

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Establishment of the Inquiry**

1.1 On 11 and 13 May 1998, the Indian Government announced that it had detonated nuclear devices in the Pokhran Range in the desert of Rajasthan, thereby removing any remaining ambiguity about its nuclear weapon capability. These nuclear tests triggered condemnatory responses from around the world and the imposition by many states of punitive measures against India.

1.2 On 28 May 1998, the Senate referred the following matter to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 4 November 1998:

- (i) the implications of India's nuclear tests, and the nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programs of both India and Pakistan, for regional and international security; and
- (ii) the Australian Government's role in international efforts to constrain nuclear weapon and ballistic missile proliferation in South Asia.

1.3 Subsequently, despite strong international pressure and inducements not to retaliate, the Pakistan Government announced that it had detonated nuclear devices at Nilore on 28 and 30 May 1998. The motion to refer the matter to the Committee was passed before it was known that Pakistan had also conducted nuclear tests. Although the terms of reference included the nuclear weapons programs of both India and Pakistan, it was considered that they should be amended to include specific mention of the Pakistani as well as Indian nuclear tests. Accordingly, on 29 June 1998, the Senate amended the terms of reference by including the words 'and Pakistan's' after the word 'India's' in the first line of sub-paragraph (i).

1.4 As a result of the disruption to the inquiry caused by the federal election held on 3 October 1998, the Senate extended the Committee's reporting date to 26 February 1999 and subsequently to 30 June 1999.

### **Conduct of the Inquiry**

1.5 The Committee advertised the inquiry in the *Weekend Australian* on 6 June 1998 calling for written submissions to be lodged by 6 July 1998. The Committee also solicited submissions from people and organisations with a known interest in this topic. In all, 46 submissions were received, details of which are listed in Appendix 1. All of the written submissions were made public documents.

1.6 The Committee held public hearings in Sydney, Canberra and Perth on 20, 21 and 22 July respectively and in Melbourne on 7 August 1998. A further hearing was held in Canberra on 4 December 1998. Details of these hearings are contained in Appendix 2. The Hansard transcript of evidence taken at the hearings was made available on the Internet.

1.7 A Dialogue on Security and Disarmament in the Asia-Pacific, which was organised by the National Centre for South Asian Studies and the Monash Asia Institute, was held in Melbourne, 26-28 August 1998. The Committee was represented at the Dialogue as observers. Referring to itself as the 'Melbourne Group', the participants of the Dialogue issued a communique at the end of the meeting, which is reproduced in Appendix 3.

### **Committee Membership**

1.8 On 24 November 1998, when members were reappointed to Senate committees in the new Parliament, Senator Gibbs replaced Senator Cook. Further changes in membership took place on 3 December 1998, when the Senate amended the *Senate Standing Orders* to reduce membership of Senate references committees from eight to six members. As a result, Senators Eggleston and Gibbs were discharged from the Committee. All three former members were appointed participating members.<sup>1</sup> On 12 May 1999, Senator Bourne replaced Senator Woodley as a member of the Committee.

### **Terminology and Sources**

1.9 In this report, the Committee uses the term 'nuclear weapon states' to refer only to the five nuclear weapon states provided for in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France. The term, therefore, does not include India and Pakistan. Where the Committee refers to states that possess nuclear weapons or are capable of producing nuclear weapons, whether or not they are within or outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) framework, it uses the term 'nuclear weapon possessors' or 'nuclear weapon capable states'.

1.10 Where information was obtained from an Internet source, the Internet address is included in the footnote.

### **Acknowledgements**

1.11 The Committee wishes to express its appreciation to everyone who contributed to the inquiry by making submissions, providing other information or appearing before the Committee in public hearings.

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1 Participating members have all the rights of members except the right to vote. In addition, participating members cannot be used to form a quorum.