

Co-Convenors report – our Past Activities

Ross Gwyther & Annette Brownlie. August 2003

Just Peace was initiated in late 2001 to give a voice to people in the community who were concerned over the policy and actions of the so-called “war on terror”.

The organization has now grown to about 160 members, with some 400 other people expressing interest in being informed of our activities..

The overall aims of the organization, as determined after protracted discussions in early 2002, are threefold, namely to raise awareness of the causes of conflict, to promote alternatives to war, and to work for a socially just and peaceful world.

The basic philosophy of the organization is to build a broad movement, to work in the wider community, rather than just within the “progressive” or “peace” movements. Thus our focus has been on involvement in trade unions, church organizations, and other community activities.

While we have carried out wide range of activities, one of the main strengths of the group has been to have a very active and enthusiastic steering committee of 15-20 people who met regularly to plan out campaigns. This group has been very diverse in political and social views, and has been open to anyone expressing interest in it. By working together, resolving our differences in a non-antagonistic manner, and socializing as well as working (eg with shared meals), the steering committee has developed a very valuable and enthusing camaraderie.

We acknowledge the ongoing time and energy which many people in the organization have contributed, to help further our aims. This work has enabled us to carry out an impressive array of activities over the past year, as summarized below:

We have run small public info evenings, often assisted by other organisations, eg

- Rhythm of peace with Malcolm Prowse (with UNAA)
- Israeli Refusenik Rotem dan Mor and Phillipine attorney Neri Colemares (with AJACS)
- Ross Daniels from QUT, on “What we haven’t been told about the War on Iraq”
- Bill Sulzman, US peace activist, on “Star Wars and the Militarisation of Space”
- Palestine /Israel situation Kathy Kelly and Avigael Abarbanel (with AJACS & Greens)
- Phillipines and war on terror with Satur Ocampo (with PISO, AJACS and Greens)
- Depleted Uranium with Pauline Rigby
- Act of Declaring War (Brian Hallett – with B.L.H.A)

We have worked to run large public meetings in the City Hall

- Language of War and the Media (Just Peace)
- Doug Rokke on depleted uranium (Just Peace and DUSK)
- Beyond Iraq: a New Era of Permanent War (as part of QPN)

We have assisted other organizations and participated in their events

- Logan Concerned Citizens for Peace group (lead up to Iraq War)
- UN Day in October 24, 2002, including wreath laying in Anzac Square.
- Palm Sunday rally for peace, and Hiroshima Day activities.
- Soka Gokkai Peace forum
- Ruth Russell (human shield from Iraq) speaking for WILPF
- Kobe prefecture in Japan in campaign against nuc weapons
- Griffith Eco-Centre peace fair
- Peace and Environment symposium at Griffith University.
- Brisbane Peace embassy during the Iraq War
- Brisbane Social Forum
- St Josephs Primary school fete

We have organised other activities such as

- Fact sheet production (May Day "*war on terror or war on workers*", "*Why we oppose the War on Iraq*")
- Regular newsletters
- Resource materials such as T-shirts, badges, key rings for distrib at public events
- Education group, with plans for visiting and working with schools
- Sending over 100 letters to the UN and relevant ambassadors asking for a veto of US plans for invasion
- A workshop on building the movement with Bob Dick

We have talked at meetings of other organizations, eg

- Trade Union meetings (TWU)
- Church groups (Uniting & Catholic Church)
- ALP branch meetings
- Talked to politicians (Clair Moore and Kevin Rudd)

We initiated the September 11 Coalition for Peace & Justice in 2002, which brought together over twenty different organizations to arrange a public celebration of arts for peace in the City Square ("*Our grief is not a cry for War*"), a large public meeting in the City Hall, entitled "*Questioning the War on Terror*", and participated in the Brisbane Festival event "*War Requiem*"

We have assisted in the rallies which helped to build public opposition to the Iraq war in November 2002, and the truly massive Feb 15th rally, as well as the March rally when the war was declared.

We have liased closely with Victorian Peace Network, and played a central part in both the establishment and ongoing development of the Qld Peace Network.

In a period in which public interest in the foreign military activities of the Australian government has waxed and waned hugely, Justpeace has provided a stable and growing voice for those seeking an alternative path.

We should all feel justly proud of the part we have played in contemporary Australian history, while at the same time realizing that there are still many struggles ahead of us. The other part of this report will deal with our future plans.