

MEDIA RELEASE: EMBARGOED TO 5AM, 16 AUGUST 2012

CALL FOR AN IRAQ WAR INQUIRY:

LAUNCH THURSDAY 16 AUGUST

Seventeen leading Australians will launch a call for an independent inquiry into the decisions that led to Australia invading Iraq, and a review of the war powers of the government, to draw out what lessons can be learned for the future.

Speakers at the Parliament House (Canberra) launch include former PM Malcolm Fraser, former ADF head General Peter Gration (retired); and former Defence Secretary Paul Barrett. Parliamentarians Melissa Parke (ALP), Andrew Wilkie (Independent), and Senator Scott Ludlam (Greens) will host the launch.

The arguments for such an inquiry will also be launched in a new publication, **Why did we go to war in Iraq: A call for an Australian inquiry**.

In this booklet's foreword, Mr Fraser notes that the inquiry would not be held to rake over old coals but rather "to develop a better understanding of how warfare decisions are reached and to strengthen the governmental structures against precipitous or ill-considered actions in future."

The Statement calling for the inquiry is supported by 17 leading academics in politics and law, retired senior diplomats, and experts in the field of war and conflict. It begins:

"The 2003 invasion of Iraq was a humanitarian, legal, political and strategic disaster. It has left a trail of death and destruction and millions of refugees. It has undermined the role of international law and strengthened terrorism. "

The statement lists unanswered questions about Australia's decision to go to war including:

- What was the Government's decision-making process and timing that led to our participation in the invasion?
- How did the Government reconcile conflicting intelligence assessments?
- How did the Government attempt to satisfy itself of the legality of the invasion?
- Which of the many NGO predictions of widespread and severe civilian suffering, including by children, did the Government consider? If none, why not?

The statement ends: "Both the UK and the Netherlands have initiated official inquiries into their own involvement in the war; Australia has not. Nearly a decade after the war commenced, it is time we did so."

AT: 10 am, Parliament House, Senate Room 2S1

Iraq War Inquiry Group contacts:

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Website with statement and booklet: www.iraqwarinquiry.org.au