill. I would hope that either the government that's there or the government-in-waiting makes a commitment to make sure that the parliament and the people are represented in the process and that debate does occur.

I think the other thing that does need to be kept in mind is the unfortunate precedent of pre-emptive strike, now being put into the thought of international law, or rules being redefined and rewritten to suit certain circumstances. And unless we have some surety in the parliament in dealing with those issues you can bet your life that some governments at some time in the future will be tempted to make exactly the same decision again.

The most recent white paper that spoke about Australia's defence made it very clear that Australia now sees itself in a very different light as it relates to foreign policy and more particularly in relation to our part of the world, this region. And I think if anything, we ought to be sending encouraging messages to our neighbours, not threatening ones. We ought not be introducing, I think, neo-colonialist views in the 21st century that seeks to dominate and put ourselves in a position where, quite frankly, we do end up becoming the deputized guards of the United States' president to follow their will. It is possible to have criticism of the way that the United States dealt with this and I do have to say and I have no difficulties - I hope there's two things that happen this year: one is that George W Bush does get kicked out of the White House - I think he's been the most incompetent US President I've ever seen; and the second is that we have change of government in this country.

The last thing I want to say is that I think that we do need to keep our eye on the future and quite frankly it does come down to making sure that the parliament does deliver on that. I'd be asking Kevin Rudd as the foreign minister-in-waiting perhaps to commit the Latham government to looking at making sure that the parliament is involved in this process because people inevitably will only vote one way or the other. There are some guarantees, but it's not enough; because I think in this country when you look at the polls people are apathetic and people aren't passionate enough about these issues, and we ought to be asking these guys to change the rules and make sure that all of us are involved in this debate.

**Kerry Nettle:** I had thought in answer to the question of: "how do we trust further justifications for war in the light of what we know now?", my answer should be, we can't, and I don't think we should continue to naively trust arguments that are put forward for justifying a war when a decision has already been made to go to war. And I think that we need to continue to be aware of those sorts of arguments in a different context being put forward, and that relates to the situation that is in Iraq right now.

The Greens have been saying for a long time now that we think the best job that Australian troops can be doing in Iraq is to be removing themselves from a US led military occupation of Iraq. And we need to do that because we can see the way in which the military occupation is fueling violence in Iraq from people, as any occupied people would be when the military are there and having control of the decisions in their daily lives about where they can move around and what they can do and where they can go to. And I suppose I've been reading a lot about the stories from those people on the ground, from the people in Falluja, who after the bridge was shut across the River Euphrates, weren't able to access their hospital which was on the other side of the bridge, people whose lives are being impacted on, in that way. And I get frustrated when I hear discussions about government's humanitarian argument for going into Iraq to support the Iraqi people because when I see the horrendous photos that we've all seen over the last few days about the way in which Iraqis have been treated in prisons, I think, it makes me even more frustrated to hear government talking about arguments of humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people when we see those sorts of pictures.

So I think the message for us is to be careful of messages, to be careful of messages for example, coming from our government, the United States and the UK at the moment, to say if our troops leave there will be civil war. I think they're messages that are being strongly put forward by governments, as they always are, where a country's occupied, the occupying forces will say, if we leave there will be chaos. Well it is chaos, because of the military occupation. We need to remove that. And we need to give to the Iraqi peoples their opportunity to make the decisions about the control of their country and of their democracy through free and fair elections,

and of their economy as well. So I think they're the things that we really need to be doing – is handing over those decisions about the economy, the democracy and the military of Iraq over to the Iraqi people.

**Kevin Rudd:** Thanks Kerry. We have a slightly old fashioned view of the question of when you go to war, and that is an old fashioned view that international law is important. And we don't say that just for some sort of left wing nostalgic view of the world, it's because if you look at what the world community did after the Second World War, they decided that what had preceded it was an abomination, where it had become the norm of international behaviour for the previous half century that when states got upset with other states they invaded those states. And we saw the carnage which that resulted in, in the war to end all wars, and the war which succeeded that war, and so the international community met in San Francisco and they came up with the UN Charter 1945. We created the United Nations organisation and through the fabric of international law constructed on the basis of the UN Charter, we came up with the grounds upon which lawful international conflict could occur, and there are three.

The first is if the UN Security Council agrees that the actions by a particular state represent a threat to peace and security of the international order, that is the so called Article 42 basis for going to war, UN Security Council agrees. The second is Article 51, which is the right to legitimate self-defence: you're attacked; you can defend yourself, Article 51. The third is the emerging doctrine in more recent times of international humanitarian intervention, which rests on Article 24 in the Charter. It's less clear cut than either Article 42 or Article 51, but it basically says to the international community, if you see Rwandas happening, you should do something about it there and then, not three, five, seven, twelve, fifteen years later, and that has spawned a whole lot of work, particularly by the International Commission on Humanitarian Intervention in States chaired by Gareth Evans and others. They are the three bases upon which you can engage in lawful international conflict.

Now if we apply that to Iraq, what happened? The basis upon which we argue this is what was laid on the table of the parliament by John Howard as his formal international legal basis for going to war. He did not seek to invoke Article 51, which was the right to self-defence, because neither ourselves nor the United States, the United Kingdom, the three invading powers, were threatened directly with attack by the government of Iraq under Saddam Hussein. So John Howard did not try to invoke Article 51. He did not try to invoke, and this is a very important point, given that Marise has raised it, he did not try to invoke at all, the international humanitarian intervention argument. If you read the text of the legal opinion he tabled in the House of Representatives, it does not contain a single reference to that at all. So when you hear the Prime Minister say post facto, we sent you abroad to liberate an oppressed people, that is a completely a post facto invention by the Prime Minister when measured against what he laid on the table of parliament.

Which leaves you with the third and only remaining grounds upon which the Prime Minister could have argued a case for going to war, which is Article 42, the UN Security Council so mandated it. The only problem the Prime Minister ran into, was that it didn't. If you remember the history of those events in the latter part of 2002, and early 2003, the UN Security Council met in repeated emergency session, and there was no support by the permanent members or a majority of the combined Council of fifteen members, for a military action against Iraq. So instead the Prime Minister resorted to the rhetorical device of simply saying this: out there we know that Iraq possesses stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons which represent of themselves a threat because they could be passed to terrorists.

That was the argument he advanced at the rhetorical political level to the Australian people, and we now know 13 months later that there has been a conspicuous lack of success in identifying said stockpiles of either a) chemical weapons or b) biological weapons. But that was the basis upon which John Howard sought to take the country to war. Therefore when I say we have an old fashioned view of these things, we sat back and looked at the debate unfold, we could not find any single argument of principle in international law as advanced by the Howard government that would justify that war, which is why we opposed it. We opposed it

as a matter of principle, we don't apologise for that decision now, and we won't be apologising for it in the future either.

Two or three quick points in conclusion. Marise referred to the report by Hans Blix, the Chief UN Weapons Inspector, at the time when the Security Council was meeting in repeated emergency session. And she's right; Hans Blix said the government of Iraq had not done enough to comply with the requirements of the Council in terms of a full and complete declaration as related to its weapons of mass destruction, activities and/or programs. Hans Blix also said in those reports, however, that the failure of Iraq to do that did not of itself constitute proof of the existence of weapons of mass destruction.

You need to read Blix's report very carefully, and Blix returns to this point repeatedly, in his subsequent commentary on the war. On subsequent commentary on the war, could I just add this, David Kay, Chief US, not UN weapons inspector, at least until recently, in his exit statement said that his considered view now having looked at evidence on the ground in Iraq for more than a year, is that in all probability no such stockpiles existed at the time when the allies went to war in March 2003. That's not a UN peacenik speaking, that's a leading US hawk speaking, appointed by the Bush administration to go and investigate these matters on the ground with all the books open, all the sites accessible, as nine to ten months into his investigation (he) arrives at that conclusion.

And finally this, Marise also quoted the Joint Intelligence Committee of the United Kingdom, as providing justification for going to war. The Joint Intelligence Committee of the United Kingdom which brings together the various arms of the UK intelligence community and into a synthesized assessment. In November of 2002, in advice to the British Government at the time said, that if you go about attacking Iraq, it was likely to increase the terrorist threat, not reduce it, and furthermore it said it would increase the likelihood of any WMD which existed in Iraq's possession being passed to terrorists. That document was passed to the Howard government prior to us going to war here, in March of 2003. Mr Howard neglected to pass that part of the JIC's information onto the Australian people. I wonder why?

And to conclude where the question leads us, what about the future? Four elements to it. You need to have an independent intelligence service, not one which believes that there are politically predetermined answers which it's required to deliver to this government, or any government for that matter. In Canberra at present, there is a culture of policy driven analysis which has taken over the intelligence bureaucracy and it's bad, it's bad for whichever government occupies the Treasury benches in the future.

Secondly, robust independent policy advice. There was a good commentary on this today, I think, in the Australian Financial Review by Geoff Barker, who commented on what advice was provided by policy agencies of the Australian government: Defence, Foreign Affairs and others, ranging through the questions and the implications of a decision to go to war, the implications about the overall impact on the terrorist threat to Australia as a consequence of going to war, or more broadly, what would happen in terms of maintenance of the peace once the war was concluded in Iraq, and in terms of bringing about a democratic culture.

And finally, a final element in terms of answer to that question is - transparent political leadership in this country which actually says to people, that levels to people: "this is the information we have, it is imperfect, it is inconclusive, we have taken this decision based on it" - rather than delivering this pat line to the Australian people that we are going to war because we have incontrovertible evidence that there are stockpiles of completed chemical and biological weapons and if we don't remove them tomorrow, western civilization will collapse by lunchtime. That was as much nonsense then, as it is now.

**Shelley Reys:** Thank you, Kevin, and thank you, speakers. I can see I'm going to have to be a more ruthless chairperson in relation to time, so, speakers, if you don't mind keeping your responses down to three minutes:

at the two minute mark I'll give you an indication, and you'll know that you have another minute, otherwise we'll be here till midnight.

**Tina Jackson:** Thanks Shelley, and thank you very much to the four speakers. If I could just encapsulate: Marise emphasised the humanitarian argument and that we went to war on the basis of intelligence at the time that there weapons of mass destruction were not accounted for. Aden again emphasised the intelligence issues and the fact that other countries are calling for royal commissions, and that the decision had already been taken to go to war, and posed the suggestion that parliament needs to be involved in the debate in future. Kerry pointed out that we can't trust in the future the arguments put to us on the basis of what's happened this time, and emphasized the need to hand rights back to the people. Kevin spoke to us about international law and the Opposition's opposition to the war and some suggestions for how we might be able to trust future justifications, and they are: an independent intelligence service, robust independent policy advice and more transparent political leadership.

I'd just like to underline the issue of the intelligence that we've been given and the threat, the dangerous flaw that all of this has raised about our process of democracy. And that is that the government chose to receive the advice it wanted, and it's been able to hide behind the excuse about the advice it had about weapons of mass destruction. To me this is one of the most tragic 'dog ate my homework' excuses that we've heard in a long time.

As Kevin pointed out, 13 months after the preemptive war in Iraq, there are no stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons, and if Hans Blix and his team had been given a bit more time then perhaps, then maybe, the deaths of a hundred thousand people could have been avoided. And we now know that the intelligence about weapons of mass destruction was skewed to ensure that the government only received the advice that it wanted, and that alternative advice wasn't getting through. There were whistle blowers, and they were pilloried. The hundreds of thousands who marched against a preemptive war were ignored. And indeed after the event, it's hard to believe that the intelligence statements that we were hearing, that there was no shadow of a doubt that there were weapons of mass destruction, it's very hard to believe that they were one hundred per cent inaccurate.

Now the government's able to say: "Well, we acted on the information that we were given". I think this is a significant flaw in our democracy; politicians shouldn't be able to get away with saying that we can only rely on advice that the public servants give us. We must have better accountability than this, we need a mechanism to ensure that governments are held accountable for not receiving the full range of information, and we also need mechanisms to ensure that the opposition is a party to the full range of advice, because unless it is, it can't act properly as an opposition, and it can't hold the government accountable as it should be able to.

My final point is that democracy won't work for as long as governments can hide behind the facade of acting only on the advice that they get. We might be able to trust future justifications for war – might - if we knew that there were systems in place to ensure that the government was indeed taking and hearing the full range of advice, and that the opposition was party to this as well. At the end of the day the ultimate accountability is at the ballot box, as has been pointed out, but as well as this, there needs to be more timely mechanisms to make a government accountable and 'we can only act on what were are told' seems to me not an excuse that we can accept. Governments should not be able to escape responsibility, and we must have mechanisms to ensure that this never happens again.

**Shelley Reys:** Thank you, Tina. Is there anyone here on the panel that would like a final quick word in relation to the comments made by your colleagues, or are you happy for me to move on? Thank you. Our [second question](#) comes from Brendan Doyle ...

## Question 2:

**There has been little informed democratic debate in Australia about the causes of terrorism – in particular Israel’s occupation of Palestine. The War on Terror cannot succeed by dealing with the symptoms alone. How can Australia work to address the causes?** (Brendan Doyle)

Responses: [Marise Payne](#); [Kevin Rudd](#); [Kerry Nettle](#); [Brendan Doyle](#); [Aden Ridgeway](#)

**Aden Ridgeway:** Well, I'll keep it pretty short, I think that the first thing that needs to be said is that nothing, whether it's the War on Terrorism or a war against indigenous disadvantage, can be treated by looking at the symptoms alone. And I think that the thing we need to keep in mind here is that what's being thrown out the window with the doctrine of pre-emptive strikes, is to compromise and put at risk the entire culture of human rights as we understand it. And I think if anything, it's also compromised international law to such an extent that it is now permissible by governments like the United States to change the rules, and do anything that it wants to any country at any particular time without reference to bodies like the United Nations, and without reference to a body of law, international law and humanitarian law which talks about the conduct of nations towards each other.

So, I think if anything, the issue of trying to deal with future circumstances of this sort really does come back to sending a very loud, clear and consistent message to the Australian government that it ought to rethink and remove itself from this war, to get back into the arena of the United Nations, to use our influence, and there's a history of our involvement in developing a world understanding and a world agreement about how we deal with conflict. And I think that that's the only way that these things can be done, because if nothing else this new inconsistency in the way that we interpret law is allowing us, and other countries to condone what are terrorist acts against other nations. We change the laws and we change the definitions to suit our circumstances, but the end result is exactly the same. And are we encouraging that sort of behaviour in return? I think yes. So I think we have to get back to observing the rule of law. That's what it was created for. Observing fundamental human rights, and then you ought to promote that across the globe. And most of all, none of these unilateral negotiations directly with the United States that they'll lead the way. They've got to go to the table and be an equal just like everyone else, and Australia's no different. ([see also](#) ...)

**Marise Payne:** Thanks, Aden. If I read the question correctly it is about whether there's an adequate level of debate of the causes of terrorism in Australia, and what we might do about addressing those causes. I think it's a reasonable observation to say that the level of debate about the causes of terrorism in Australia could be higher, but I don't think it's entirely accurate to say that there is very little of it. There is, within the parliamentary environment – if you include that as part of the debate process, and I think it is appropriate to do so – some significant debate on the Israeli and Palestine issue - in fact since the last election about 400 different speeches concerning Israel and Palestine in the House of Representatives alone. And that's just at that level. There is of course various aspects of community debate and public discussion as well, of which this is a very important part of the process. Whether you think that advances our position is another matter altogether.

In terms of whether we can succeed in dealing with the War on Terror by dealing with the symptoms alone, I agree it is not possible to do that, and in most international fora, and when the opportunity is there, we make it quite clear that we understand it can't only be fought on the law and order and security issues. It's very important that we make sure that the ideas by which terrorists seek to justify their actions don't go unchallenged, but aggressively challenged. It's not, I think, true to say that terrorism is only driven by poverty and lack of opportunity - far from it, in fact, in terms of the work of absolute extremists and absolute fundamentalists. Their approach is more often than not to undermine what we would call common human aspirations, to disrupt social and economic advances in life, to distribute and sow fear and insecurity, and to impose their will through violence and intimidation. That's absolutely part of the process, and these two

approaches need to go hand-in-hand: dealing with that sort of behaviour, and dealing with the issue that the question raises. Very specifically, in terms of engagement between Australia and countries in the region, for example, where you might think it's very appropriate for us to do this, we are taking some significant steps to increase understanding between our non-Muslim, broadly speaking, society and Muslim societies, whether it's the Australia-Indonesia Institute, and the interfaith dialogue they've established, whether it's our efforts to assist the Indonesian government in the Islamic school system there, whether it's the Council for Arab Australian Relations which was formed last year to promote economic political, cultural and social links with Arab countries - they are very important and specific part of this process. And our aid budget, of almost 1.9 billion dollars is also directed in many of those cases to assist in development, poverty reduction, in areas where it is the most challenging issue facing people, to assist those countries across the board. And I that all of those are components of the answer to this question.

**Kevin Rudd:** Many years ago, when I was at University, I spent a year or two studying Chinese Buddhism, and the Buddhist Sutra had this nice story, which I'm sure others are familiar with here: it's like the sound of one hand clapping, and sometimes I think when we talk about terrorism, it sounds very much like the sound of one hand clapping - and that is, that there is this permanent, sustained debate about better intelligence, better policing, better security work, harder and tougher crackdowns, harder and harsher sentences, etc. Now, I'm no dove on these questions, all that's useful, all that's important, but it is the sound of one hand clapping.

The sound of the second hand clapping, the other hand clapping, is in fact what you do constructively, by way of policy, about the causes of terrorism, and what actually causes this phenomenon. And you'll never have a perfect answer to it, but you can get some of the way along the path. And it's the way in which I see it is that ... if we take our nearest neighbour, Indonesia, which is a useful example to take, because it's not just our nearest neighbour, but it's the largest Islamic country in the world ... Fact one: since the Asian financial crisis, the Indonesian public school system has collapsed, through the absence of fiscal resources on the part of the government in Jakarta to sustain it. What's happened as a result of that? Well, a large number of kids now, particularly in Java, but beyond Java, are going to school at, increasingly, militant, fundamentalist, *pesantren* and *madrassas* funded by Wahhabism out of Saudi Arabia: not a huge number, but an increasingly and measurable increased number. And this is because Mums and Dads don't have any other financial option, because the state school system has either broken down in parts of rural Java and rural Indonesia, and therefore, if you want your kid to learn anything, this is the education that's on offer. Therefore, it strikes me, given that this is a very large country next door to us, and a country with which we should have a close and constructive and cooperative relationship, that this is front and centre for dealing with the future recruiting grounds for Wahhabist Islam, which gives rise to Jemaah Islamiyah, and six sister organisations out in the field of terrorism.

Secondly, in Java, you currently have unemployment of about forty million - forty million - so, if you don't have employment, and this unemployment number has again gone through the roof since the Asian financial crisis, and the IMF's, I think, woeful response to the Asian financial crisis, you are not dealing, again, with a causative factor, which creates a subsequent breeding ground for terrorist activity. And the third and final point I'd make is a political one: there is a grave danger that unless we do see a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine, we progressively will see the middle-eastern-isation of Islamic politics, in broader Islamic southeast Asia. Now, we therefore, apart from the intrinsic justice of what needs to be delivered within the Middle East itself, have a here a local set of interests at stake as well, which is to see Israel-Palestine resolved, so that it doesn't become a lightning rod for the further radicalisation of Wahhabist Islam, and groups around Wahhabist Islam in our nearest neighbour, the largest Muslim country in the world.

**Kerry Nettle:** We've often tried to have the debate and its often been in Parliament, about the need to address the causes of terrorism. I think the problem is in being listened too, in terms of the predominant actions that the government is taking. The actions that exist within the War on Terrorism in fact seek to fuel some of the reasons behind the actions of terrorism. And by that I mean, the actions on the War on Terrorism that accentuate the US's foreign policy objectives in the Middle East do more to fuel terrorism than they do to address the root causes of terrorism, which is what we need to be doing. We need to be developing fair and

just international relations with countries around the world, because we're not going to get genuine human security from being involved in conflict or from being a closed society and choosing not to assist our neighbours. We need to be developing independent foreign, defence and trade policies - it means coming out clearly and opposing preemptive action being put forward by the United States, but also means coming out and condemning targeted assassinations, of whomever they may be, when they occur.

In relation to specifics: it means the withdrawal of Australian troops from Iraq, it means advocating for a peace process in Israel and Palestine, and not supporting ... – a genuine peace process – I don't mean the sort of peace process that George Bush has just signed onto which ignores international law in relation to the settlements in the West Bank. We need to ensure that our aid program – and it is embarrassing in terms of the level of aid program that we contribute to internationally – we need to ensure it's targeted at poverty elimination and not targeted at ensuring that Australian businesses or strategic interests can further themselves. We need to also be rejecting international trading agreements that disadvantage poor countries in our community by simply signing onto a bilateral agreement with the United States. We also need to support international institutions like the United Nations, like the International Criminal Court, where war criminals such as Saddam Hussein should have been taken. We need to do all these things without removing the civil rights of our citizens, because if we do, we damage the capacity of our democracy to move forward. We need to bring in measures such as airport security at regional airports, but we don't need to bring in things like the ASIO legislation that take away the capacity of us to engage in free, open and democratic debate in our society.

**Shelley Reys:** Thank you, Kerry. I would like to ask if anyone on the panel would like to make a quick response to anything that's been said. OK, Brendan, are there any comments that you'd like to make in relation to the way in which your question was answered?

**Brendan Doyle:** Yes, thank you. I'd like to start by saying that, this afternoon I got some news that my 23 - year-old son is in a hospital in London with pneumonia, and of course I'm still feeling pretty upset about it, but at the same time I know he'll be OK, because he's in a hospital in London and he's being treated with antibiotics. And I couldn't help thinking about - in relation to this question tonight - about if I was, let's say, a Palestinian father whose kids have just been bombed by an Apache helicopter provided by the United States for Israel to take out someone in Gaza or the West Bank. If that Palestinian father then went to an Israeli checkpoint with a gun, to start shooting at Israeli soldiers, that Palestinian father would be called a terrorist. And I think that, unfortunately, our government, along with the US government would call that Palestinian man a terrorist. So, I really think that in the whole debate about what terrorism is, it seems to me that we have to be pretty sure about what we're talking about.

I think the very word terrorism is itself as part of the arsenal of the propaganda war. When the US snipers are shooting women and children running down the streets of Falluja, that's not called terrorism, but if an Iraqi adult picks up a gun and shoots back at the American soldiers he's a terrorist. So I'm afraid I have a very cynical feeling about the way the word terrorism is bandied about.

In relation to the Israeli-Palestine situation, which to me is very clearly a case of international law has been broken in a very, very serious way, Israel has been illegally occupying Palestinian territory for many decades now, and I'd like to read just a little bit about this situation in Israel and Palestine, because I think it's extremely important in the whole debate on terrorism. The reason I think that is because they are so many young unemployed men in the Muslim world: they look to the Middle East, and they look at the situation in Israel and Palestine, and they know that it's wrong, and they know that they're going to be treated in the same way if they happen to get in the way of American power. I just want to read something that the late Dr Andrew McNaughtan, who was an active member of our group, North Shore Peace and Democracy, and who passed away late last year - he wrote something about the situation in Israel, which I think is very very pertinent: it's only short, too, and I'd like to read it out.

Andrew McNaughtan wrote: "Over the past decades the US has provided profound diplomatic, financial and military support to Israel. This support (which has rarely questioned or opposed Israeli policy) has been crucial to Israel whilst it has pursued a policy of occupying significant portions of what remained of Palestinian land -

particularly in the West Bank. These continuing encroachments (which could only have occurred with US backing) have now made it very difficult to achieve a resolution of the Israel- Palestine conflict - because any true resolution will almost certainly require the creation of a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel." - And that doesn't mean creating Bantustans to park Palestinian people inside walls, it doesn't mean creating another apartheid state, that's not what we are talking about. "Creating a viable Palestinian state will require the removal of encroaching Israeli settlements - something Israeli is very reluctant to do. Thus US policy (which has always favoured Israel) has contributed to making this issue much more intractable."

As to what, what can Australia do? Well, for a start, we must not openly ally ourselves with this position. The Australian government must not continue to support Israeli policy in Palestine. We must criticise the Americans for continuing to arm Israel. And - I'm going to finish very briefly - I could say a lot more, but I'd just like to say: how can Australia work to address the causes? By being compassionate world citizens - and I think that's the problem - we've become - we've lost our sense of compassion, and until we get that sense of compassion again, and Kerry talked about human rights, and that to me is the key to it - we have to put those human rights into practice, we have to practise compassion, and that will be the start of a compassionate foreign policy.

**Shelley Reys:** Thank you Brendan. Now, I'm going to move on to our third question ...

**Aden Ridgeway:** I just wanted to make a few comments, Brendan, if you don't mind, and be respectful about it. This is not coming from the Democrats perspective, it's my own view about many of the things concerning the Middle East, and particularly having been to Israel and Palestine now on at least four occasions, and having a relationship here in Australia with the Jewish and Arab communities, and- I think one of the things that I'm always cautious about is this promotion of the message about the need for us to make a choice between one camp or another. And I think that the whole process of peace and reconciliation getting to some common ground understanding where groups actually come together, is more about how we actually encourage people to sit down, and I was privileged in the last fortnight to be out at Greenacre, at Malek Fahd school with a thousand Muslim people, a lot of children, Cardinal George Pell, members of the Australian Jewish community, all sitting down and having a dialogue: they recognise that there are faults and problems, that these things happen on both sides, and technology is - perhaps one way of looking at the inequality is how that is used - that I would want to, I suppose, implore a message: at least try and understand that the way to bring about peace isn't about one side or the other, it's about trying to encourage them to find a way, because ultimately they have to live with it, not us, and I think we've got to encourage them to get there.

**Shelley Reys:** There are not three questions, in fact there are five, so we have three to go, and we'll have to watch our time. And I'd like to move on to our [third question](#), and it comes from David Roffey ...

### Question 3:

**Does a request for support from the US automatically and always pre-empt Australian policy and budgets at the expense of education, health and welfare, and if not, how should we decide which requests to refuse?** (David Roffey)

Responses: [Kerry Nettle](#); [Aden Ridgeway](#); [Marise Payne](#); [David Roffey](#)

**Kevin Rudd:** Just to add a footnote on what Brendan said before, as well. He said, I think, that what this country needs to do is to rediscover compassion. Can I just say it would be a sign of our collective maturation as an Australian foreign policy community when we get to the stage when our national political leadership of the left and the right can say, without apology, what is the compassionate response to this problem we see in the international community. What is the compassionate response to what we see unfolding in Indonesia? What is the compassionate response to what we see unfolding in Iraq? Kerry was talking before about the humanitarian consequences on the ground. Compassion has become a dirty word in Australian national politics and it shouldn't be. It is, I think, an expression of our collective humanity to think about the impact of our actions on others - other communities, other countries and to think first about what we can do to better those conditions, and to start that process we actually need to rehabilitate the vocabulary of compassion in our national political discourse. So that's a long way of saying 'yes'. But I feel quite deeply about that.

On the US thing – well our view has been that an alliance with the United States does not equal compliance to the United States. We don't apologise for that. That's been our view for 50 years.

We also think we've got a right to say that, because we started the alliance in the first place. In 1941, though John Howard never admits that fact. If Menzies had remained as Prime Minister in 1941 I think he would have still been waiting for Churchill to sail capital ships across the seas to liberate us - and waited desperately for them to arrive. Curtin looked to America. This country had no other option in '41 and in the context of the times in was an extraordinarily radical step, given where this country had been for the previous 150 years of its settled history and foreign policy which operated largely under the rubric of the two word defence doctrine "Rule Britannia."

But we have never seen this as being a recipe for saying yes to everything that any US administration wants. Remember it was the Australian Labor Party which opposed the war in Vietnam. We opposed it then. We thought it was a wrong decision and I believe history has vindicated the posture we took then. It was the Australian Labor Party which opposed the war in Iraq, we believed it was the wrong decision, and we've argued that, and some said at the time, to our political cost, but we believed it was the wrong decision for the reasons of international law that I outlined before.

The other thing where I think Mr. Howard misleads us is to assume that there has always been this automatic support in Washington in previous US administrations for Australian national interests at given times - look to the history books: what did various US administrations say to then Australian Governments, usually conservative, when there was a conflict between Australia and Indonesia, at the time of confrontation, *konfrontasi*? What happened with the conflict between Australia and Indonesia over the future of Dutch New Guinea, as it then was? What happened when the Nixon administration proclaimed the "Guam Doctrine"? The tabloid summary of which was in 1968 - "allies get to look after their own security and interests in their own region. We will only intervene if there is an attack on them by the global superpower" namely at that stage the Soviet Union.

And most recently in 1999, remember Howard's claim and call for "boots on the ground" in East Timor from the United States? What happened?

Now all I'm saying is, let's just put this into a little bit of historical context. That's why we have absolutely no apology to make about

a) being initiators of this alliance, but

b) always asserting ourselves that the independence of this country and its foreign policy comes first.

Our interpretation of what is right for this country against the principles of International law shall be the barometer, and if that means disagreeing with the United States from time to time on critical issues of foreign policy, regional policy, global policy we will do that; and we will do so in the framework of an alliance which we have consistently supported for sixty years.

**Kerry Nettle:** If we do make decisions based on consistently prioritising the US alliance, the US alliance does not bring us security and it doesn't bring us our own interests, and it isn't just in the area of defence matters this is the case, it's also in the area of trade. I touched on before, the US Australia Free Trade Agreement. If we want to protect things like our Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme – we shouldn't believe Government when it says it won't be impacted on, because when we get to see the text we find out the variety of different ways by which our Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme will be impacted on by the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

The question also talks to the impact on budgetary decisions that are made by the government, and people should watch closely when, one week from tomorrow, the budget comes down. Watch closely for how much the defence budget goes up. I'm sure many of you read the investigation in the Sydney Morning Herald on the weekend about defence expenditure. There's fifty billion dollars there which the Greens say should be bringing us real security, by being spent as aid money, that helps and assists our regional neighbours and develops stronger relationships between Australia and their governments that bring us genuine ongoing and lasting security.

The other thing to look out for in that budget, and again it comes out of the question, is, the Australian population are crying out for spending on public services, like health, education and welfare. With a \$4 dollar a week tax cut – the polls in the Sydney Morning Herald said 77% of Australians wanted that money to be spent on health and education. Now this time around people were being asked in a poll question by AC Nielson – what about if you're given \$10? An even stronger response came back – no, we want that money spent on health and education.

After the last budget, myself and Bob Brown sat by ourselves on one side of the chamber and we voted for that \$4 a week tax cut to go into tertiary education in this country to make it free for students. I'm hoping that in a week or so's time we are not sitting alone again on the other side of the chamber voting for services instead of tax cuts.

**Aden Ridgeway:** I suppose the question highlights a number of things for me – the first is, I wasn't aware that the US makes requests on anything that has a financial cost to us other than military action. Certainly there has been cause to support it diplomatically in arenas like the UN, and certainly in relation to things like the signing of the Kyoto protocol - what I do want to say about it though, is that I think that the way that we have shaped our foreign policy is that it's allowed us to write off something that is a pre-emptive strike of the US against Australian independence. They get to make the decisions, they get to call the shots and we just have to follow suit.

I think if anything, if we are talking about the budget coming up, we say without question in the Democrats, forget about the tax cuts and forget about the top end of town. If people are saying that they want the money spent on much needed social services then that should be spent where it is most needed.

I make no bones about the fact that even in the last couple of weeks that the Democrats have been launching various budget announcements. One thing I think, that does need to be resolved in this country, is the crisis in indigenous health. It goes without saying that if the Deeble Report and the AMA are both saying that 300 million dollars is all that is required to spend to bring up to par, just like any other Australian, then that's no more than what we are spending in one week on defence in this country.

How can we say that we have a moral conscience when we have a crisis in our backyard and we're not responding appropriately when it comes to the budget?

We seem to have a government that somehow gets out there and tells the population (cons them at least) that they are going to get a tax cut. This time around it might give them a milkshake and maybe a hamburger: I'm waiting to see what the next headlines are. The reality is that the US shouldn't be telling us. We shouldn't be entering into a free trade agreement that, from my reckoning, doesn't deliver any great benefits and if it does – that's going to be about increasing the cost of medicines in this country let alone anything else that's been spoken about.

I think most of all, we ought to be talking about keeping our eye on the future, that is, the next generation of young people. And if anyone can come forward and say that they have done the reckoning and they can find that there are going to be benefits for Australia under a free trade agreement, then I'd like to see it.

It's not about being anti-American. It's about being pro-Australian. It's about us making decisions about the things that matter most to us and targeting any of those circumstances and any decisions in our budget to those areas of greatest need – least of all lessening the gap between the rich and the poor in this country.

**Marise Payne:** The first thing I'd like to say is that I don't necessarily accept the premise on which the question is put, that Australia automatically and always accepts requests for support from the United States, but I'm not going to walk away from the fact that we place a major priority on the strength of our relationship and our alliance with the United States. I'm not going to walk away from that for a number of reasons, not the least of which is security in our region, and more broadly, and the long-term aspects of the relationship which do mean that we share basic democratic processes, that we share ... have a long record of cooperation, and the security alliance is part of a practical manifestation of those values. But it doesn't mean that we're not simultaneously in the process of enhancing our regional relationships as well. It doesn't mean that we're not enhancing our relationships with Indonesia, with New Zealand, with the Philippines, with Singapore ... and in fact the list goes on, in recognition of the regional challenge that we currently face. We can do more than one thing at a time, and we do.

In relation to budgetary issues, and the priorities that are placed on particular issues, the first thing I would say is that humble back-benchers are not exposed to the budget before its release next week either, but there is obviously some discussion around at the moment about the sorts of issues that members of the panel have raised tonight, and I just wanted to - to one of those, which is the question of whether there will be enhanced spending in the areas of security, intelligence and defence. We're actually not in a position to walk away from the challenges that international terrorism places for Australia as well as every other western democracy and a whole range of other nations. We're not in a position to do that, and if ultimately we don't support the agencies and the organisations that we charge with the responsibility of protecting this nation, and we don't support them properly in this environment, then we will be culpable in the event of further atrocities in our region which we may have been able to assist with. And I think that's a very important fact to recognise: we cannot walk away from that.

In relation to the FTA, I read a press statement on Friday from the Centre for International Economics, I think, if I have the acronym correctly, which indicated that their analysis shows a benefit to the Australian economy, across a vast range of areas of the economy of 6.1 billion dollars annually within a decade. Now, these are the sorts of future-looking things, forward-looking things, that one of the other panellists, perhaps Kerry, referred to - I'm sure that's not what she meant, but it's a point that I'd like to take up, and say that these are important issues for Australia to consider as well, in trade terms, and I think we can't turn our back on those.

**Shelley Reys:** Thank you, Marise. And – David Roffey, do you have anything you would like to add, or comment in the light of what's been said?

**David Roffey:** Some of what I wanted to say has been said by the speakers, but it bears repeating.

Just over a week ago [**Anzac Day**] we commemorated, as we do every year, the fact that a large number of young Australians died invading a country, Turkey, with which we had no argument whatsoever, on behalf of another power. And, as Kevin has already said, in 1941 that power failed to turn up in its turn and support us, and we changed our minds about which power we needed to go to. Those of you who have seen The Fog of

War, which is an interesting couple of hours in the company of Robert McNamara, who was LBJ's Secretary of Defence – "All the way with LBJ", and we again sent young Australians to go and die in a country with which we had no argument whatsoever – and what did that do for us? It's very interesting for an Australian to listen to Robert McNamara, because in the middle of that film he says, and I quote: "None of our allies supported us in Vietnam: nobody came to our aid – nobody important – France, Germany, Japan, the UK, none of them." So, here was LBJ's Secretary of Defence, and he didn't remember that we did it. So they died for nothing. So now we're off doing it again.

And what is the support of America worth, and how much does it actually do for us? We've not signed up to the Kyoto agreement, which the State Premiers have released a report which shows that, not only has it the chance of saving our grandchildren's lives from some pretty awful effects, but it would actually be a net economic benefit to Australia if we signed up. We signed up to the Free Trade Agreement, which is our "reward" in quotes: well that report that Marise mentioned is the most shonky piece of economics I've ever seen. 41 out of the 58 billion dollars of net benefit that it talks about over the next ten years comes from the benefits of relaxed rules on foreign investment in Australia. No US investment in Australia has ever been turned down under the old rules, so where are we going to get all this money from? Well I can tell what would add up to about \$41 billion, you let American firms buy Telstra and Qantas, which I think are just about the only firms that there is actually a difference under the free trade agreement – but do we want that to happen? How much does it actually matter – and some of this has already been said by Kevin – how much does it actually matter whether you support America or not. Well, you can be against America and do the most appalling things and they'll support you.

Syria undoubtedly planted the bomb that caused PanAm103 to crash at Lockerbie, but two years into the investigation of that, they joined in in the Gulf War 1, and suddenly the blame shifts to Libya. If they're on our side, it's OK. We went into Iraq, as has already been discussed, with the claim that, if we didn't, terrible weapons would be passed to other members of the "Axis of Evil". Well, we now know that Iraq had certainly no nuclear capability. Who did have nuclear capability? Who was passing nuclear secrets to other members of the "Axis of Evil"? A member of the Coalition of the Willing – Pakistan. Has America gone against them because they did that? – No.

So, actively opposing them can still get you American support. Standing with them doesn't necessarily get you any support at all. In the case that might be most relevant to the question of terrorism, which has already been brought up, for 30 years, the country that you can tell from my accent I came from [the UK] had bombs going off in the streets of its capital, on a regular basis. The building that I used to work in, that was on top of Victoria Station, there was a period in which we had to be evacuated because of a bomb scare in the station beneath us, approximately once a week. And where did the funding for that come from? It came almost entirely from the United States – not from the government, but from private individuals. But when the British Government went to America and said: "please can you do something about stopping this support for terrorism on our land?", they had absolutely no government action whatsoever.

So, being on their side gets you nothing - being against them can still get support. So the whole tenor of the debate as Mr Howard puts it, about how we need to keep up with these important – we need to stick, as the Defence Policy statement effectively says, paraphrasing it, we need to stick with the biggest bully in the playground so they're on our side when the fight starts. But if it's in their interests they'll be there anyway, and if it's not in their interests they won't turn up.

One last thing: the US State Department's recently released annual report on international terrorism repeats again that about 300 people a year get killed by international terrorism – that obviously went up in 2001, and again in 2002, though not in 2003, when it actually went down. 300 people a year die from international terrorism. How much are we prepared to pay to stop that – knowing that, someone who is prepared to die can essentially not be stopped without losing all the freedoms we say we're fighting for? When at the same time, hundreds of Australians are dying from diseases; many, many thousands of children are dying in the Third World for lack of food. Security comes out of believing that we live in a world where we don't have to fight and shoot in order to get a decent way to live: security comes out of knowing that your hospital is in a good enough

condition to be able to treat you if you need emergency treatment at that time. We can spend some of those billions on that sort of security, and not on taking away the freedoms that the rest of us have. Thank you.

**Shelley Reys:** May I remind you that this is your last opportunity to write a question down, and to give it to one of the people wearing badges. [Question 4](#) comes from Jim Wilks ...

## Question 4:

**The present rigid control of Australian political parties over members effectively hijacks much of the decision-making process from open debate in the parliamentary chambers to behind the closed doors of party rooms, and is more coercive than in the US and UK. Why should this be permitted? (Jim Wilks)**

Responses: [Kevin Rudd](#); [Aden Ridgeway](#); [Marise Payne](#); [Jim Wilks](#)

**Kerry Nettle:** Thanks. I don't know that I'd choose this question as the one to go first on ... I think it is a shame that we don't see more of the debate occur in the parliament and I suppose one of the things that I would say in response to this question is to encourage people to get involved in political parties, because that's a capacity to be involved in the debate, but also to ensure that political parties are involved in community debate, and are involved in social movements like the sorts of things that we've got going on here tonight. And to be supportive of processes both in political parties and within our parliament that allow for maximum participation of all individuals involved. And whether that's down to a local council level where decisions are being made about planning and having genuine community consultations, or whether that's down to the ways in which decisions are made within political parties, whether they're made on the basis of consensus or in other ways, to be supportive of processes that allow people to be involved and to engage in the debate.

**Kevin Rudd:** In the town of Bergen, on the west coast of Norway, there's a tradition, I'm told, whereby each Wednesday afternoon the Mayor of Bergen, which is not a small town, it's a city, comes down and sits in the town square for the afternoon, and sits on the stump of a tree, and there the Mayor sits, and talks to the good burghers of Bergen about whatever they want to talk to the Mayor of Bergen about. And you think, well, in the twenty-first century that gets a bit tough and a bit rough, because there's so many people out there and only one Mayor ... but I raise it simply to say that, part of the reason we need to be concerned about the future policy of our democracy is that - physical access to the legislators and decision makers, at whichever level of government. So ... physician heal thyself, what do I try and do about that? About every second Saturday in my electorate, up there in the People's Democratic Republic of Queensland, (Laughter) the - they mock, don't they, they mock - shame on you - what I do, is I go in a horrendously painted yellow truck and I set up in a shopping centre, in a different suburb of the electorate, every second Saturday, and I've been doing this for about four years ... so far - I miss some when I'm out of the country - so far, I've done about 150 of these. And that means being around from about 9 in the morning to noon on a Saturday morning, when most people are out there doing their stuff.

I actually think this is quite important, in terms of two things: one, hearing directly, not in some synthetic form, what in people in their undiluted selves are thinking about what's going on in the world there sitting in their community; and secondly putting me right on the spot in terms of what I'm about. Now, I think that's healthy. If we remove ourselves behind the glass partition, let alone the parliamentary partition, or behind the celluloid partition, which is the 6 o'clock news, then I think it becomes an increasingly arrogant democratic experience for people - it's democracy by remote control - first thing I'd say.

Latham is doing, I think, something good about this: running around in his Opportunity Express, up and down the coast of New South Wales, in rural Victoria last week, over in Western Australia as well. This is - he described it as 'democracy in the raw' - and it is, because you don't know what the hell's going to happen. It's not the old Labor Party of old, where there's a meeting of 400 people and they've stacked 300 of them in, so everyone sort of nods at the right time, shakes their head at the right time - it ain't like that, and what you see is what you get, and there are some people come up and whack you - verbally, hopefully - and some people say you're doing the right thing. I actually think we should do more of that, and not less.

And, finally I'd just say in terms of the party room itself, I think there's a responsibility on all of us members of parliament - I know people criticise the party room here - to actually exercise our rights to disagree within party rooms in a very effective way.

The concluding point, and I'm sorry to bang on about this, is - you ask why can't there be disagreement on the floor of parliament? Well the dynamic with that debate is served by the media: if you **[Kerry]** and Bob have a radical disagreement about something, and it's all over the media the next day, then you have a problem - similarly with us, because the media set up a dynamic, which is essentially that there are winners and losers, and you're either united or divided, and if you've got a disagreement then you're divided, and therefore you're going to lose - that's the dynamic. If we can get beyond that dynamic, in terms of the maturity I think you see in British parliamentary party politics and American parliamentary party politics at a different level, greater public disagreement is tolerated before people start clanging the disunity bell, and saying the sky is about to fall in. And that needs to change.

**Aden Ridgeway:** I probably understand the dynamic very well. I think that certainly one of the faults with our notion of democracy is that it seems to work on a two-party-preferred basis, and I think that we need to review that in the context of the whole representation of views that Australians have, not just in the Senate but also in the House of Representatives, because I think the two-party-preferred system in every western democracy is probably now outdated and probably does need to be reviewed.

I think the other thing that also needs to be said is that people might remember, one hundred years ago, when Australia federated as a country, at least then on a two-party-preferred basis, every politician irrespective of the party they represented or the state they came from, voted according to their conscience. Now I seem to recall that our Constitution talks about the capacity of the individual as a holder of office to exercise that right. I think what's happened since that time is convention within each of the parties to discipline and to disendorse anyone that might disagree. Whilst I take on board what Kevin says about the media and the dynamic of winners and losers - yes, that will occur, but we have to provide an opportunity, if people feel so strongly about a particular issue, they ought to exercise their conscience vote. It ought to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week every time that parliament sits.

**Marise Payne:** Thanks very much, Aden. Now we're on some territory I can deal with. The question of flexibility in the political process. My critics and my supporters would tell you I have it down to a fine art. I agree completely with Kevin about the question of what happens behind the closed doors of party rooms, and that is that it's up to us to disagree and to question. Indeed, that's precisely the approach I've taken since I first walked into our party room in 1997. It's not welcomed, I'm sure they're not grateful, they've never thanked me, and I'm not holding my breath until they do, but I also don't intend to change it.

I think the Australian democracy does suffer from the largely media-driven mantra of 'disunity is death'. That goes for minor parties as well as major parties. And I think that we need to - those people that are interested in being engaged in the democratic process, and in supporting an open and frank and exciting and dynamic democracy in this country, need to feed the message right back to the media: that it doesn't really matter if people within political parties want to discuss policy amongst themselves - we're not going to receive your pap that tells us that means the end is nigh. And until Australians who are interested in hearing about policy and process, and interested in engaging in the democratic process, are prepared to send that message back, then it's actually not going to change. And I actually know that to be the case from personal experience.

I have also a couple of things that I want to say about the Senate itself. With enormous respect to our visitor from the House of Representatives on the panel here this evening, and that is to say, if the public scrutiny of the political process spent half of a nano-second looking at what actually goes on in the Senate, and the committee process, the committee stages of bills and the way they are discussed in the Senate, and frankly the work that people like Aden and Kerry do, and the ministers as well, and the shadow ministers, in seeking amendments, in responding to questions, and providing those answers, for hours and hours and hours of pivotal pieces of legislation, that really do change the way we operate as a nation, to the most arcane pieces of legislation that four pear tree farmers in West Wyalong have some interest in, but not many others. All of those pieces of legislation - about 200 a year - get a forensic level of scrutiny from your parliament, from your Senate representatives, that I think goes largely unheeded, and most disappointingly so.

And that doesn't just happen because people like the sound of their own voices, it happens because it's important; it happens because the legislative committee process in the Senate, for which I have one singular

responsibility as the Senate leader on constitutional legislation committee, and others like it, put an enormous amount of effort in to scrutinising legislation that comes back to our chamber. We make recommendations on changes, we make recommendations on amendments ... some of you may recall, given your interest in these issues, the security legislation of 2002, which after 600 submissions, and hours and hours and hours, days in fact, of committee scrutiny, was sent back through the Senate with a whole raft of recommendations suggested from a committee which the government had a majority on, which I chaired. I actually regard that as a very robust aspect of our democracy, and I'll defend it to my political or otherwise death.

**Shelley Reys:** Jim, as author of that question, do you have any comments you'd like to make?

**Jim Wilks:** Thanks very much. Just a couple of brief comments. Firstly, I thank the panel for their comments, and I must say that I'm encouraged by the fact that they do see that there is some need for some reform to improve the democratic process in regard to the control exercised by parties. Some people I found were surprised I proposed this question, because many of them living a lifetime in Australia were not aware that it was possible to have a political party system that operated with a freer form of control over its membership; but the examples of the US and the UK show us that it is possible to have greater freedom of expression by party members, and that the sky definitely won't fall in simply as a result of that freedom. If you have a look at the voting record in some of these countries and compare them to Australia, you'll see that in Australia so many issues are decided along party lines, that they could almost just drop the voting numbers onto the Speaker's desk, rather than go through the charade of debating some of the issues. This is probably more particularly in the House of Reps than the Senate, and I accept some of the comments that have been made about the Senate.

The real problem is that when decisions are being taken behind the closed doors of the party room, the voters don't know what, if any, stance their particular representatives took on this particular issue and how then can they be accountable to their electorates. Now we have, in fact, some senior people in government suggesting that the only time we really have democracy is at three-yearly intervals when we have the opportunity to vote and pass down decisions on how well we've been represented - but if we don't know what they've said and done, and how decisions were arrived at, that opportunity is also stolen away from us.

I'd just like to finish by quoting a passage from a [paper](#) presented by Sir Garfield Barwick, a former High Court judge of Australia, not noted for his wild and off-the wall comments on our legal system or our parliamentary system, and he said that: "If a parliamentary party is allowed by any means to compel those Members of Parliament who are also members of the party to vote according to the prescription of the executive government, the role of the Parliament and its relation to the executive as designed in parliamentary democracy is reversed." Incidentally, he also makes the comment that if people are compelled, or if there are actions taken against them as a result of the way in which they cast their vote or the way they've conducted themselves in parliament that this is in fact a breach of parliamentary privilege. And yet I'm sure we're all aware of many instances where members of a parliamentary party have crossed the floor, and they have been visited by retribution later, but no action has ever been taken in the court, the parliament to deal with it as a breach of parliamentary privilege, and maybe that's what's needed to help ginger up the reform process. And anyhow, having said that he concludes by saying that "if this control is able to be exercised, instead of the parliament in it's independent judgement controlling the executive, the executive controls the parliament, and the community has lost the democratic control of its affairs". So that to me is the crux of the issues behind this question, but I am greatly appreciative of the recognition that the panel has made of the need for some reform there, and I hope it comes sooner rather than later, because it's something that has been deteriorating over time.

If I can just say to the chairperson: I've been asked to make a quick announcement - we've received something in excess of 30 questions from the floor, were only be able to deal with at best a couple of those here tonight, so what will be done is that all of those questions will go up on the [sydneypeace.com](#) website, and we will encourage discussion of the issues raised on the web. Thank you.

**Shelley Reys:** So, Jim can I just confirm, will we be having any questions, or none at all? Two? - OK. Our final [question](#) from Lindsay Wood ...

## Question 5:

**Australians are very cynical about the political process, and the extent to which secrecy and falsehood are used to justify policy decisions. How can our faith in the system be restored?** (Lindsay Wood)

Responses: [Aden Ridgeway](#); [Kerry Nettle](#); [Kevin Rudd](#)

**Marise Payne:** Just briefly on the previous question, I wouldn't like to leave without saying that I don't quite have the same confidence in the US political process as Jim does. Laws for the Congress are overwhelmingly sponsored by individual members, so to get their laws through they have to construct a majority for each Bill that comes before the Congress from their colleagues. How they do that is an entirely secretive process. It's not a public or an open process at all, and my understanding is that you usually end up with more *quid pro quo* than with anything else between members on particular bills.

To go to this question, though, cynicism about the political process, as my deputy leader Peter Costello said during the 1999 referendum campaign, when he and I were both strongly on the same side, he warned some of our colleagues in the Coalition not to run the Don't Trust a Politician line. And I think one of those colleagues spoke to your group at a previous session [i.e. **Tony Abbott**]. He said in November 1999 "I don't think we're ever going to develop a future for this country by denigrating people who engage in public service", in reference to that particular campaign. I think that was a very reasonable position for him to take. How can we not be cynical about the political process when politicians are prepared to do that to each other, let alone what happens more broadly. But the premise of this question is about truthfulness, I suppose, more importantly. What I'd like to say first up is that in my view lying is incontestably not a legitimate political tool. (Audience reaction) I'm sorry, but that is my personal view, and if you don't believe me, then you don't know very much about me. And the fact that I can have discussions like this tonight in a reasonably robust and healthy fashion is an important part of that process. I don't for example support the Whatever It Takes program that Graham Richardson adopted in 1994 when he launched his book and said he could remember dozens of times when his government had deliberately leaked lies to the media for the purpose of advantaging their position. I mean that's totally inappropriate political behaviour and it's not something I've ever done myself.

In 1995 in the parliament I learnt when doing some research for tonight, the Speaker tabled for discussion the draft proposals of a working group called "A Framework of Ethical Principles for Members and Senators", and it had a number of principles which were meant to provide a framework of reference for us in discharging our responsibilities. Those principles were set out as: [?indistinct] for the nation and regard for its laws, diligence and economy, respect for the dignity and privacy of others, integrity, primacy of the public interest, proper exercise of influence, personal conduct, and additional responsibilities of parliamentary office holders - a separate area. I had not been aware of that before I was researching for this evening. I think it's a very interesting proposition that we might do well to read and bring back to the parliamentary process, our procedure committees and the relevant parts of the parliament, to discuss again to address some of the concerns that clearly the public have and clearly find themselves very cynical about the political process and I can understand that position.

**Aden Ridgeway:** I suppose for me in answering the question, I'd look at the system of democracy that we have that contributes to Australians feeling cynical in the first place about a system that's not listening and not hearing, and certainly not making decisions that represent their views.

In many respects it follows on from what Jim was saying in the last question. Quite frankly when we look at what's happening before elections, what we have is marginal seat democracies. How many people feel neglected that people aren't rolling into town to talk about things that are going to benefit them when they have been taken for granted, because you only have to look at the polls, look at it from the last time and work out that you're in a safe seats so, therefore we can take for granted whatever views you might have. Now it seems

to me that we don't respect what Australians think about their form of democracy. Are they going to go back and forward, with the same sort of decisions that they've made for a long period of time? Because I think the issue of cynicism with the system starts with the individual's approach. We don't get to change that system but you can get to change it by deciding how you cast your vote. And I think that's the most important thing about our form of democracy is that it is compulsory. I know that people like Tony Abbot and others will take a view that it ought to be a system that's voluntary, that we ought to follow the UK and the US and all the rest. I actually think it's quite a good thing to make a political gesture for all those that are 18 or over to have to engage in our political system no matter how cynical they might be.

I suppose the final thing is that it does come back to things that we also need to improve in the system that are, like some of the topics we've been talking about tonight, on the decision to go to war in Iraq and about falsehoods and secrecies. And I think that if we were so loyal in our faith to follow the US and the UK in going to war, then why can't we be exactly the same about having a public inquiry about the truth, not hiding it behind closed doors. Because that's exactly what's happening.

**Kerry Nettle:** How can our faith in the system be restored? I think by changing the system and changing the people in it. I think we also need to be supporting legislation for an independent public service and independent intelligence services supporting our government. We need to be able to have strong and lively public debate in forums such as the forum that we're having tonight, and we also need to have participants in democracy with a strong social conscience to ensure that they hold government and political parties to account for policies that they make. We also need to have scope in our democracy for people to participate and put forward their views, and I acknowledge at the back of the room tonight is a gentleman who did that, coming along, who is one of the heroes of the antiwar movement in climbing up onto one of our great buildings and expressing the views that so many of us have on the day that they started to bomb Iraq. It's important that people be able to participate in ways that they feel confident with, in a whole variety of different sorts of protest action, whether it be being part of those big rallies that saw millions of people across this country come out, or whether it be writing a letter to a local politician, or coming along to a forum like this. That's what helps to make our democracy strong and that's what helps make sure that our politicians are accountable.

**Kevin Rudd:** There are two or three principles to bear in mind here. One is for those of us participants in the political process to be genuinely accessible, as I was talking about before. Second is for that political process to be genuinely accountable. Third is for the political process to be genuinely transparent. Marise talked about the need for truth, and that's true. I also happen to be of the view that Honest John is very loose with the truth: loose with the truth over Tampa; loose with the truth over children overboard; loose with the truth over pre-war intelligence from Iraq; loose with the truth about the impact of our participation in the Iraq War, and Australia as a terrorist target. Remember, Police Commissioner Keelty, described by Alexander Downer as running Al Qaeda propaganda because he dared to say that our participation in the Iraq War could have an effect on Australia as a terrorist target. But the loose-with-the-truthfulness doesn't stop there. This current debate about so-called "cutting-and-running". Who was it who said in March-April last year that Australia's future role in Iraq would be a humanitarian and economic construction, would be humanitarian and rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country and not a military one? Alexander Downer. I find it passing strange that that seems to have escaped the attention of the Prime Minister in the conduct of the debate about timetables for withdrawal from Iraq, that the Foreign Minister said twelve months ago there would be no continuing military role: strange that. And the rest of this debate about our time of engagement in Iraq.

But the one thing, the great central travesty as far as the truth is concerned about this whole involvement in Iraq as I see it is this: and that is the Howard government saying that they have absolutely no responsibility of any description in Iraq in relation to what has happened most recently with the treatment of Iraqi prisoners. Zero responsibility. Now I heard John Howard say in April last year that Australia was an occupying power in Iraq. An occupying power under the Geneva Convention is a power which has a responsibility for the well-being of the civilian population of the country that it invades and occupies, as well as for the prisoners: prisoners of war and civilian prisoners. That's why we have the Third Geneva Convention, that's why we have the Fourth Geneva Convention, that's why we have the First Optional Protocol on the Third Geneva

Convention of 1977, that's why we've got the Hague Convention of 1907. Now, we talked at the beginning about the importance of international law. We have this fabric of laws to handle these sorts of circumstances. So we are, by the Prime Minister's own admission, and occupying power in Iraq, he said that himself in April last year, and these are the responsibilities of occupying powers conjointly - UK, US, Australia - in relation to the handling of prisoners of war. And Mr Downer says, on national television on Sunday, that that's not his concern, that he hasn't bothered to raise it with the United States because Australia doesn't have that responsibility. That is a travesty of the truth, and we are demeaned as a nation as a result.

**Shelley Reys:** Thank you, everyone. I'm now going to move to the first of the two questions from the floor, and I think that they're good ones, because they do in fact cover concerns that we haven't quite covered yet. And we do hope to finish up quite shortly for those of you that are worried about carparks etc, as I know some of you are. This is a double-barrelled [question](#) ...

## Question 6:

**First question from floor: Should the allegations of Andrew Wilkie, Ms Errey and Col Lance Collins be examined in the interest of Australia's national security? Isn't a Royal Commission which examines the veracity of the claims of the whistleblowers the only way of establishing the truth of their claims?** (Question from Mervyn Murchie)

Responses: [Kevin Rudd](#); [Kerry Nettle](#); [Aden Ridgeway](#); [Kevin Rudd](#)

**Kevin Rudd:** Yes, and yes. [see also](#) ...)

**Aden Ridgeway:** No, I think it goes without saying that a Royal Commission is needed to uncover the truth, and to make sure that these particular individuals that I think have put their own future at risk, are given a way of being able to express their views, get the facts on the record, and be supported and protected in the process. Because you can guarantee that while the Prime Minister says that he does at the moment respect their views, next week it's going to be very different.

**Marise Payne:** I think that one of the important aspects of this process is that there are already Committees within the Parliamentary system which do look at these issues. I'm currently participating in one myself which has a very broad reach in terms of military justice *per se*, and we'll be taking up some of the concerns that have been raised, particularly where they relate to Aden's exact reference. The other is that some of these have already been examined to the Intelligence Services Committee as it's already defined. I understand that there are people here who don't think that is a satisfactory approach, but it has provided some form of examination of the process, and I think that is important.

**Kevin Rudd:** ... coming back to steal back 40 seconds ... Marise mentioned Parliamentary Committees - the Parliamentary Inquiry into prewar intelligence on Iraq was chaired by the Liberals, and dominated by Liberals. It found that - yeah, we were there too, I'm just saying it found that on twelve separate occasions, the Howard Government exaggerated prewar intelligence on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. It further found that there was an emerging problem in terms of 'policy-driven analysis', that is, the intelligence community seeking to anticipate what they believed the government wanted. Now, that is a Parliamentary Inquiry not controlled by us, the dreaded socialists, but by them, the dreaded capitalists. All I'm saying is, that was prior to what we had on Keelty, that is Keelty basically bucking the government's public line that our involvement in Iraq had no impact whatsoever on Australia as a terrorist target, prior to the Leeuwin camp affair, prior to the Collins affair, prior to the Toohey affair, prior to the Tracey affair, prior to Uncle Tom Cobleigh affair - look, something stinks, and that's why a Commission of Inquiry with the powers of a Royal Commission is necessary. [see also](#) ...)

**Kerry Nettle:** We don't just need a Royal Commission into our intelligence services, it needs to have broad enough terms of reference to be able to look in, what I believe are the most important points, which is the government use of intelligence information they are given. Because all of the inquiries that we have had to date through Parliamentary Committees have not had that capacity, to be able to ensure that government representatives who made the decision, based on advice that they received, but who made the decision, have to answer and be involved in those inquiries about the decisions they made, based on the information that they received.

**Aden Ridgeway:** I just wanted to correct the record a little, to say that the inquiries that are occurring were decided to be held behind closed doors by the government and with the support of the ALP. Let's be very clear about that. Can I also say that, when it came to supporting a recommendation to have an equivalent inquiry to what was happening in the UK and the US, the ALP did not support that, nor did the government, so let's be clear about truth.

**Kevin Rudd:** Aden's a good guy. The reason for that was that we would not have been able to obtain the access to classified information that we did through the use of the Joint Intelligence Committee of Parliament, which is comprised of Liberal and Labor members, in the way in which we were able to. And as a consequence, we therefore had through that committee high levels of access to the intelligence material which

the government relied upon for its decision to go to war. And it is on the basis of access to that, that you have a unanimous report, saying that there were twelve occasions on which the government exaggerated the prewar intelligence on Iraq. I don't think that's a bad outcome, myself. It provides the foundation, now, for asking fundamentally of the government why they now have objections to a fully public Commission of Inquiry with the powers of a Royal Commission to examine the entire gamut of these concerns, including the ones rightly touched on by Kerry, that is the government's selective use of intelligence on the war.

**Shelley Reys:** Our [final question](#) very quickly ...

## Question 7:

**Second question from floor: How can any Australian government presume to instruct other governments on human rights or the cause of terrorism when they have failed patently to address structural disadvantage of our indigenous peoples, the gross racism they are subjected to, the racism Muslims and Arab people are subjected to, and continue to lock up asylum seekers in indefinite detention?** (Anne Picot)

Responses: [Kerry Nettle](#); [Kevin Rudd](#); [Aden Ridgeway](#); [Marise Payne](#)

**Kerry Nettle:** I don't think I have anything to add - it's a great question. It should be answered. By the government.

**Kevin Rudd:** I go back to the discussion we had before about compassion. It's about compassion, whether it's in relation to people who are asylum seekers, or if it's about people within this country who are not from the Anglo Celtic, Anglo-Saxon majority, who come to these shores and experience discrimination in the workplace or in the streets of this country or in the communities in which they live. The sign of our maturity as a nation lies in our capacity personally and as a community, institutionally, politically, to deal compassionately with people such as this. The most riveting experience I had recently was in Kabul, I was in Kabul in Afghanistan about five weeks ago, and I ran into individuals who had been forcible returned to Afghanistan, and I listened carefully to their stories, which - those accounts do not make me proud to be a member of this community. What the individual circumstances of their case, what the relevant papers were, I'm not sure, but what I was concerned about was a lack of compassion in our response to these people and their circumstances.

**Aden Ridgeway:** Well I'm not sure what else can be said about it. I don't believe it's a question at all, I mean, we ought to delete the question mark, it's a statement. It's a statement that I agree with entirely, and I think that there's an absence of both compassion and understanding, and a need to promote cultural diversity in this country. We seem to be under attack from this government, who seek to impose a narrow set of views and prejudices about what Australians should think and what they should believe in. We're being asked to conform to the straitjacket of the mono-cultural society. We only have to look around on the streets to see that it is not mono-cultural. It is culturally diverse. People from all walks of life make a contribution to this nation. We ought to recognise that enrichment. We ought to recognise that everyone needs to be engaged, not kept outside of the tent, and not being forced to be just like everyone else. I certainly don't want to end up just being one thing and not another. And I celebrate the fact that I come from an indigenous background as well as being a proud Australian. And I would hope that people can share in what's on offer just like in other ethnic groups in this society, we can take something from the [??]. I think we've got to sit down and talk to each other, because it does concern me, people in this country still say they've yet to meet an aboriginal person, I want to know how many people have still yet to say they've met an Arab person in this society. That's what we've got to start doing more of, instead of pretending that these ghettos and enclaves have been created, if we think about in the mind, we reinforce that, and we want to be putting the bridges in place to reach out as well. Thank you.

**Marise Payne:** I think that the issues that are raised in this question are very important issues from a political perspective but also from a community perspective. Some of you will know my engagement, particularly on the asylum seekers question, on the detention question specifically, which is one of those issues that I [??] before in terms of how the political process works, and it's something that I've pursued for some years. You might not think that's good enough, but it's kind of like Kevin's reference to the sound of one hand clapping, and yes there's people within the major parties and within government who are prepared to take up these issues. Similarly, mandatory detention of juvenile defendants in the Northern Territory and in Western Australia, was an issue that I pursued to my great detriment with my colleagues, with a number of my colleagues in 1998, because of my concerns about the inherently racist basis of those laws. And you do have to have political representatives who are compassionate human beings with a social conscience. I believe

more, rather than less, of our political representatives fall into that category. The area in which I work is largely Western Sydney, I work in the crucible, if you like, of the future of Australia, and Aden's quite right, you just have to walk down the street in any of the communities and electorates in which I work particularly, whether you're in Cabramatta or Auburn or Mount Druitt, to see that we have a burgeoning indigenous population in Sydney, which is huge and unacknowledged, that we have the most ethnically diverse parts of this country, to know exactly what I'm talking about. You can walk down any street in Canberra, and you will see the most mono-cultural world you can possibly imagine - it beggars my imagination, I feel like I'm not in Australia in some parts of Canberra - it's an extraordinary place in some ways. I think that some of the decision-makers need to occasionally leave the leafy streets of Kingston, Red Hill, [??] and Belconnen, and that includes our media representatives, who don't often take a close look at what Australia is about. They regard visiting to a marginal seat as going to Queanbeyan or [??], so that doesn't say a great deal about where the rest of that exploration of what Australia is about might take them.

## Closing remarks

Shelley Reys and Sue Roffey, Convenor, NSPD

**Shelley Reys:** In closing I'd just like to say that there's been some really interesting comments throughout the discussion today, and one of those is that we need to question, and to always be aware of what's going on in our environment, both in our local neighbourhoods and towns, and in our country. We also need to have solid debate, and we need to have that debate regularly. I'd like to thank all of the speakers before I hand over to Sue. (Applause)

**Sue Roffey:** Before I go into the formal thanks, the last forum that we had included Donna Mulhearn, who was originally in Iraq as a human shield, and is now in Baghdad running an orphanage. And amongst the things that we put on the sydneypeace website is [her journal](#), her story about being there, and it's worth having a look. We will also be putting up your questions. I just want to read a little bit, a short extract of her "Road to Falluja".

"Fallujah is a bustling city of 350,000 people. Bigger than Newcastle, smaller than Sydney. The road to Fallujah is one of the main highways west from Baghdad, so the town receives a lot of through traffic from cars, buses and trucks doing the trip from Baghdad to Jordan. So driving towards Fallujah on Tuesday on a highway that was empty of any other vehicles felt eerie to say the least. We soon realised why. An American military checkpoint was blocking the highway and not allowing most cars through. We approached the checkpoint with caution – the head American soldier saw us he looked relieved and broke out into a smile. "Hey, some foreigners, where ya'll from?" Our 'foreigner' status meant our cars were not even searched and we were invited out to chat with the soldiers while we waited for clearance to travel the road. "So you're going to Fallujah? We've killed a whole bunch of 'em there," Sgt Trapner announced with pride. "I'm jealous you're going to Fallujah where the action is," another soldier added."

"I realised the war has totally de-humanised these soldiers. They were boasting about killing people, who they didn't even consider to be people. We continued to chat with the soldiers, they gave us water and they seemed sincerely happy to talk to foreigners. In almost every sentence they expressed a deep hatred towards the Iraqi people. They clearly held no respect for the people they have come to 'liberate.' An ambulance came along and then turned away - they'd seen the checkpoint and were worried about what trouble might occur. "Good, we don't want anymore of those bastards getting through," a soldier said as he watched the ambulances turn away.

Donna Mulhearn was pilloried, labelled, chastised for being on the road to Falluja, by both Alexander Downer and John Howard on the news. The news repeated them saying that she was stupid, and immoral, and I think it really worries me about the society that we have here in Australia, if somebody who is actually in Iraq on a compassionate mission is the one who is labelled, and we are left wondering what Alexander Downer thinks and believes is valuable and important and the right way to be.

Not only was Donna labelled and pilloried, but so were all the people who objected to the war, and people who are questioning what is happening now in Australia.

I'd just like to thank the people here on the panel tonight: Kerry, Kevin, Aden and Marise. Thank you very much. I think what we're doing here is to try to say that democratic debate is something that is important and something that needs to happen here, and I'm very grateful to them all for being here tonight. (Applause)

I'd also like to thank Shelley very much for being here tonight, she stepped in at the last minute when Phillip Adams was pulled out on an international assignment. Thank you very much Shelley. (Applause)

We'd like everybody on our e-mail list, if you're not already on it, and we'll keep you up-to-date on everything else that North Shore Peace and Democracy are doing. And we'd like to remind you, if you'd be so good, if you haven't already donated something - it doesn't come free, these evenings, and we very much appreciate your contribution to that.

I'd like to say that we have a hope that the Secrets and Lies that we've been talking about will be replaced eventually with respect, transparency, humanity, and proper representation. Thank you all for being here.

## Other Questions Submitted from the Floor

Questions submitted from the floor on the day: apologies again for the inequity of only being able to choose two from the long list of good questions here - even if we had devoted the whole evening to questions from the floor, sadly most of you would still have been disappointed.

### War and Iraq

1. How can Australia help ensure that all nations are held to the same standards? Why for example do we not raise the issue of current US development of low-yield tactical battlefield nuclear weapons - are these not weapons of mass destruction?
2. Just suppose, your government decided to invade another country, with whom you had no argument, to drop cluster bombs and depleted uranium on them, to kill thousands of them, on the basis of a complete pack of lies, in flagrant contravention of international law, and against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of its people. What would you do to stop it? (Will Saunders)
3. Do you think that America could ship a few drums of chemical weapons to Iraq to be discovered?
4. Given that WMD was not the reason for war on Iraq, why do you think that Howard so keenly wanted to go to war?
5. I belong to Medical Association for Prevention of War, and before the "coalition of the willing" invaded Iraq I attended a lecture which had as its subject the real reasons behind the (let's face it) US-invasion (not the excuses like WMD). Various things were put forward - oil, unfinished business on the part of George W Bush vis-a-vis Iraq, and so on. I remained unclear about why exactly the US did go to war. Was it simply to ensure control of oil? What do the speakers feel to be the main reason, as I feel we cannot progress and attempt to prevent further conflict unless we understand what's behind it?
6. How does the Liberal Party reconcile the belief in the sovereignty of the individual with the ongoing occupation of Iraq and its iniquitous imposition on Iraqi lives? Is sovereignty reserved for some races and not others? Marise's arguments seem to be couched in deeply euro-centric (racist) terms. (Tung-Yi Kho)
7. To Marise Payne: How can you claim a humanitarian element justifying the war when the "coalition of the willing" failed to come to the aid of the Kurds in 1987 when Saddam gassed them (while the US continued to support him) or of the Shi'ites in 1991 when they were against Saddam or when over 1 million Iraqis died, half of them children, as a result of UN sanctions held in place by the votes of US and Britain and with the active support of Australia (1991-98)? For the Howard government to make this claim is sheer hypocrisy. (Bert Gray)
8. For Marise Payne: Bush and Blair always said they would go to war, UN or not. But John Howard said he would reserve his decision to join any US-led invasion until result of second UN resolution was known. There was no second resolution, because it stood no chance of success. So what possible outcome would have led to John Howard not joining a US-led invasion? And if no such outcome, is it not clear that John Howard lied to the Australian people about having already committed them to any invasion, UN-sanctioned or not? is it not clear he did this to avoid debate on the ethics of such an invasion? (Will Saunders)
9. To Marise Payne: Where is the equity in the Howard government's stated policy and basis for going to war - to rid an oppressed people of a tyrannical leader? Why are we not providing assistance to oppressed Zimbabweans?
10. To Marise Payne: You said that we need to support the agencies charged with looking after certain areas (or not, to that effect). Do you think that going to war in Iraq without a Security Council resolution helps the UN's permanent body? (Tony Simpson, International Commission of Jurists)

## Terrorism

1. Given that terrorism is fuelled by hatred of American foreign policy and hatred of Americans because of their foreign policy impact on the countries these terrorists come from, how is it in the interest of Australia's citizens that we be aligned with America? Are we not inviting terrorist acts against our citizens by inviting the hatred of terrorists and the countries they come from? (Susy Benson)
2. As ambiguous as the concept of terrorism is, the use of the term "terror" is even worse. It is more disingenuous, designed more to obfuscate and muddle the issue and to promote fear, not rational action. Please refrain from it?

## Relations with America

1. Please comment on the recent statement by the respected defence analyst Mr Dibb to the effect that unless Australia can re-establish its capability to stand independently on foreign policy issues and actions from the USA, Australia will do significant and long-term damage to its hard-won international credibility? (John Coffey)
2. American meddling. Big Time. When will it stop? They created puppets, puppet rulers. Then those puppets got way too powerful in emulation. When will the meddling stop? So our world can begin mending??

## Politics and accountability

1. How can any Australian government presume to instruct other governments on human rights or the cause of terrorism when they have failed patently to address structural disadvantage of our indigenous peoples, the gross racism they are subject to, the racism Muslims and Arab people are subject to, and continue to lock up asylum seekers in indefinite detention? (Anne Picot)  
[Transcript](#) of debate in forum
2. What structures can we put in place to improve truth and accountability in our politicians?
3. Should politicians' first allegiance be to their electors or their party? (Steve Richardson)
4. It has been noted that the government has manipulated the public service with respect to the information it provides. What is the chance of reforming the public service into a more independent, less politicised public service?
5. To Marise Payne: How can your government be seen as credible or trustworthy, when clearly it has lied and sought to distort the truth on so many occasions - eg children overboard, WMD, the attack on the Federal Police Chief and civil servants, the selective use of defence reports, etc, etc? Where is the government's integrity in all of this? (Nina Burridge)

## Intelligence services

1. Should the allegations of Andrew Wilkie, Ms Errey and Col Lance Collins be examined in the interest of Australia's national security? Isn't a Royal Commission which examines the veracity of the claims of the whistleblowers the only way of establishing the truth of their claims? (Mervyn Murchie) [Transcript](#) of debate in forum
2. What is Labor's position on a Royal Commission into Australia's intelligence service and its attitude to the Jakarta lobby?

## Timor Oil

1. Why has Labor's voice been silent over the conflict of the Timor Oil question?
2. You have been referring to the crises our neighbours face - what then is the Labor Party's stand on the Timor Oil boundaries, keeping in mind Timor is Asia's poorest neighbour and our government is stealing its future? (Chris Nobel)

## **Falun Gong**

1. In the context of "decisions behind closed doors", could the panel please comment on certificates issued by Foreign Minister Downer under DPI regulations which prevent the holding of any banners (at the appeal for Falun Gong practitioners tortured in China) at the Chinese Embassy in Canberra? This is an executive decision affecting freedom of expression in Australia. It is not considered by Parliament, but only by the Foreign Minister. (John Deller)
2. What of state terrorism and genocide? There is a hidden case of persecution and genocide taking place which is the largest case of persecution happening in the world today. The persecution of tens of millions of people in China whose simple wish and only request is to be able to practice 5 peaceful Falun Gong exercises and to cultivate their inner selves according to the three principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. These three words are not a slogan but principles that are lived by and embodied by Falun Gong practitioners. The evidence of this is for example that there is not one reported case of even one practitioner retaliating against their tormentor even after the most cruellest of torture, rape and continuous beatings. The genocide and continuing atrocities against Falun Gong practitioners has been recognised and acknowledged by all respected human rights organisations and by the Australian MPs and Senators. The policy of continuing behind closed doors bilateral talks with China has simply been a failure, as the number of people being reported tortured to death is continuing to escalate and the official policy of "eradicating Falun Gong" is still continuing. What will we do to change this other than the failed policy of behind closed doors discussions? (Chris Cominos)

## **Other**

1. Other areas of government spending are being grossly neglected whilst the Federal Liberal government directs our tax revenue to military hardware contracts with the United States. Is there anyone here who can save Kur-ring-gai campus? (Alanna Hardman)