

## **Just Peace AGM report 2016**

### **Introduction**

Today we meet for the 15<sup>th</sup> Just Peace AGM in this great place Magda Artz on aboriginal land. We pay our respects to the Turrbal people and to their elders past present and future.

The attack on the US in 2001 led to an emergence of energy to make war AND to promote peace and work for an end to all wars. Just Peace developed in Brisbane and similarly other groups around Australia and internationally became more active.

The massive public opposition to the manufactured illegal war on Iraq in 2003 was an indication of how mature the public was, regarding who benefits from making war and the consequences with an estimated 1M people on the streets around Australia in February 2003.

What a blow it was to all when the community was dismissed and abused by then PM John Howard by committing Australian troops to wage war in Iraq. Since then the lid is off Pandora's Box and so many countries have experienced war and the breakdown of civilisation with so many ordinary people dead injured displaced devastated. Just Peace works with Australians for War Powers Reform in the hope we can bring parliamentary changes to the decision making required to send our young men and women to war.

With the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and Ukraine and rising tensions in the South China Sea the need for a shift in our foreign policy is urgent. There would be no victors in another world war.

Over the past year Just Peace has continued to be very active locally and nationally through our role in IPAN UNAAQ APAN and internationally through the International Peace Bureau.

### **Membership**

As a result of the consistent activity for justice and peace our membership has remained steady at just below 100.

The incoming committee faces the dual challenges of maintaining membership and engagement to achieve our goals.

### **Finances**

With the reliable and efficient work of Treasurer Beth Gordon our finances remain sound. Beth will provide a report following this. Acknowledgement is made to those who have made donations to Just Peace and to IPAN. I would particularly like to recognise the support given to campaigns from the Union of Australian Women.

### **Focus sub-groups**

Committed and active engagement in specific areas of concern and interest for members is encouraged. We have maintained activity in the following areas and organisations

- Australian Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN)

- United Nations Assn Qld. (UNAAQ)
- Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN)
- International Peace Bureau (IPB)

## **IPAN**

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) was formed in 2012 following the Australian government agreement to host a semi-permanent base of US Marines in Darwin. This coming about at the time of the US pivot to Asia and increasing US anxiety about the rise of China meant Australia was effectively declaring support for continued US supremacy in the Asia Pacific at a cost to our sovereignty and a risk of involvement in a war with China.

Just Peace is a founding member of IPAN and together with now over 35 other organisations has firmly established the national peace network.

In September/October this year we held our 3<sup>rd</sup> national conference in Alice Springs in order to highlight the 5 decades Pine Gap has been operating as a military intelligence and arms control facility under the control of the US.

During the past year Just Peace has seized opportunities to engage various local organisations in the work of IPAN. This has included speaking engagements with the Qld Council of Unions, the Sunshine Coast Labor Party branch, St Marys in Exile, and the xxx

In Brisbane IPAN have affiliations from St Marys in Exile, the ETU, Ecumenical Social Justice Group western suburbs Qld, Quakers, Union of Australian Women, Year for Peace Sandgate.

At the recent AGM of IPAN Annette Brownlie and Janine Quine from the Sandgate Year for Peace group were elected as the 2 representatives from Qld. The coordinating committee meet each month nationally by teleconference to organise around key events, media releases, planning and the annual conference.

Next year the conference will be held in Melbourne where it will have the opportunity to reach many more people and organisations. There is even a suggestion to invite Jeremy Corbyn as the key note speaker.

A weekend strategy planning meeting is forecast to take place in Sydney early next year. With the threat of world war rising, it is vital that we as part of the peace movement in Just Peace and through the national network are working to our maximum efficiency.

## **APAN**

Since the beginning of Just Peace we have had a commitment to working on the historic injustice being metered out to the Palestinian people. We have been very fortunate to work with APAN to effect a significant change in public opinion over Israeli policies and terrible aggression towards the people in Gaza and the West Bank of Palestine. Vikki Henry is the convenor of the Just Peace sub group ***Just Peace for Palestine***. Vikki travelled to Palestine early in the year on a tour organised by APAN. Vikki has already presented talks and slides on her experiences there and is open to further invitations. Our very valued and loved member Margot Salom will be sorely missed from our pro Palestine activity.

Vale Margot,

Margot Salom, a past committee member of the United Nations Association Australia Qld Branch, Just Peace and WILPF, passed away in October. Margot worked as a social worker in her earlier years, which laid the ground for her strong commitment to human rights. She graduated with a Master of Philosophy in the field of Sociology in 2006 at the age of 73. One important aspect of Margot's writing and activism in the last third of her life related to her Jewish heritage, writing extensively on the migratory history of her Jewish forebears, and participating in Jewish anti-Zionist activism. Margot spoke publicly supporting Palestinian human rights and self-determination. She dreamed of a time when the people of Palestine and Israel would establish a working partnership for a safe, just and peaceful future.

## **UNAA**

The international Day of Peace Resolution passed in 2000 declared the 21<sup>st</sup> September to be a day to call for cessation of hostilities in theatres of war and community efforts to work on building a culture of peace.

For the past 5 years Just Peace through its membership of the United Nations Association of Australia Qld branch has marked the day with the Brisbane Peace Lecture held at St John's Cathedral. This event is strongly supported by the Dean of St Johns, Dr Peter Catt, Griffith University, UQ and WILPF.

In 2015 former leader of the Australian Greens Bob Brown drew a huge crowd to deliver an address where he used much of Pope Frances's encyclical on Climate Change to emphasise how closely environmental security is tied to the need to end wars and militarism. This year Dr Debbie Kilroy from *Sisters Inside* gave an impassioned speech on the raw ongoing injustice of the incarceration of aboriginal people in particular. Debbie has a dream that one day there will be a justice system not based on incarceration.

Annette Brownlie and Vikki Henry are the Just Peace representatives on the UNAAQ committee. Working in the UNAAQ provides us with the opportunity to network with diverse community organisation representatives from the CWA to Universities. Donell Davis is the new president and has a strong history of working in the environment arena. Clem Campbell is now the immediate past President and remains very active. Clem has a passion for working with young people and currently is active around the UN Global Schools campaign. Virginia Balmain must be credited with re-energising the organisation through her presidency over x years.

Activities that are organised by the UNAAQ include the UN Peacekeepers Day in May and the International Day of Peace on the 21<sup>st</sup> September, Annual Community Awards, plus recognition of numerous UN declared days eg Human Rights Day on the 12<sup>th</sup> December.

## **International Peace Bureau (IPB)**

The IPB was founded in 1891/92 and is the oldest existing international peace network. It counts more than 300 member organisations in over 70 countries with Just Peace joining in 2015. Our involvement stems from the campaign initiated by IPB 5 years ago, the Global Day of Action on

Military Spending in April each year is timed to mark the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute annual report on countries military spending.

We have worked on this campaign for the past 5 years. Our graphic artist and Secretary Mike Henry providing the expertise to produce informative and attractive brochures handed out at speak-outs in the city.

Just Peace was represented at the IPB World Congress in October this year by long term committee member Ross Gwyther who delivered a paper and ran a workshop on the Australian Peace movement specifically IPAN.

### **Communications**

Editor Adrian Pollock continues to produce a high quality newsletter *The Peace Issue*. Our thanks are extended to Adrian for this valuable contribution to maintaining communication with our members and friends. It would not have been possible to print the now 51 editions of The Peace Issue without the support and practical physical assistance provided by our valued member Senator Claire Moore and her committed team.

On behalf of Just Peace members we say a big thankyou to Claire and all of her team.

Periodic letters and notices and postings on Just Peace Facebook page assist in communication with members and the broader community.

### **Activity recorded in the Peace Issue during 2014-2015**

- Just Peace 4 Palestine stalls each month with petitions in Queen St Mall
- Supporting IPAN petition to cancel the Joint strike fighter jet F35
- Co-organising the 2014 Brisbane Peace Lecture with Prof Larissa Behrendt as keynote speaker
- Establishment of Just Peace Facebook page
- Brisbane IPAN affiliate groups met at the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission to plan joint activity in the coming year.
- Meeting with Qld Council of Unions General Secretary Ron Monaghan to discuss opportunities to work together
- Meeting with RAC to plan joint organising of Palm Sunday 2015
- Public meeting with visiting US peace activist Sarah Thompson and Peter Arndt speaking about their recent fact finding tour of West Papua
- Palm Sunday Rally 2015 jointly organised with RAC
- Public screening of Waging War a documentary by David Bradbury
- Global Day of Action on Military Spending action in the city
- Anzac Eve peace vigil and commemoration of the Frontier wars at Emma Miller Place with a march to the cenotaph in Anzac Square
- Planning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> IPAN national conference in Brisbane in July where 100 people attended.
- Meetings with political representatives Senator Claire Moore and Terri Butler Griffith MP

## The Year Ahead

The incoming committee of management will face another year where wars in the Middle East and North Africa continue. The complexity of these horrific wars hugely influenced by the US Australia and the UK waging war on Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in 2001, challenges good people in peace movements around the world. Trying to identify the various military forces in Syria is like trying to identify the individual components of a soup. We read and hear so many opinions and analyses of who is most at fault as the killing and suffering of people on the ground pans out. However western governments around the world continue to present through the mainstream media a perspective on Syria and other war torn countries that paints the West as simply fighting against evil forces including the elected government of the country.

Our thanks are extended to the outgoing committee with note that Willy Bach will not be re-standing due being out of the country for the next 12 months. Willy and partner Rowan will be living in the UK. Best wishes for a safe and enjoyable time. Linda and Enda Bracken have let us know they unable to continue on the committee due to personal circumstances. ..again we wish them well and thank both for significant contributions over the year.

With new committee members and the support of our membership we hope that through our work we might play a role in calling for an end to current and future wars.

It is with sadness we received Norm Bullen's resignation from the Just Peace committee. Norm has contributed in so many important ways to the development of Just Peace from our inception in 2001. The setting up of our structures, financial, incorporation, and in policy development has been invaluable. Norm initially our treasurer and then a Convenor with me, I can honestly say we may not have been here at our 15<sup>th</sup> AGM without you.

Just Peace has achieved respect within the Brisbane community for the work we do and much of that is due to your diligence and attention to well thought out processes.

Yours in Friendship and Peace

Annette Brownlie

Convenor

Just Peace Qld Inc.

13/11/2016