

Appendix 4

Findings of previous parliamentary inquiries

Previous parliamentary inquiries into Australia's involvement in peacekeeping have noted themes and issues evident again in this inquiry. These include, for example, the range of factors which need to be taken into account in the decision to commit Australia to a peace operation, the importance of coordinating input from a range of government agencies, the need for cooperation across government and non-government sectors and the advantages of regional cooperation. This appendix provides a brief summary of the findings of the previous inquiries.

In 1991 the Senate Standing Committee noted the importance of 'assessing peacekeeping activities as part and parcel of wider Australian security concerns and foreign policy interests'. It made 17 recommendations covering a wide range of areas including: improving the United Nations (UN) machinery for peacekeeping; formalising Australia's strategic interests in peacekeeping; better assessing the pre-conditions for Australia's involvement; improving recognition of peacekeepers and reviewing conditions of service; enhancing training; improving civil–military coordination; and enhancing regional cooperation. The committee provided a list of factors that it considered should be taken into account in the decision to participate in peacekeeping operations.¹

The 1994 report of the Joint Standing Committee made 50 recommendations, some overlapping the themes of the earlier inquiry. Among these recommendations, the committee emphasised reforming and improving the UN's capacity for peacekeeping and the importance of early planning, as well as enhancing Australia's capacity for peacekeeping. The committee's report reflected the evolving international environment and wider range of activities being undertaken in peacekeeping operations. It called for a permanent secretariat staffed from a number of government departments and other organisations to 'coordinate peacekeeping policy and decision making' and also recommended that an 'integrated policy on peacekeeping, taking into account the diversity of peacekeeping activities and objectives in the evolving international order' be developed. The report highlighted the role of non-military agencies in peacekeeping, making recommendations specific to the Australian Federal Police and Australian Electoral Commission. It also made several recommendations aimed at improving Australian Defence Force coordination with non-government organisations. Finally, the committee considered and recommended the establishment of an Australian Peacekeeping Institute.²

1 Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, May 1991, *United Nations Peacekeeping and Australia*.

2 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, December 1994, *Australia's Participation in Peacekeeping*.

The 2001 report made recommendations about the circumstances in which Australia should commit to peace operations, focusing specifically on the legitimate basis for the operation and a specified exit strategy. It recommended increased personnel and financial support to the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The report also recommended regional collaboration, in that the Australian Defence Force was asked to consider conducting joint military training exercises with regional countries, although given the context of the report, the recommendation related to exercises 'specifically focused on UN peace operations'.³

3 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, 2001, *Australia's role in United Nations Reform*, pp. xxv–xxvi.