

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Australian Attitudes on ANZUS and the East China Sea

A poll commissioned by the Australia-China Relations Institute (ACRI) has found that seventy one percent of Australians think Australia should remain neutral in any armed conflict between Japan and China over disputed islands in the East China Sea, even if the United States supports Japan. Only 15 percent think Australia should support Japan and the US.

Sixty eight percent believe the Australian Prime Minister should say no if a US President calls to ask for an Australian contribution to support Japan. Only 14 percent believe he should say yes. These findings are the result of a poll commissioned by the Australia-China Relations Institute based at UTS in Sydney. It was conducted by UMR Research.

Former Foreign Minister Bob Carr, Director of the Institute, said the East China Sea is the most volatile of any of the disputes that could see Australia drawn into armed combat.

“The poll confirms Australians overwhelmingly want their country to stay neutral.

“As far as the public is concerned we are not obliged under ANZUS to make any commitment.

“We know that Australians overwhelmingly support the ANZUS treaty but this poll confirms they do not want it invoked in conflict between China and Japan over the islands in the East China Sea.”

Former Defence Minister David Johnston was asked on June 12 last year whether ANZUS would apply in the event of a conflict in East China Sea his reply was “I don’t believe it does.”

Mr Carr said, “It was striking that there was no controversy about this. Minister Johnston wasn’t criticized by either side of politics. This was a contrast with the response Alexander Downer received in 2004 when he suggested the ANZUS treaty might not apply in a conflict over the Taiwan Straits.”

The poll also found that:

- 51 percent of Australians believe that the ANZUS treaty does not mean Australia has to support Japan in a conflict with China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Only 24 percent believe that the ANZUS treaty does mean Australia must take sides with Japan and the US.
- 76 percent of Australians believe that if Australia supported Japan and the US in a conflict with China the value of Australia’s trade with China would fall.
- 40 percent of respondents were aware of the dispute between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

1000 people over the age of eighteen were polled.

Contact ACRI on +61 9 514 8953 or E: [acri@uts.edu.au](mailto:acri@uts.edu.au)