

## **COALITION RESPONSE TO THE HOBART PEACE COALITION**

### **1. Cluster Bombs Ban**

The Coalition continues to support a ban on cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. These cluster munitions are inaccurate and indiscriminate, and very often include a large number of small, low-yield, “dumb” bomblets which pose an unacceptable risk to civilians. Such cluster munitions, by virtue of their unreliability, also have the potential to create a major problem as an explosive remnant of war.

As occurred with the Ottawa Convention to ban anti-personnel landmines, any future ban on cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians will have to address critical definitional issues, including the important question of retaining stockpiles for developing techniques to clear battlefields of explosive remnants of war, including where cluster munitions may have been used.

### **2. Nuclear Weapons Abolition**

The Coalition remains fully committed to the twin goals of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and working through progressive balanced steps towards complete nuclear disarmament.

These goals are already enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We consider that the NPT remains the right vehicle for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

### **3. Iraq**

#### **a. War. Do you believe the coalition is winning the war in Iraq?**

The Coalition believes that the Multi-national forces in Iraq, along with the Iraqi Government, are making progress in providing stability and much needed humanitarian support.

On the security front, the September testimony by GEN David Petraeus, the Commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq, reported clear and measurable progress. His testimony is freely available online, but some examples of the compelling statistics he presented include: the overall number of attacks in Iraq is at its lowest level since early 2006; civilian deaths are down by over 45 per cent (and by 70 per cent in Baghdad) since the height of violence and car bombings and suicide attacks are declining.

The Coalition does not believe that now, when measurable, undeniable, progress is being made, is the time to abandon the Iraqi people.

**b. Do you believe that the people of Iraq want the occupying military forces to remain?**

The multi-national force in Iraq is not an occupying force. ADF participation in Iraq has been authorised by successive United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR). Australian troops remain in Iraq in accordance with UNSCR 1546 (2004), reaffirmed by UNSCRs 1637 (2005) and 1723 (2006) – which enjoy the full support of the Iraqi Government.

The democratically elected Government of Iraq, on behalf of the Iraqi people, has stated its desire for the multi-national force to remain. Specifically referring to Australia, in March this year Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said “The mission is still ongoing and we still have a desire for Australia to remain and to continue its support until we are completely confident that the operation, the planning, all the terrorist activities cease to exist.”

**c. If elected, would you support a proposal, when Parliament assembles, to withdraw Australian military forces from Iraq without delay?**

No. A re-elected Coalition Government will maintain its commitment to Iraq because right now, when progress is being made, it is critical that we finish the job. A Coalition Government will not weaken its resolve by withdrawing important combat forces for political expediency.

The Australian Defence Forces' role in Iraq will continue to evolve as further progress is made, transitioning to an expanded focus on training the Iraqi security forces from around the middle of 2008. Now is not the time to abandon the Iraqi people.

#### **4. Afghanistan**

##### **a. Do you believe that the people of Afghanistan want the occupying military forces to remain?**

The multi-national force in Afghanistan is not an occupying force. The ADF is deployed to Afghanistan as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. ISAF has a peace-enforcement mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, supported by 10 UN Security Council Resolutions which relate to ISAF. In August 2003, at the request of the UN and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, NATO took command of ISAF.

ISAF's work in Afghanistan is vital to helping the democratically elected Government of Afghanistan ensure a safe and secure environment that will be conducive to consolidating democratic structures. In addition, ISAF is facilitating the reconstruction efforts for the benefit of all Afghan people.

##### **b. If elected, would you support a proposal, when Parliament assembles, to withdraw Australian military forces from Afghanistan without delay?**

No. A re-elected Coalition Government will maintain its commitment to Afghanistan. The Coalition acknowledges that what happens in remote parts of the world can have everything to do with us. There are, for example, strong links between terrorists in Afghanistan and those responsible for the two Bali bombings and the bombing of the Australian Embassy in Indonesia.

Putting terrorists on the defensive, and fighting them where they operate, is far better than waiting for them to go on the offensive and strike innocent civilians.

## **5. Conflict Resolution**

The Coalition firmly believes that the application of military force should be a last resort, but that does not mean that the Defence Force should be funded, structured, or applied to the resolution of conflict through other means – that vital role rightly belongs to other parts of the Australian Government, and to the international community. The Coalition is committed to appropriately funding the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and to vigorously supporting international institutions including the United Nations, to pursue peaceful conflict resolution.