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VOICE

For the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network
www.ipan.org.au

No 48

Mid- November, 2020

INQUIRY ZOOM LAUNCH: INDEPENDENT & PEACEFUL AUSTRALIA



THUR NOV. 26, 2020
7:00 PM AEDT | RSVP REQUIRED



Join us for the launch of the people's inquiry exploring the case for an independent and peaceful Australia. The inquiry will examine the costs and consequences of Australia's involvement in US-led wars and the US alliance, brought to you by the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network.

Register via [Zoom](#),
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To attend this unique event

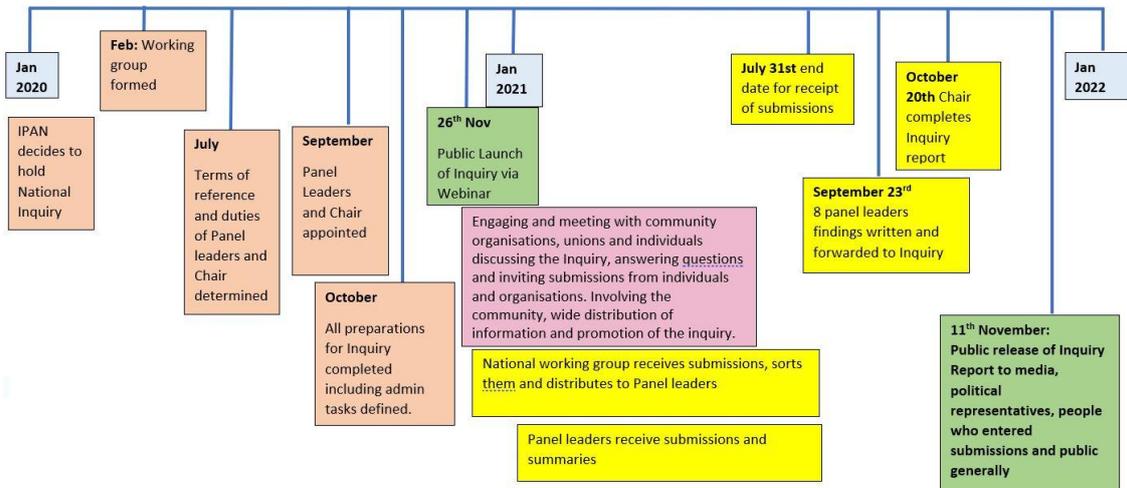
REGISTER [HERE](#)

**The Inquiry Launch on Zoom on Thursday 26th November, at 7pm
AEDT**

PROGRAM

- 6.55 pm Introductory Music
- 7.05 pm Introduction to Inquiry: **Annette Brownlie** (IPAN)
Acknowledgement of Country/Inquiry Rationale
- 7.00 pm **Michelle Pini** (Independent Australia) MC
- 7.10 pm **Kellie Tranter** (Panel Chair) Opening address
- 7.20 pm **Terry Mason** (Impact on First People's Panel Leader)
- 7.25 pm **Ian Lowe** (Environment and Climate Change Panel Leader)
- 7.30 pm **Millie Rooney** (Australia Remade)
- 7.15 pm (6) **Panel Leaders** – 30 second introduction/video (why they chose to join the panel)
- 7.35 pm **Website demonstration** – How to make a submission (Jonathan Pilbrow)
- 7.40 pm **Questions and Answers** (Michele Pini)
- 7.55 pm **Close with Annette** Thankyou's
- 7.59 pm Music to close

INQUIRY TIMELINE



This Time Line can be accessed and printed out [HERE](#)



Media Release 18th November,
2020

Investigation into War Crimes in Afghanistan must be public and transparent

- Expunge brutality and disregard for human life from the culture of the defence forces
- Extend the investigation to determine the political responsibility for sending the ADF into Afghanistan and whether that constitutes, in itself, a war crime.

IPAN welcomes the announcement that a special investigator will be appointed to probe allegations of war crimes by Australian special forces in Afghanistan and prosecute any criminal misconduct, following a four-year inquiry into possible breaches of law between 2005 and 2016.

IPAN urges that his process should be public and transparent and not determined behind closed doors, stated IPAN spokesperson, Dr Alison Broinowski.

Whistle-blower Major David McBride is currently facing serious charges for exposing the aberrant culture in the SAS. He leaked documents related to possible war crimes to the ABC, an act that can be clearly seen to be in the public interest, but only took this action after having gone through the proper channels and seeing no evidence of effective action being taken to deter the dangerous culture.

The charges against Major McBride must be dropped immediately.

Further, every effort should be made to determine how far up the chain of command this culture of brutality and disregard for human life and human rights within the SAS extends. “Any such culture must be expunged and replaced with respect for human life and adherence to internationally recognized standards in respect to civilian populations and prisoners”, stated Dr Broinowski.

But over and above this Inquiry, IPAN sees an urgent need to extend the investigation to determine the political responsibility for creating the environment in which these crimes have been committed in

Afghanistan and whether that constitutes, in itself, a war crime. Who was responsible for sending Australian troops into Afghanistan in the coalition led by the United States? What was their justification for doing so?

The invasion of Afghanistan did not have the sanction of the United Nations General Assembly or Security Council. It was an illegal war. John Howard, as PM at the time, invoked the ANZUS Treaty as justification for sending our troops into Afghanistan with those of the United States, but Afghanistan had not attacked Australia or the USA. In any case the ANZUS Treaty applies to an attack on Australia, the USA or NZ in the Pacific area and in any event only stipulates that Australia should consult with other parties over any military action to be taken. Afghanistan has no seaboard with the Pacific. The alleged perpetrators of 9/11 were Saudi Arabians not Afghans. And there has never been any evidence produced that the Afghani Government or the Taliban were responsible for 9/11.

“The illegal invasion of Afghanistan with the consequential deaths, injuries and disruption to the civilian population including the creation of thousands of refugees is, in itself, a crime against humanity and the political perpetrators should be tried and if found guilty, face the consequences of the law”, said Dr Broinowski.

-----ENDS-----

Media Interviews: Contact Dr Alison Broinowski AM
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This incident in which a member of the ADF shoots an unarmed Afghan holding up his prayer beads is under investigation as a war crime

With Acknowledgement to Canberra Times, 15th November

Australia goes to war too easily

It's clear the culture in our special forces must change. But change can only come from politicians at the top

by Sue Wareham

THE soon-to-be-released Brereton Report will shine a light on alleged

war crimes committed by Australian forces in Afghanistan. It is expected that a culture of impunity within the special forces will be highlighted as a significant factor in perpetuating crimes against Afghan civilians.

However, any change that is to occur as a result of this report must not be limited to the troops themselves. It must start at the top - meaning the political decisions to send Australians to war and the impunity with which those decisions are made. And it must focus on those who are disproportionately affected and disproportionately ignored when we go to war - civilians.

When Australia decides to go to war, there are many glaring omissions in the decision-making process. This far-reaching decision is taken by, at most, a tiny handful of ministers, and in practice generally by the Prime Minister alone. Our parliament is not consulted. Many critical questions, about goals, strategy, likely duration and costs are either not asked, not answered, subject to shifting goalposts or hidden from the public - or all of these. Far from war being the proverbial "last resort", Australia enters wars remarkably easily.

A decision for war is made all the easier because civilians in the places where we fight our wars - and questions such as how many are likely to be killed, injured, displaced or orphaned, and who will look after them - barely rate a mention. Justice Brereton has identified 55 possible breaches of the laws of war. Each of these tragic deaths leaves a wide circle of grief, often additional economic hardship for a family and, unsurprisingly, hatred

for those responsible. But what of the other civilian deaths in Afghanistan from the war that Australia so enthusiastically joined in 2001?

The Costs of War project at Brown University in the United States estimates that there have been over 43,000 civilian deaths from the war in Afghanistan, and a far higher additional number whose lives have been devastated in multiple ways. Tadamichi Yamamoto, head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), says that "almost no civilian in Afghanistan has escaped being personally affected in some way by the ongoing violence."

For children, the costs of war are particularly severe. Not a single child living in Afghanistan today was born into peace. The UN Secretary-General's June 2020 report Children and Armed Conflict (reporting on the year 2019) states that, of all the conflicts around the world, the war in Afghanistan remains the deadliest for children, with a 67 per cent increase in suicide and complex attacks affecting children, outweighing a decrease in casualties from aerial attacks.

Millions of Afghans have been displaced from their homes. The Costs of War project estimates that since 2001 at least 2.1 million Afghans have fled the country, and another 3.2 million have been displaced internally. They face any combination of lack of shelter, hunger, unemployment, lack of adequate healthcare, water, electricity, and sanitation. Globally, over half of the world's refugees are children. Women also are disproportionately impacted by the conflict. UNAMA reports that it exacerbates inequalities and discriminatory practices

against them and increases their exposure to sexual and gender-based violence.

By providing political, military and moral support for the war, Australia has had a hand in creating and perpetuating this 19-year long human disaster. Australian governments have managed the war by a combination of misinformation and secrecy. The goalposts have shifted regularly, from President Bush's "smoking al-Qaeda out of their holes" to "preventing Afghanistan from again becoming a training ground for terrorists" to "stabilising Afghanistan" to "improving the lives of the Afghan people", each one seeming to represent little more than a media sound bite.

A string of ministerial statements over many years assured us of "progress" when there was none. The media were very carefully managed to paint an overly positive picture of the war. "Operational sensitivity" was abused to avoid disclosing the real situation. The reliance on secrecy was taken to a new level by the criminal prosecution of military lawyer David McBride, whose "crime" was to disclose to media the Afghan War files on alleged war crimes in Afghanistan - the very subject of Brereton's report. McBride believed he had exhausted all other avenues internally, including by raising his concerns with very senior military and political figures and the Australian Federal Police, to no avail. For such acts of honour and courage, he faces the possibility of life in prison. If a culture of impunity is to change, the political intimidation of whistleblowers such as McBride must cease.

When a country goes to war, we know there will be killing, maiming, psychological terror, destruction of infrastructure, waves of refugees and human rights violations, with disproportionate impacts on innocent people. There will be "the fog of war", in which particularly heinous things can happen. These are not unanticipated consequences, but part and parcel of modern war.

The time to weigh up these costs is not after the event, but before a decision is made. We owe it to our troops, and to every civilian who will suffer the consequences of whatever unfolds, to get the decision right. Our current decision-making process fails appallingly on every count.

The apparent culture of impunity in our special forces must change, and the perpetrators of the atrocities reported by Justice Brereton must be held to account. But equally there is a need for the culture of political impunity and secrecy to change. Only then might we claw back an identity as a nation that values peace, rather than one that is constantly at war. ■

Dr Sue Wareham OAM is president of the Medical Association for Prevention of War and secretary of Australians for War Powers Reform.



Access Inquiry Web site [HERE](#)

Register to attend this unique Inquiry Launching
event [HERE](#)

Voice is produced and edited by the Media Group of the IPAN co-ordinating committee. It is produced for IPAN affiliates to:

- *provide a medium for communication of their campaigns and activities*
- *provide a medium for discussion of issues central to IPAN's objectives*
- *provide affiliates with details of co-ordinating committee activities, media releases, lobbying activities and other actions taken on behalf of IPAN*
- * provide information on issues/events relating to IPAN's objectives*

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