



Crossbench Calls for AUKUS Inquiry

Crossbench MPs from the House of Representatives and Senate have written to Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles, calling for an urgent parliamentary inquiry into AUKUS.

In April, the UK Parliament's Defence Committee announced an inquiry into the AUKUS arrangements, and this week the US defence department announced they were undertaking a rapid review of AUKUS.

AUKUS represents Australia's largest defence investment in decades and is central to our defence and foreign affairs strategy.

Australians are concerned to know more about the strategic and financial implications of this policy which has been jointly adopted by major party governments without significant parliamentary scrutiny.

A full and formal parliamentary inquiry is therefore both important and timely.
Crossbench letter attached.

Quotes:

Nicolette Boele, Independent MP for Bradfield

Any time Parliament commits to spend \$368 billion, we should at least have a full parliamentary inquiry. The case for an inquiry on AUKUS is even stronger given the rules of global co-operation have dramatically changed since it was signed.

AUKUS now risks our defence — because we don't know if these submarines will ever arrive. It risks our budget — because we may waste \$368 billion in taxpayer's money. And it risks our Australian values, which we do not import from the United States.

Helen Haines, Independent MP for Indi

In light of the reviews of AUKUS by our two partner nations and the consequential nature of the agreement, it's important for our Parliament to apply the same level of scrutiny.

Kate Chaney, Independent MP for Curtin

AUKUS is a monumental strategic commitment with far-reaching implications for our economy, sovereignty, and security posture, yet it continues to unfold with minimal public transparency and virtually no parliamentary accountability. Australians want to understand whether this is the best use of our resources and the right path for our security.



Allegra Spender, Independent MP for Wentworth

AUKUS is the centrepiece of our defence and foreign policy strategy, but it's been adopted by the major parties with very poor public engagement. AUKUS will shape Australia's future for decades with enormous implications both financially, economically, and strategically, but in discussions at the community level, there are consistent questions and concerns that have not been addressed. AUKUS won't work without wider community interrogation and engagement, and a parliamentary inquiry is the first step to building that.

We also need a more open discussion of the challenges facing AUKUS. Most urgently, the US Navy is currently short of attack submarines and there is a very clear risk that the US President at the time will not be able to certify that the Virginia class submarines can be transferred to Australia without undermining US Navy capability: a requirement of the current enabling legislation. We must publicly face those risks and actively manage them including identifying viable alternatives.

Andrew Wilkie, Independent MP for Clark

More than ever an Australian Inquiry into AUKUS is needed, and President Trump's caution about the deal gives Australia a great chance to reset. Nuclear subs were always the wrong technology for Australia's future submarine needs given the shallow littoral and offshore waters in our region, not to mention the ridiculous cost and impractical timeframe.

Sophie Scamps, Independent MP for Mackellar

Circumstances have changed significantly since the AUKUS deal was first announced and it's only reasonable it be reviewed in the current context.

This is the largest investment in our defence capability in decades, other parties are conducting their own reviews, and the Australian community largely supports a parliamentary inquiry - it's high time the Government responds.

Senator Jacqui Lambie

We've poured billions into AUKUS with nothing to show for it but broken promises and cancelled defence programs. It's a \$368 billion blank cheque to the US and UK with zero guarantee of real capability for decades.

Australians deserve better and it's time for a full parliamentary inquiry into this dud deal.

Senator David Pocock

With the UK and now the US reviewing AUKUS, Australia is now the only country not actively considering whether the agreement in its current form best serves our national interest. Given the scale and cost of this deal, a transparent review is not just sensible, it's overdue.



13th June, 2025

The Hon Richard Marles MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

RE: Parliamentary Inquiry into AUKUS

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

We are writing to request the Australian government commission an urgent parliamentary inquiry into AUKUS, the trilateral security partnership between the United Kingdom, United States and Australia.

The AUKUS agreement represents the largest investment in Australia's defence force capability in recent decades. It is central to the 2024 National Defence Strategy, the associated 2024 Integrated Investment Program, and to Australia's foreign policy.

However, people across our communities are increasingly concerned about the AUKUS agreement.

These concerns relate to the overall cost of AUKUS, the feasibility of delivering the desired capabilities in the required timelines, a perceived lack of transparency and accountability, and the apparent absence of contingency plans should any AUKUS partner withdraw from or be unable to deliver aspects of the agreement including the provision of the Virginia Class Submarines.

Despite these concerns, there has been limited opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny of AUKUS to date. We therefore think it is important and timely for parliament to conduct a full and formal inquiry.

Indeed, both of Australia's AUKUS partners are conducting similar inquiries. In April, the UK Parliament's Defence Committee announced an inquiry into Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 of the AUKUS arrangements. Yesterday, the United States Department of Defence announced they were undertaking a rapid review of AUKUS, headed by Defence Under Secretary Elbridge Colby.

A parliamentary inquiry into AUKUS should look at both Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 of AUKUS and could examine matters such as:

- The strategic rationale for AUKUS, given the evolving geopolitical environment;
- The opportunity costs associated with choosing these defence capabilities over others;
- The feasibility and timeline of the nuclear submarine program, the current progress against this timeline, the risk of delivery delays or failure, and the associated mitigation actions;
- The impact on Australia's sovereignty and foreign policy independence; and
- The role of public consultation and parliamentary debate in ongoing scrutiny of the agreement.



The inquiry could be undertaken through a new Joint Select Committee or other similar arrangement, and should report back before the end of the year. Reflecting the diversity of the 48th parliament, the inquiry must include members of the crossbench.

Whilst we acknowledge that the Treaties Committee recently conducted a related inquiry, this looked more narrowly at whether ratification of the AUKUS treaty¹ was in Australia's national interest. It therefore did not address many of the issues outlined above.

There is no greater responsibility for the Government than ensuring the safety and security of Australians and we remain committed to working collaboratively with you on these issues.

We would be happy to discuss this further at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Allegra Spender MP
Member for Wentworth

Andrew Wilkie MP
Member for Clark

Dr Monique Ryan MP
Member for Kooyong

Zali Steggall OAM MP
Member for Warringah

Nicolette Boele MP
Member for Bradfield

Dr Sophie Scamps MP
Member for Mackellar

Kate Chaney MP
Member for Curtin

Dr Helen Haines MP
Member for Indi

Senator Jacqui Lambie
Senator for Tasmania

Senator David Pocock
Senator for the ACT

¹ The Agreement among the Government of Australia, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Government of the United States of America for Cooperation Related to Naval Nuclear Propulsion