

PROPOSAL FOR A

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO  
NATIONAL RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS**

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*Including the Impact of Foreign-Funded, Foreign-Directed and Offshore-  
Controlled Advocacy and Influence on Australia's Sovereign Capability and  
Preparedness*

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Prepared for consideration by  
**Members and Senators of the Australian Parliament**  
By  
**The Institute for Integrated Economic Research -Australia**

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## 1. Executive Summary

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This document proposes the establishment of an Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into National Resilience and Preparedness. The inquiry would examine Australia's systemic failure to anticipate and prepare for foreseeable strategic disruptions, with particular reference to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent conflict-related disruption to petroleum flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

Despite multiple warnings from defence and strategic reviews, independent research bodies, royal commissions, and parliamentary committee reports over the past decade, Australia has repeatedly failed to translate risk identification into meaningful preparedness action. The pattern is consistent: vulnerability is identified, reports are produced, recommendations are made, and implementation is deferred until a crisis arrives, or just deferred indefinitely.

This proposal also addresses an issue that previous inquiries have not adequately confronted: whether foreign-funded, foreign-directed, or offshore-controlled lobbying, advocacy, and influence activities have materially affected Australian policy settings in ways that have weakened national resilience, preparedness, or sovereign capability. This question cuts across the political spectrum and applies equally to influence campaigns of any ideological orientation.

The proposed inquiry would build upon, but go significantly beyond, existing parliamentary work by adopting a whole-of-nation resilience lens that integrates supply chain vulnerability, critical national systems, sovereign capability, cognitive resilience, and foreign influence into a single coherent framework.

## 2. The Case for an Inquiry

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### 2.1 A Pattern of Foreseeable Failure

Australia's exposure to cascading supply chain disruptions is not a new discovery. The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT), in its 2022 report on the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, concluded that returning to business as usual was not an option if Australia was to remain resilient, secure, and prosperous. The Committee found that Australia lacked a clear definition of the critical national systems underpinning its security and prosperity, and specifically recommended the development of a national resilience framework.

The 2020 Defence Strategic Update judged that the nation was inside its previously assumed ten-year strategic warning period. The 2023 Defence Strategic Review reinforced that warning time had deteriorated sharply, with major implications for preparedness and strategic planning. The 2024 National Defence Strategy reaffirmed that Australia no longer enjoys the benefit of a ten-year window of strategic warning time for conflict.

Despite these escalating warnings, preparation has been inadequate. The recent disruption to petroleum flows through the Strait of Hormuz provides a stark demonstration: Australia's liquid fuel vulnerability, documented in detail for over fifteen years, is now manifesting as a real-world supply crisis for which the nation was not prepared.

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## 2.2 Inquiry Lessons Unlearned

The Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry (2024) produced nine guiding recommendations, along with 19 immediate actions and seven medium-term actions. Among its key recommendations was a call to ensure the rapid mobilisation of a national governance structure that reflects health, social, economic, and equity priorities. The inquiry received over 2,200 public submissions and found that pandemic planning and response arrangements were not fully integrated with broader whole-of-government emergency management and resilience frameworks.

The Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience, appointed in November 2022, examined preparedness, response, and recovery workforce models. The Australian Government tabled a response to the committee's interim report in December 2024, but broader progress on systemic resilience measures remains limited.

Neither of these inquiries addressed the full spectrum of national resilience as a systemic, cross-cutting issue. Both were predominantly focused on their specific domains—health response and natural disaster management respectively—rather than the interconnected web of critical national systems upon which Australia's sovereignty depends.

## 2.3 Energy Supply Disruption: Vulnerability Realised

The recent conflict-related disruption to oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz is the kind of foreseeable, high-consequence event that Australian fuel security analysts have been warning about for over a decade. Australia imports over 90 per cent of its refined fuel and possesses materially lower sovereign controllable onshore reserves than official figures suggest, once fuel in transit within the Exclusive Economic Zone is excluded from the calculation.

The disruption has exposed fundamental vulnerabilities across multiple critical national systems simultaneously: liquid fuel supply, defence operational readiness, freight and logistics, agricultural inputs, and the broader economy. This cascading, interconnected nature of the disruption is precisely what a national resilience framework would have been designed to anticipate and manage.

## 3. How This Inquiry Would Differ from Earlier Work

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Earlier inquiries have examined fuel security, pandemic response, natural disaster resilience, or foreign influence transparency in isolation. Each has produced valuable findings and recommendations within its defined scope. But none has examined the interaction between these domains or the repeated failure to convert warning into preparedness.

This inquiry would be the first to examine national resilience as an integrated whole-of-nation system, asking why warnings from multiple prior inquiries were not acted upon, how vulnerabilities in one critical system cascade into others, and whether external influence—including foreign-funded advocacy—has contributed to policy settings that have reduced Australia's preparedness. The intellectual centre of this inquiry is the gap between knowing and doing: Australia has been told repeatedly what it needs to do, and has repeatedly failed to do it.

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## 4. Relevant Prior Parliamentary Inquiries and Reviews

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Several previous inquiries have touched on elements of national resilience without addressing the issue comprehensively. The proposed inquiry should build upon and integrate the findings of these predecessors:

### 4.1 Senate Inquiry into Australia's Transport Energy Resilience and Sustainability (2015)

The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee conducted an inquiry into Australia's transport energy resilience and sustainability, reporting in 2015. The inquiry specifically recommended a whole-of-government fuel supply risk assessment including military disruption scenarios. This inquiry is a direct predecessor to the current proposal and provides baseline evidence that warnings about liquid fuel vulnerability were formally presented to Parliament over a decade ago.

### 4.2 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (2020)

The Royal Commission examined preparedness, resilience, and national emergency arrangements following the catastrophic 2019–20 bushfire season. It made wide-ranging recommendations on national coordination, information sharing, and emergency response capability. Critically, the Royal Commission considered the intersection between natural disasters and broader national resilience, providing an important reference point for whole-of-government preparedness.

### 4.3 JSCFADT Inquiry into the Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic (2020–2022)

This is the most directly relevant predecessor. Chaired by the Hon Kevin Andrews MP and later Senator David Fawcett, the inquiry concluded that the strategic lessons from COVID-19 were not predominantly about health but about the behaviour of nation states under stress and the vulnerability of critical supply chains. Chapter 4, "Need for a National Resilience Framework," drew extensively on evidence from the Institute for Integrated Economic Research – Australia (IIER-A), the Perth USAsia Centre, and defence industry witnesses.

The report produced two key recommendations: that the Australian Government define which critical national systems are essential to Australia's ability to function as a secure, prosperous, first-world nation (Recommendation 1); and that it develop a national resilience framework to assess which elements of those systems are vulnerable to high-consequence supply chain disruptions (Recommendation 2). **As at March 2026, no formal Government Response to this report has been tabled in Parliament.**

### 4.4 Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 (2020–2022)

Established by Senate resolution on 8 April 2020, this committee scrutinised the Australian Government's pandemic response throughout the crisis, delivering its final report in April 2022. While focused primarily on the health and economic response, its proceedings revealed significant deficiencies in whole-of-government crisis coordination.

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#### **4.5 Commonwealth COVID-19 Response Inquiry (2023–2024)**

Announced by Prime Minister Albanese on 21 September 2023, this independent inquiry received over 2,200 submissions and conducted 27 stakeholder roundtables. It produced nine guiding recommendations, 19 immediate actions, and seven medium-term actions. The inquiry found that pandemic planning and response arrangements were not fully integrated with broader emergency management and resilience frameworks, but its terms of reference were limited to the pandemic domain.

#### **4.6 Senate Select Committee on Australia’s Disaster Resilience (2022–2024)**

Appointed by Senate resolution on 30 November 2022, this committee examined preparedness, response, and recovery workforce models, as well as alternative models for dealing with increasingly frequent and severe disasters. Its terms of reference were focused on natural disaster resilience rather than the full spectrum of strategic disruptions facing Australia.

#### **4.7 Senate Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy (2025–2026)**

This completed inquiry tabled its final report, *The Integrity Gap: Restoring Trust in the Climate and Energy Debate*, on 24 March 2026. The majority report made 21 recommendations. The inquiry received more than 240 submissions and held 11 public hearings. It examined the prevalence and impact of misinformation and disinformation in the climate and energy debate and received substantial evidence regarding foreign funding flows into domestic advocacy organisations. This inquiry provides an important evidentiary foundation for the foreign influence dimension of the proposed inquiry, but its focus was on information integrity rather than the broader national resilience implications.

#### **4.8 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security: Review of FITS Act (2024)**

The PJCIS conducted a statutory review of the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018. The Attorney-General’s Department response said the scheme “has failed to achieve its intended purpose,” and the Government agreed, agreed in principle, or agreed in part to 12 recommendations, while noting 2A parallel Senate inquiry into lobbying regulation found the current code applies only to third-party lobbyists, providing only a partial and incomplete picture of lobbying at the Commonwealth level.

#### **4.9 Key Gap Identified**

No previous inquiry has examined national resilience as an integrated, whole-of-nation system encompassing supply chain vulnerability, sovereign capability, cognitive resilience, foreign influence, and preparedness for strategic disruptions beyond natural disasters. Each has examined one facet of the problem in isolation. The proposed inquiry would bridge this gap.

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## 5. How Parliamentary Inquiries Are Initiated

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Understanding the procedural pathways available for establishing the proposed inquiry is essential for any parliamentary sponsor. The Australian Parliament has several mechanisms:

### 5.1 Senate Select Committee (Recommended)

A Select Committee is established by resolution of the Senate for a specific purpose and duration. This is the mechanism used for the Select Committee on COVID-19 (April 2020), the Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience (November 2022), and the Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy (July 2025). A Senator gives notice of a proposed motion, which is debated and voted upon by the full Senate. Select Committees are time-limited and dissolve upon reporting or at a specified date.

This is the recommended pathway. The Senate's role as a house of review, its tradition of cross-party committee work, and the ability to establish terms of reference that cut across portfolio boundaries make a Senate Select Committee the most appropriate vehicle. The committee would have the ability to receive public submissions and, where necessary, take private or in camera evidence on matters involving national security or public interest sensitivities.

### 5.2 Senate Standing Committee Reference

A matter may be referred by the Senate to one of its existing Standing Committees. The limitation is that standing committees have defined jurisdictions, and national resilience spans multiple portfolios, making this pathway less suitable for the broad scope envisaged.

### 5.3 Joint Standing Committee Self-Reference

Joint Standing Committees, such as the JSCFADT, may adopt their own inquiry topics within their established terms of reference. The JSCFADT adopted its COVID-19 pandemic implications inquiry on 13 May 2020 using this mechanism. This could be appropriate if the inquiry were focused primarily on the foreign affairs, defence, and trade dimensions of resilience.

### 5.4 Independent Review or Royal Commission

The Government may establish an independent inquiry outside the parliamentary committee system, as occurred with the Commonwealth COVID-19 Response Inquiry. Royal Commissions have coercive powers to compel evidence and production of documents. While offering the greatest investigative authority, Royal Commissions are resource-intensive and are not typically used for policy development inquiries of this nature.

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## 6. Foreign-Funded Influence and National Resilience

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A distinctive feature of this proposed inquiry is its examination of whether foreign-funded, foreign-directed, or offshore-controlled advocacy and lobbying activities have materially affected Australian policy settings in ways that have weakened national resilience and preparedness. This issue has been identified in multiple prior proceedings but has not been examined through the lens of its impact on Australia's sovereign capability and crisis preparedness.

### 6.1 The Questions for Inquiry

The inquiry should address three core questions in this domain:

**First, whether existing transparency and disclosure laws capture offshore-funded policy advocacy adequately.** The Attorney-General's Department has acknowledged that the FITS scheme has not achieved its intended purpose. The PJCIS review found significant deficiencies in the scheme's design and enforcement. A separate Senate inquiry found the current lobbying code applies only to third-party lobbyists, providing only a partial and incomplete picture of lobbying at the Commonwealth level. These are findings of the Parliament's own committees, not external allegations.

**Second, whether policy processes in resilience-relevant sectors are vulnerable to asymmetric influence.** Evidence presented to the Senate Select Committee on Information Integrity documented substantial foreign funding flows into Australian advocacy networks. The Page Research Centre argued in its submission, that more than \$108 million in traceable foreign funding had flowed into Australian advocacy organisations in the energy and climate domain. Separately, research has documented the role of fossil fuel industry lobbying in shaping energy and climate policy. The inquiry should examine whether the scale of external funding, from any source, creates asymmetries of influence that distort policy formation in sectors relevant to national resilience.

**Third, whether any such influence has contributed to reduced preparedness, delayed capability development, or increased import dependence.** This is the connection to the broader inquiry purpose. If Australia's energy sovereignty, industrial capability, or supply chain resilience have been weakened by policy decisions that were materially influenced by foreign-funded campaigns, that is a national security concern regardless of the ideological orientation of the campaigns in question.

### 6.2 Balanced Treatment

It is essential that this dimension of the inquiry examine foreign-funded influence across the full spectrum. Foreign-funded campaigns from environmental advocacy organisations, fossil fuel interests, technology companies, defence contractors, and geopolitical actors all warrant examination through the lens of their impact on resilience. The inquiry's focus should be on whether Australia's decision-making sovereignty has been compromised by foreign money, regardless of source or direction.

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### 6.3 Cognitive Resilience

The inquiry should also examine the cognitive dimensions of national resilience, including information integrity, the effects of disinformation, and the risks associated with AI-enabled cognitive offloading. The capacity of the Australian public, media, and decision-makers to identify and resist foreign influence, to critically assess competing claims about energy and industrial policy, and to maintain independent analytical capability in an era of accelerating AI adoption are all relevant to the nation's preparedness for future crises.

## 7. Proposed Terms of Reference

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That a Senate Select Committee on National Resilience and Preparedness be established to inquire into and report on:

- (a) the adequacy of Australia's preparedness for major national disruptions, including pandemics, conflict-related energy shocks, supply chain failures, cyber incidents, and concurrent multi-hazard crises;
- (b) the implementation, non-implementation, or partial implementation of recommendations from prior parliamentary inquiries, royal commissions, and official reviews relevant to resilience and preparedness, including the reasons for any failures of implementation;
- (c) the adequacy of current arrangements for identifying, mapping, protecting, and exercising Australia's critical national systems, including national stockpiles, surge capacity, and war-gaming and exercise programs;
- (d) the resilience of essential supply chains, including liquid fuels, pharmaceuticals, food production inputs, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics, critical minerals, and sovereign industrial capability;
- (e) the adequacy of transparency, disclosure, and integrity arrangements governing foreign-funded, foreign-directed, or offshore-controlled advocacy and lobbying in sectors relevant to national resilience and preparedness;
- (f) the capacity of Australia's institutional decision-making processes to respond at the speed required by cascading supply chain disruptions, including whether institutional structures and decision-action chains operate at an adequate tempo;
- (g) the cognitive dimensions of national resilience, including information integrity, the effects of disinformation, and the risks associated with AI-enabled cognitive offloading on the capacity of citizens, media, and decision-makers to exercise independent critical judgement;
- (h) whether Australia should adopt a formal national resilience framework, a national risk assessment process, and regular reporting to Parliament on the state of national preparedness; and
- (i) any related matters.

The Committee should report within twelve months of its establishment.

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## 8. Suggested Key Witnesses and Submitters

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### 8.1 Government and Agencies

- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet – National Security Division
- National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
- Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC)
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Department of Industry, Science and Resources
- Treasury
- Department of Defence
- Department of Health and Aged Care / Therapeutic Goods Administration
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
- Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)
- Attorney-General's Department – FITS administration
- Department of Home Affairs
- Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO)

### 8.2 Independent Research and Policy Organisations

- Institute for Integrated Economic Research – Australia (IIER-A)
- Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI)
- Lowy Institute
- Australian Security Leaders Climate Group (ASLCG)
- Perth USAsia Centre
- Centre for Public Integrity
- Independent experts in lobbying regulation and foreign interference law

### 8.3 Industry, Transport and Supply Chains

- Major Australian refiners and fuel distributors
- Defence industry primes and sovereign capability manufacturers
- Critical minerals producers and processors
- Pharmaceutical manufacturers and API suppliers
- Major freight, shipping, and port operators
- National Farmers' Federation and agricultural input suppliers
- Unions
- Motorist Organisations such as the NRMA and RACV.

### 8.4 Foreign Influence and Transparency

- Organisations registered (or required to register) under the FITS Act
  - Recipients of substantial foreign funding engaged in policy advocacy, across the full spectrum of political orientation
  - International comparators (e.g. US FARA administrators, NATO resilience centres)
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- Representatives from across the ideological spectrum, to ensure the committee is seen to examine all sides of the influence question

## 9. Expected Outcomes

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The inquiry should be expected to produce recommendations in the following areas:

1. **National Resilience Framework.** A legislated requirement for the Australian Government to establish, maintain, and regularly update a National Resilience Framework that defines critical national systems, categorises supply chain vulnerabilities, and identifies sovereign capability requirements.
2. **State of National Preparedness Report.** A requirement for regular reporting to Parliament on the state of national preparedness, including the adequacy of national stockpiles, surge capacity, exercise programs, and the resilience of critical supply chains.
3. **Implementation Accountability.** Mechanisms to ensure that recommendations from parliamentary and independent inquiries into national resilience are tracked, reported against, and implemented within specified timeframes, with reasons provided where recommendations are not accepted. In addition, examples where elections result in a change of Government and Inquiries lapse.
4. **Foreign Influence Reform.** Substantial reform to the FITS Act and federal lobbying regulation to close the gaps identified by the PJCIS review and the Senate lobbying inquiry, and to extend transparency requirements to all substantial foreign funding of domestic policy advocacy.
5. **Energy Security Action.** Immediate and medium-term measures to address Australia's critical liquid fuel vulnerability, including realistic assessment of sovereign controllable reserves, domestic refining capacity, and alternative fuel pathways.
6. **Institutional Tempo.** Reforms to Australia's crisis governance architecture to ensure that institutional decision-action chains can operate at the speed required by cascading supply disruptions.

## 10. Conclusion

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Australia has been warned repeatedly. The JSCFADT concluded in 2022 that the nation lacked the frameworks needed to assess and manage risks to its critical national systems. The 2015 Senate inquiry into transport energy resilience recommended whole-of-government fuel supply risk assessments including military disruption scenarios. The 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements called for improved national coordination and resilience. Defence strategic reviews have declared that the era of comfortable warning time is over.

At the same time, substantial volumes of foreign money have flowed into advocacy campaigns on multiple sides of Australian energy and industrial policy debates, operating through channels that the current transparency regime has, by the Government's own acknowledgement, failed to illuminate. Whether and to what extent these flows have affected policy settings relevant to national resilience is a question that Parliament should examine.

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A Parliamentary Inquiry into National Resilience and Preparedness would provide the forum to integrate these previously siloed concerns into a coherent, actionable framework. It would hold previous failures of implementation to account, examine the foreign influence dimension through the lens of resilience rather than partisanship, and provide the evidence base for the legislative and institutional reforms that Australia requires.

The question is not whether such an inquiry is needed. The question is whether Australia can afford to delay it any further.

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**Appendix:**

- A. Summary of Key Prior Inquiries

## Appendix A: Summary of Key Prior Inquiries

Inquiry	Period	Key Findings	Gap for Proposed Inquiry
Senate Inquiry: Transport Energy Resilience	2015	Recommended whole-of-government fuel supply risk assessment including military disruption scenarios	Fuel-specific; no broader resilience framework or foreign influence analysis
Royal Commission: National Natural Disaster Arrangements	2020	Examined national preparedness, resilience and coordination for natural disasters	Natural disaster focus; did not address strategic disruption, supply chains or foreign influence
JSCFADT COVID-19 Pandemic Implications	2020–22	Called for national resilience framework; identified critical supply chain vulnerabilities	Did not address foreign influence or cognitive resilience; <b>no Government Response ever tabled</b>
Senate Select Ctte on COVID-19	2020–22	Scrutinised government pandemic response; identified governance and coordination failures	Pandemic-specific; no broader resilience framework
Commonwealth COVID-19 Response Inquiry	2023–24	Nine guiding recommendations plus immediate/medium-term actions; found response not integrated with broader resilience	Pandemic domain only; no supply chain or foreign influence analysis
Senate Select Ctte: Disaster Resilience	2022–24	Examined disaster preparedness, response, and recovery workforce models	Natural disaster focus; no strategic disruption or foreign influence analysis
Senate Select Ctte: Information Integrity (Climate/Energy)	2025–26	Tabled “The Integrity Gap” (24 March 2026); 21 recommendations; documented foreign funding flows	Information integrity focus; does not connect to broader national resilience or supply chain framework
PJCIS Review of FITS Act	2024	Found FITS scheme ineffective; Government acknowledged scheme not achieving intended purpose	Technical review of scheme mechanics; no connection to resilience impact assessment

END OF PROPOSAL