

## **Business & Professional Women Australia (BPW Australia) calls to end Australia's involvement in the war in Afghanistan.**

*A media release issued by BPW Australia on 7 April 2010.*

Business & Professional Women Australia (BPW Australia) calls on the Government to immediately end Australia's participation in the war in Afghanistan.

In the lead up to Anzac Day we must remember that war in any form is an abomination. War rains death and destruction on civilian populations with devastating personal and social consequences. It's time we brought our soldiers home to their families and let the people of Afghanistan rebuild their lives. Until we do that the death toll and other consequences of the war will continue to grow.

For example, armed conflict contributes to poverty. Wars leave people without homes, food or sources of income and often create large numbers of refugees. These legacies hinder the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to which Australia is a signatory.

Despite the demise of the Taliban regime at the end of 2001, BPW Australia remains alarmed about the plight of Afghan women, including ongoing human rights abuses, as outlined in the United Nations July 2009 report 'Silence is Violence, End the Abuse of Women in Afghanistan'.

BPW Australia notes the recent UNICEF 2010 Humanitarian Action Report that:

"...increased fighting between the government and rebel forces along with floods in the Western and Northern provinces have displaced 235,000 people and caused one third of the population to be food insecure. An additional 2.6 million Afghans have registered as refugees in neighbouring countries. In displacement camps, Afghans lack access to essential health care, safe water, a basic education and child protection services. Nationwide only 31% of Afghans have access to safe drinking water and only 12% sanitary toilets. More than half of school-aged children are not in school because of inadequate infrastructure, poverty, armed conflict, and climate-related disasters... nearly 44% of the country remains inaccessible to the humanitarian community due to armed fighting and inadequate security. Much violence now is aimed at children...Afghanistan is seeing increasing numbers of cases of the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus, putting additional pressure on a health system already unable to provide care to over 600,000 people. The most vulnerable are women, children, and the internally displaced....."

BPW Australia is concerned about recent reports that suggest that the UN

Security Council did not authorise the use of force in Afghanistan in 2001 as has been previously asserted and the revelations in secret cables from the US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Karl Eikenberry, recommending against the recent escalation of troops in Afghanistan.

Finally, BPW Australia is particularly concerned by the recent prediction of respected Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg that four years from now there will be more troops in Afghanistan than there will be two years from now.

Promises are made about troop withdrawals but the war in Afghanistan seems to be becoming a war without end, and Australia's involvement in it seems to be escalating. No benchmarks have been set for victory or defeat.

Just as we claim not to tolerate violence against women and children in our own country, so we cannot in all conscience be the perpetrators or supporters of violence against women and children abroad.

BPW Australia seeks the immediate withdrawal of Australian troops from Afghanistan and the replacement of military spending by accountable expenditure on local institutional and social reconstruction.

Marilyn Forsythe BPW Australia President

BPW Australia  
PO Box 193  
Surrey Hills VIC Australia 3127

Level 1, 613 Canterbury Road  
Surrey Hills VIC Australia 3127

Ph: +61 3 9895 4487  
Fax: +61 3 9898 0249  
ABN 50 956 174 998

downloaded from [www.sawa-australia.org/background.html](http://www.sawa-australia.org/background.html)