

JUST PEACE AGM CONVENORS REPORT 2009

Just Peace Qld seeks to raise awareness

- about the causes of conflict on a local, national and international level
- to promote and support alternative solutions to war between and within States, and
- Work for a socially just and peaceful world.

At the time of this annual report wars continue in Iraq and Afghanistan and other countries in our region such as Sri Lanka. The horror of these wars is evidenced by families leaving their birthplaces and families to seek security in far away places such as Australia.

Climate Change, understood, predicted, with warnings made many years ago will be an integral factor in all political decision making into the future. The short term profits of a few have prevented necessary early intervention.

As the planet warms we will see tensions rise with the temperature. Sea level rise, droughts and wild storms will result in massive displacement of people from their countries of origin. We will see conflict over vital human resources that will require skilled and determined collective action to enable the survival of life on Planet Earth.

Over the past year there have been some historic developments. After 8 disastrous years of neo conservative government in the US President Barak Obama was elected in December 2008. Obama has been in office now for 10 months. This has had a major psychological impact on people around the world. He brings with his leadership HOPE.....and expectation. The Nobel Peace Prize is a testament to just that. Hope that internationalism will be nurtured with a view to managing the major challenges of our time. Climate Change, Nuclear Disarmament, Poverty, Hunger and Disease and long standing time bombs of conflict such as the Palestinian struggle for survival against a wealthy adversary equipped with one of the most sophisticated military apparatus in the world. Israel.

In the aftermath of not only wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but in fact a war on the United Nations we now see a move back to the legitimacy and need for such an international coalition? Indeed if there ever was a need for a coalition of the willing it is the UN! With people around the world developing a growing understanding that we must work together if we are to survive the unfolding effects of climate change and

prevent even worse repercussions, including wars over energy resources or food and water!

The current Labor government led by Kevin Rudd about to enter its 3rd year of office has thrown its weight behind the need for Nuclear Disarmament and yet continues to expand uranium mining providing material for not only electricity but for potential nuclear weapons. Along with this it leaves radioactive tailings 'Blowin in the Wind'.

Who knows just what thousands of people across the eastern seaboard of Australia have inhaled or ingested with the dust storms of September which picked up tonnes of red dust from central Australia sites of both the Maralinga atomic bomb tests and tailings from Ranger uranium mine!!

The current government continues to cause us unease in relation to

- The vision for security through the defence white paper published in May this year. Although many people attended consultations across the country calling for a decrease in defence spending and involvement in wars of aggression the direction of the paper is to further increase military spending some \$20 B a year with a massive increase in air and naval capability. The view put forth in the paper that China poses a potential threat to Australian security fits snugly into long standing xenophobia encouraged over the years of European occupation. Ironically there are also calls for Australia and the US to conduct joint training exercises with the Chinese! One wonders on just who is the enemy that justifies spending billions of dollars on killing machines when so much is needed to effect technological changes away from fossil fuelled power generation!
- The Northern Territory Intervention- inherited from the Howard government this racist policy is shameful! It must be scrapped.
- Troop commitment to Afghanistan. There is no military solution in Afghanistan! Malalai Joya on the front page of our last Peace Issue clearly calls for the withdrawal of foreign troops from her country stating the change must come from within- with help from the outside but directed by Afghani's.
- Subservient, immoral support for the state of Israel. We will hear much more on the subject from Michael Shaik this afternoon. The military attack on the people of Gaza early this year was a war crime. The Goldstone report confirms this assessment. 1400 people, some 350 of them children died in operation Cast Lead and over 5000 were seriously injured. We heard doctors live, working out of hospitals in Gaza describing injuries caused by white phosphorus weapons burning victims from inside their

bodies! The response from the PM and his deputy were evasive to say the least. UN Secretary General Ban Ki- moon condemned Israel's actions and initiated the Goldstone inquiry recently released, which again has not elicited even a response from the Rudd Gillard Government.

- Silence on the self determination rights of the people of West Papua.

At the same time positive developments under the new government include the decision to hold a national inquiry into the need for Human Rights protection with the recent findings announced showing strong support for a Human Rights Act. The apology to our first people was a turning point of Hope but again with expectation not satisfied at this stage.

For the future we are armed with an amazing resource- educated young people! Now more than ever before we have young people coming through high schools and universities with a broad knowledge and desire for positive change. Coupled with generations who have lived through the Second World War, the Vietnam War, the Cold war and the gulf wars this is a powerful mix!

