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## **I'm listening on Iraq says PM; Then why no vote says Andren**

The PM demonstrated a blatant double standard to the National Press Club today, saying he is listening to the Australian people to guide his decisions on Iraq, yet he has not allowed their representatives a vote on the issue in parliament, according to Peter Andren, Member for Calare.

“In the question and answer session after his speech, Mr Howard was asked which notable, non-political Australians support his stand on Iraq. He answered that he was informed more by the views of the Australian people as a whole than by individuals of note,” Mr Andren said.

“How can this be so when the Prime Minister will not allow the elected representatives of the Australian people a vote on the impending invasion in Parliament?”

“This shows the double standard that permeates the views of our leaders on Iraq – say what they will, the Government and Opposition have not yet listened to the people on this and there is no indication they will in the near future.

In an answer to another question on whether he was lobbying the US position to other world leaders, Mr Howard told of his admiration and warm regard for General Musharraf, President of Pakistan.

“So our Prime Minister has warm regard for a military dictatorship in Pakistan that is in possession of nuclear weapons, and yet will go to war against the military dictatorship in Iraq because he suspects it also has nukes – the fact that Pakistan is not a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty makes it OK for them to have nuclear weapons without making them a rogue state.

“Refusing to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty says as much for me about being a potential rogue state as breaking it does.

“The Prime Minister is quick to link Al Qaeda to Iraq yet neither he nor the US will link it to Saudi Arabia from where Osama bin Laden and the majority of the September 11 terrorists came.

“This is the double standard that is so difficult to reconcile for many in the Middle East who are likely to be the most adversely affected by the outbreak of war, and is what fuels the passions of fundamentalists and terrorists against the West.

“The crux of the Prime Minister’s speech focused on the need for Iraq to be dealt with as an example to other rogue states, such as North Korea. Yet the Pakistani & North Korea regimes are known to have swapped nuclear and rocket technology, with one state a bad guy and the other a good guy in this bizarre pre-war scenario.

“The PM believes that Iraq’s cooperation so far has been entirely due to the build-up of US, British and Australian forces in the gulf region. Why not maintain the pressure but allow the weapons inspectors to further verify Iraq’s compliance or non-compliance?”

“Whatever Mr Howard says the fact remains he is about to commit our forces to a pre-emptive strike in likely defiance of any UN Security Council mandate. That is illegal and when the deaths of thousands arrive, it becomes a crime,” Mr Andren said.

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