

Senate, Tuesday 2 October 1997

COMMITTEES: Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee: Joint : Report

Senator CALVERT (Tasmania) —On behalf of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I present the report entitled *ANZUS after 45 years: Seminar Proceedings, 11-12 August 1997* together with minutes of proceedings. I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

Senator CALVERT —I seek leave to have the tabling speech incorporated in Hansard and I also seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

The report I am tabling today is a record of the proceedings of a Seminar conducted by the Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in August this year. This seminar assembled some of the most pre-eminent and authoritative speakers from both Australia and the United States, to share their views on the current status, relevance and future prospects for the Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States, otherwise known by its acronym, the ANZUS Treaty.

The alliance with the United States continues to be the most important of Australia's Defence agreements. Few would dispute this point. The previous Government's Defence White Paper accepted the value of the US alliance as a key element of our Defence policy, and this Government's recently-released Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper reaffirms the importance of this relationship. I expect that the soon-to-be-released Strategic Review similarly will reflect that strategic reality.

This seminar sought to inform the Parliament, and the wider public through open discussion, of all the provisions and the implications of those provisions of the Treaty.

The US Ambassador, in opening the seminar, commented upon both the flexibility and adaptability of the ANZUS Treaty. Its brief and relatively simple wording has allowed it to evolve with changing strategic circumstances. This is the key to the Treaty's continued relevance: that the true value to Australia from the ANZUS alliance arises from the myriad activities, exercises, exchanges and cooperative ventures enabled under its auspices, rather than from what is prescribed by the Treaty.

This was the main emphasis of the seminar. It was not an occasion to reflect on the military ties between Australia and the United States, strong though they are; from the links forged in the crucible of the wars of this century and annealed in the prolonged and testing uncertainties of the Cold War.

It is true that the Alliance was propelled into existence by the common threat of an expansionist Soviet empire, but at heart it was an alliance between nations which was based on shared democratic and cultural ideals and a shared belief in a system of fair and just international relations. Now, over 45 years later, those fundamental considerations are as relevant as ever and remain the strong foundation on which the alliance is based.

The one great internal change in ANZUS has come about because of the adoption by New Zealand of its prohibition of ship visits by nuclear powered vessels. Discussion took place of current New Zealand defence policies, regrettably, without official representation from the New Zealand government. New Zealand's suspension from trilateral activities is an unresolved issue for the Alliance though this is of greater concern to Australia than to the United States or New Zealand.

The Committee, in reporting its views of the seminar, chose to keep its remarks brief. In so doing, the words of the individual speakers have been allowed to stand by themselves. While individually noteworthy, these presentations collectively provide a comprehensive overview

of the alliance, and of the continuing value it provides, not just for Australia, but also for the United States, and for most regional nations.

As a final point, I wish to note that, in the papers presented to the seminar, and in the issues raised by the audience present, there emerged no fundamental questioning of the rationale for Australia's continued membership of ANZUS. Following two days of discussions, the consensus that emerged was that there remains distinct advantages in maintaining the ANZUS relationship, and the Treaty is likely to remain a pillar of Australia's national security policy into the foreseeable future.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the many members of the military, academic, foreign affairs and diplomatic communities, and members of the general public who participated in the seminar, and particularly the score of speakers who generously contributed their time to ensure its success through the quality of their presentations. I believe their efforts have contributed to the creation of a valuable reference source and an important collation of contemporary thought on the ANZUS alliance. I commend these proceedings to you.