

I.O.G.D.

TERMS of REFERENCE

RESPONSE to the FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE and TRADE REFERENCES
COMMITTEE

- a. **Australia's 20 year military, diplomatic and development engagement In Afghanistan:**
- i. **Since the Australian Government Objectives included obtaining a peaceful culture among the various tribal entities, this has not occurred. Also. it was an objective that a more liberal attitude to social interaction and education, especially for women would be achieved. This was successful during the Allied occupation, but has since been discarded. (The refusal of the Taliban leaders to allow the Afghanistan Women's cricket team to play is an obvious example of failure.)**
 - ii. **The fact that the Taliban forces easily asserted their dominance, and moved so quickly to gain control of the country, particularly the capital, Kabul, exposes the inadequacy of 20 years of military engagement by the Allies. The planning of the Taliban was obviously helped by the ease with which the Afghan National Army surrendered. Also, the fact that the Allies, particularly the USA, left armaments behind contributed to the success of the Taliban.**
 - iii. **While I am personally uninformed of the financial cost involved in Australia's engagement, it must have been considerable, after 20 years. Given the lack of enduring success, it was money misspent. Also, the cost in terms of human lives cannot be calculated.**
- b
- i **The closure of the embassy was ill conceived and made it very difficult for Afghan personnel who served our Armed Forces to obtain safe passage from danger.**
 - li **The evacuation of Australian citizens, permanent residents and visa holders was adequate, yet here was a lack of empathy towards non-Australians.**

lii Evacuation of at-risk Afghan nationals and partners and family members of Australian citizens and permanent residents was painfully slow and miserly in numbers.

C I The Australian Government should not be so paranoid about our national security. There is a mentality among the Coalition Party that our international commitment to human rights has no place in recognising the legitimate freedom of people fleeing treacherous situations to be given asylum in Australia

li Australia's international reputation is becoming increasingly more shameful as the current Government continues in power. I cannot see the present Government doing anything to prevent further damage to our reputation.

lii The Australian Government needs to allow the findings of the Royal Commission to be made public, and use whatever means are necessary to provide mental health support to Australian Defence Force personnel and veterans.

Also, the criminal behaviour of some of our top-level defence units should be officially and transparently revealed, to avoid such a disregard for the rights of citizens and the resorting to murder, instead of intelligent engagement.

Iv It is morally inescapable that the Australian Government must give Australian visa holders and Afghan nationals who supported Australian forces, the means of leaving Afghanistan safely. If they remain in Afghanistan, they do so at their peril and our shame.