

CO CONVENOR REPORT JUST PEACE September 2005

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4 years have passed since the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks in NY. Those of us here today who realized the likely political developments following the events of that day and saw the need for a community based non aligned peace and justice organization, created JustPeace. Many people have worked very hard over that time to meet the aims and objectives decided on in our formative months.

In our opinion JustPeace has established itself as a reputable organization capable of carrying through decision making to action, with significant abilities to work with a wide range of other organizations and individuals on issues relating to peace and justice.

This is an organization which has the potential for influence over the long term.

Over the past 12 months our activities have included:

- On going JustPeace Education project- in 2004 saw the culmination of working with teachers and children from schools in Brisbane at an expo day at the Power House- wonderful displays and a great effort and result from those in the education committee.
- Publications group have discussed and produced leaflets on Australian Foreign policy, on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Nuclear non-proliferation treaty.
- Bi monthly forums on Palestine/ Israel, The Free Trade Agreement, Iran and the rising Neo Con's influence, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, plus a film screening of David Bradbury's film Blowin' in the Wind, focusing on the use of DU and the Australian American Alliance.
- Pre-election activities were undertaken by some in JustPeace following on from the Australia at the Crossroads- Time for Change meeting in August last year.
- Just Peace stalls, distributing T Shirts, stickers, key rings and badges, and approximately 5000 copies of our leaflet publications were held at Rally for Peace, The Brisbane Social Forum, a Folk Festival at Woolloongabba, Hiroshima Day, and the West End Street Festival.
- Sessions at the Woodford Festival on Peace and War
- The 2004 International Day of Peace observing resolution 55/282 was marked by a ceremony in a suburban park with contributions from Actors for Refugees and the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict.
- Hosting of Peace activists from Japan
- A public meeting hosting UK writer Tariq Ali with 500 people in attendance. Following this successful national tour, a national group has been established (Global Justice Tours), which is aimed at supporting national speaking tours of well known speakers. We have provided provisional support to this plan.
- Another 6 issues of The Peace Issue our newsletter
- After considerable discussion and debate, we have launched a new Just Peace website, with the assistance of Scott Hamilton. It is based on a blogsite, with the capacity for members and the public to play an active part in posting discussion and articles. It also will enable rapid and reliable emailing of steering committee, members and friends when necessary.
- We provided assistance to the Aspley Special School fundraising project for an East Timorese school, by running a campaign to collect spare 5c pieces. WE also supported students from the QUT in an activity to hang a large No War banner from the Kangaroo Pt cliffs in October 2004.
- Just Peace has continued its close involvement in the Qld Peace Network, with our Co-Convenor Annette active on the Steering Committee of QPN.
- Workshops have been held on the proposed "Imagine a world without War" project, on Just Peace aims and objectives, and on future directions and priorities for Just Peace in 2005, particularly with the assistance of Christine James. Following considerable discussion at some of these workshops, the Aims of Just Peace were updated from those originally adopted in November 2001.

- Letters have been sent to
 - The Qld Premier protesting that a Qld company (Cavalier Homes) is selling housing in the occupied territories in Palestine, and that Qld is hosting a US base at Shoalwater bay, and the dangers of DU usage there.
 - The Lord Mayor advocating continuation of Brisbane's nuclear free zone status, advocating that the Lord Mayor remain a member of the Mayors for Peace organisation, and protesting that the BCC has ceased its support for the Brisbane Ideas Festival
 - Kevin Rudd advocating that Australia's foreign policy should include support for East Timor in the dispute over the Timor Sea boundary
 - The Australian Prime Minister advocating more recognition of the International Day of Peace.
- Just Peace representatives have attended:
 - A Social Justice conference in September 2004
 - A meeting of the Sunshine Coast Environment council in September 2004
 - A Peace conference convened by the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies attended by 200 international delegates.
 - The Warwick Peace Festival
 - A Forum on peace and Justice conducted by Amnesty International at Indooroopilly SHS
 - A Celebration of the 60th anniversary of the UN, hosted by the Lord Mayor
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Evidently there has been plenty of activity!

JustPeace membership has been consistently maintained at around 200 people, with another 400 people providing their contact details as "friends of Just Peace" at our various public functions and events. This indicates a real need in the wider community for an organisation addressing the issues of war and peace.

However we find ourselves in a time of decreased empowerment. This is being experienced by most of the progressive organizations and certainly is historically predictable. Factors which have contributed to the low we are experiencing are the complete disregard by the Australian Government of the massive public opposition in February 2003 to the invasion of Iraq, and a widespread dependency following the re-election of the current government.

Coupled with a political atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity, the very conservative political agenda of the current government, no real alternative political leadership from the Labor Party and the absence of honest informative media reporting on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the prospects for mass popular dissent are currently very low.

The continued military involvement of the United States in the Middle East, and the continued public campaigns by US authorities against countries such as Syria, Iran, North Korea, China or Venezuela, suggest that the world situation could change for the worse very rapidly. Disputes over critical resources such as oil and water will only intensify in the coming years, as will the contention between the competing world powers of the US, Europe, Japan, and the rising powers such as India and China.

So the possibilities for JustPeace remaining an effective community group raising awareness, providing a voice for peace, against war, are at the same time challenging...and yet vital! This is a time for us to continue the work of maintaining and gradually building an organisation that has been an important part of the political life of Brisbane.