

CONFERENCE OF LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

CLRI (NSW)

ABN 52 476 362 010
Member of Catholic Church Religious Group

Mr Mark Latham
Leader of the Opposition
Parliament House
Canberra

Monday 17th May 2004

Dear Mr Latham,

Re: Labor's support for a UN role in Iraq

I am writing on behalf of the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes of NSW, a body which represents several thousand Catholic religious men and women throughout the State.

Your recent statements in regard to Australia's participation in the 'Coalition of the Willing' and recent comments about the need to establish a clear and unambiguous UN role in Iraq are significant in that they reassert the fundamental role that the UN must play in the international community. The CLRI (NSW) believes strongly in the role that Australia can play and has played in the past in building and nurturing peace and stability through the UN system.

The CLRI (NSW) is deeply disturbed by what we see as the Government's slow and steady erosion of Australia's compliance of UN Conventions and Protocols. The Government's participation in the US lead war in Iraq is a manifestation of the undermining of the UN system. We believe that this policy is fundamentally flawed and against Australia's long term interests as it devalues our role in a range of human rights and humanitarian endeavours, and it further destabilises relationships with many near neighbours.

In preparation for the federal election, the CLRI (NSW) will be conducting a comprehensive education campaign that will have a cluster of international issues as a focal point: the denial of human rights to the refugees in Australian on-shore and off-shore detention centres; the slow and steady erosion of Australia's obligations to and compliance of UN Conventions and Protocols; and the unjust way that the new Government of East

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Timor is being treated in regard to the oil and gas resources in the seas which our neighbouring countries share.

The differences between the Government and the Opposition on many of these issues have not been substantive in the past, although we are heartened by the Opposition's recent comments on children in detention after the release of the HREOC report. We will be helping our constituents to understand the differences, if any, between these important policies - the stand that Australia takes towards the UN will be one of the significant issues for our education campaign.

We look forward to hearing from you about the specific details of Labor's policy on Iraq and more broadly on your policies towards the United Nations.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Morgan
On behalf of the CLRI(NSW) Social Justice Committee