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Dr Kathleen Dermody
Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Suite S1.57
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Dear Dr Dermody

Thank you for your letter inviting me to make a submission to the inquiry into Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations

I am not in a position to address all the issues mentioned in your letter, but I believe that I and other members of my official history team might be well placed to give evidence before the committee. A thorough understanding of past peacekeeping operations is critical to any inquiry and we have been researching past operations intensively for the past three years. In that regard, it might be useful if I briefly outline the official history project.

Official History project

In February 2004 the Cabinet appointed me as the Official Historian of Australian Peacekeeping and Post-Cold War Operations. The scope of the Official History was to be all multi-national operations and post-Cold War operations in which Australia has participated since 1947, excluding the recent operations in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq (2003).

Cabinet agreed that all relevant Government records, including Cabinet records, subject to appropriate security clearances, be made available to me and members of my team. The history would not be subject to censorship and direction of any kind, but the Government reserved the right to prevent the use of information of the kinds set out in section 33(1) of the *Archives Act 1983*.

Since then we have assembled the team and have begun work. The project is supported by the Australian War Memorial, the Australian National University and the Department of Defence. In addition, the Australian Research Council has awarded a grant of \$1 million over five years to support the writing of the history.

Under the current plan, the history will comprise four volumes as follows:

Volume I (author, Peter Londey)

Missions beginning between 1947 and 1987, including Indonesia, Kashmir, the Middle East, Congo, Cyprus, and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

Volume II (David Horner)

Missions beginning between 1988 and 1991, including Namibia, Iran, Afghanistan/Pakistan, Western Sahara, the Persian Gulf, Kuwait, and Iraq.

Volume III (John Connor)

Missions beginning from 1992 onwards (except those covered in Volume IV), including Cambodia, former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Haiti, Eritrea, and Sierra Leone.

Volume IV (Bob Breen)

Missions in the Pacific region since 1980, including Bougainville and Solomon Islands.

Dr Breen and I are academics at the Australian National University, and Drs Connor and Londey are senior historians at the Australian War Memorial. The authors are supported by an experienced research team, including Dr Garth Pratten from the Australian War Memorial, and Drs Jean Bou and Christine Winter of the Australian National University.

Last month the government approved the writing of a fifth volume, to cover overseas humanitarian operations, and we hope to advertise for an author for that volume shortly.

After three years of full-time research we have amassed a huge amount of material on Australian peacekeeping operations. We have worked our way through official records in the Departments of Defence, DFAT and Prime Minister and Cabinet, and have carried out extensive interviews with participants. Members of our team have also visited the UN archives in New York and the areas of Australian peacekeeping operations around the world including Bougainville, Cambodia, Cyprus, East Timor, the Gulf, Kosovo, the Middle East, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Solomon Islands, Somalia, and Western Sahara. We have begun drafting chapters for the history and have presently written about 400,000 words. We hope to complete the first volume this year, and this is likely to be published in 2009. Other volumes will follow at about yearly intervals.

Our expertise

All four authors are experienced historians and authors with wide knowledge in the field of military history. Our special expertise in the history of Australian peacekeeping, however, might be useful to the committee.

Dr Bob Breen

Dr Breen has been researching Australian peacekeeping operations for the past 14 years, working for much of that time as an operations analyst for the Australian Army's Land Commander. In this appointment he was personally involved in training and preparing army contingents for service on peacekeeping operations in Bougainville and East Timor. He also prepared Australian public servants for service as peace monitors in Bougainville and election observers in East Timor. As an operations analyst he spent considerable time overseas visiting or working in peacekeeping operations. Apart from this work, between November 2001 and June 2002 Dr Breen worked in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and Transitional Administrator, Sergio Vieira de Mello, in East Timor.

His books on Australian peacekeeping include:

- *A Little Bit of Hope: Australian Force - Somalia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998.
- *Mission Accomplished – East Timor: Australian Defence Force participation in International Force East Timor*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney 2001.
- *Giving Peace a Chance – Operation Lagoon, Bougainville 1994: A Case Study of Military Action and Diplomacy*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence no. 412, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 2001.

He has also published articles on Australian force projection overseas and peacekeeping.

Dr John Connor

Dr Connor began work on his volume in September 2004, and has researched and written about Australia's commitment in Cambodia. He has written articles on peacekeeping including a study of the naval role in the Somalia peacekeeping mission.

Professor David Horner

Professor Horner wrote the feasibility study for the official history project in 2002. He began work on this project in January 2004 and since then has written most of his volume, covering Namibia, Iran, Afghanistan/Pakistan, Western Sahara, the Persian Gulf, Kuwait, and Iraq.

He has written or edited 25 books on Australian military history, strategy and defence. Those that are relevant to peacekeeping include:

- *The Gulf Commitment, The Australian Defence Force's First War*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1992
- *Armies and Nation Building: Past Experience – Future Prospects*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1995 (editor)
- *Making the Australian Defence Force*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2001
- *SAS: Phantoms of War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002, which includes the SAS's operations in East Timor, Somalia etc.

Dr Peter Londey

Dr Londey has been researching peacekeeping at the Australian War Memorial for almost fifteen years, curating exhibitions, interviewing peacekeepers, and working across the whole period of Australian peacekeeping. Currently his research has concentrated on Indonesia, Kashmir, the Middle East, Congo, Cyprus, and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, and he has drafted numerous chapters covering most of these commitments.

In 2004 he published the first comprehensive account of Australian peacekeeping.

- *Other People's Wars: A History of Australian Peacekeeping*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004.

He has also written numerous articles on Australian peacekeeping.

What information can we provide?

Our research has been focused at three levels. First we have explored the political reasons for Australia's involvement in each mission. Second, we have examined the mounting and conduct of each mission. And third, we have tried to gain an insight into the nature of peacekeeping at the individual or personal level - the stories of Australian peacekeepers. We have been able to conduct this research over the full 60 years of Australian peacekeeping. (Australia sent

observers into Indonesia in September 1947 – the beginning of UN peacekeeping.). As noted above, our research has been based on full access to government records.

While Defence and Foreign Affairs participants and policy makers have particular expertise in the background, preparation and conduct of Australian peacekeeping, few of them would have been able to look at peacekeeping across a period of 60 years. We are able to provide a longer-term perspective that would help inform the future of Australian peacekeeping.

My authors and I would be happy to give evidence either on an individual basis or as a group.

Yours sincerely

David Horner
Professor
Official Historian