

National Newsletter



Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia)

Autumn 2012

From the President: Control the arms trade

Dr Jenny Grounds

“I am . . . fed up with mopping the floors while the taps are running.”

Dr Bob Mtonga, IPPNW Co-President, commenting on his experiences dealing with victims of armed violence in Zambia.

THANKS to all who have continued to be active supporters of MAPW's work, and those who have joined or rejoined recently. It has a very busy time for us and we need our members more than ever.

A very important focus this year is building support for the (conventional) **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)** which will cover the legal arms trade.

The idea for an Arms Trade Treaty originated with Nobel Peace Laureates, supported by civil society organisations. In 2003, the Control Arms Campaign was launched and has since gathered support for an ATT from people world wide. IPPNW has joined Control Arms through our own *Aiming for Prevention Campaign*.

In 2006, Control Arms presented a global petition, *Million Faces*, to then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. In December that year, 153 governments finally voted at the UN to start work on developing a global arms trade treaty.

Momentum has continued to build. In 2009 the UN General Assembly established a time frame for the treaty's negotiation, including several preparatory meetings (PrepComs) leading up to this year's final



MAPW supported March events marking the anniversary of Japan's nuclear power disaster

negotiating conference in July. At the February PrepCom, in New York, the IPPNW *Aiming for Prevention* team coordinated by Maria Valenti, and colleagues from the Control Arms Coalition, had strong input.

Our petition *Medical Alert for a Strong ATT*, currently circulating among health professionals, will be presented at the July conference.

It calls for a humanitarian-focused, legally binding instrument which monitors and regulates the movement of all conventional arms on the planet.

MAPW is sending a request for signatures to medical colleges and organisations. Please sign it yourselves as individuals, and if you have links to such an organisation please let us know and make contact.

The Pacific Small Arms Action Group coordinated by Oxfam, has produced a statement outlining the particular concerns of small island nations which suffer high levels of gun violence. These

island states are often also used as a base for small arms brokering. Carole Wigg has represented MAPW in this forum.

The Australian Government has strongly supported the ATT. However a 2007 agreement between the US and Australia, similar to an existing agreement between the US and Canada, would allow military exports between the two countries without the usual documentation process. This obviously undermines the principle of transparency that is central to the ATT. We have made submissions to the Government, raising our concerns that related legislation is being fast-tracked before the ATT comes into force.

- Sign the petition at ippnw.org

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AROUND THE BRANCHES



Clockwise, from top: Dr Jenny Grounds raffles a donated bottle of wine (for \$110) at the well-attended Victorian musical afternoon fundraiser in March; an even larger crowd hears Professor Marilyn Lake speak on the militarisation of Australian history, at the ACT Branch dinner in February; and South Australian members at a less formal Adelaide gathering.

REPORT FROM TASMANIA

Dr Sally Attrill, Branch Secretary

On Thursday 8 March, Gerry McGushin, MAPW Branch Coordinator, spoke at a one-year-post-Fukushima rally held on Parliament lawns Hobart. Also speaking was Cassy O'Connor, Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Greens in Tasmania. Gerry reiterated MAPW's opposition to nuclear energy on the basis that it is too dangerous, with the catastrophe at Fukushima clearly illustrating the folly of nuclear power plants.

Our Branch had a table at the University of Tasmania's Uni O-week where many students signed up to receive MAPW's Peace e-Script (see below if you don't receive it.)

The Branch continues to hold well-attended lunchtime meetings on the first Monday of each month.

Update on Sri Lanka

By Dr Carole Wigg, MAPW Secretary

Dr Bobby Sundaralingam, a member in Melbourne, has sent us an update on the situation in Sri Lanka. He has been working hard for a peaceful outcome in his home country for many years and has spoken to us at National Council.

The civil war in Sri Lanka ran from 1985 to 2002 but there were recurrences of hostilities until May 2009 when the Sri Lankan government formally declared an end to the civil war after the army had taken control of the entire island and had killed the leader of the Tamil Tigers.

Since then there have been attempts at reconciliation. The Sri Lankan government has been conducting its own enquiry into the conduct of the war but has refused to allow an independent inquiry. In December last year they published a report entitled "Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission." International observers have questioned their findings. A UN report in April 2011 said: "The conduct of the war by both sides represented a grave assault on the entire regime of international law designed to protect

individual dignity during both war and peace. The victory of one side has emboldened some to believe that these rules may now be disregarded in the cause of fighting terrorism."

In October last year Jenny Grounds wrote to the Prime Minister on our behalf on the eve of the CHOGM meeting in Perth. She urged the PM to demand that the Sri Lankan government immediately allow for an independent and transparent inquiry. Ms Gillard merely urged the Sri Lankan PM to deal with the allegations.

Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu, as members of the Elders Group, have recently drawn attention to the upcoming inquiry by the UN Human Rights Council. Apart from the importance of this for a peaceful future for Sri Lanka they draw attention to the

importance of their work for all of us. They say "Finally we want to emphasise that Sri Lanka's recent history is an issue that concerns all of us"

Whether or not the Human Rights Council is able to summon the will to act on one of the most serious cases of human rights violations to have occurred since it was founded in 2006 could have ramifications for the global standing of human rights and international humanitarian law – and for the prestige and authority of the council."

As an association that hopes to prevent war we should be keenly interested in the outcome.

See: Desmond Tutu and Mary Robinson – Guardian, 26 February; International Crisis Group blog; for more references enter *Sri Lanka* into "search" at www.mapw.org.au

Don't miss your fortnightly Peace e-Script

MAPW members and supporters receive a fortnightly news update from our national office. Peace e-Script summarises and links you to major news stories from mainstream and lesser-known sources on our areas of interest: nuclear weapons abolition, war and conflict, and the nuclear industry. If we don't have your current email address send it now, to nancy.atkin@mapw.org.au

Australia's goal: no nuclear weapons!



By Tim Wright, ICAN Campaign director

On 21 March in the Australian parliament, in a rare show of bipartisan agreement, both the Labor Party and Coalition affirmed their “support for the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons”.

This important step comes just two months after ICAN launched a major appeal the Prime Minister urging action for a nuclear weapons ban.

More than 700 recipients of the Order of Australia signed on, including former Prime Ministers, governors-general, and chiefs of the army, navy and air force, as well as some of the nation's most celebrated actors, artists and authors.

The appeal specifically aimed to raise cross-party support for the kind of parliamentary motion that was passed this week. The motion calls for the “exploration of legal frameworks for the abolition of nuclear weapons, including the possibility of a nuclear weapons convention.”

Obviously we would have liked the motion to go further and commit Australia to immediately supporting international calls for such a treaty. But, as it stands, the motion is a huge step that would not have come about with your ongoing support of ICAN.

A study released this month by ICAN shows that three in four governments now support a treaty to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons. It is time for Australia to join them. That goal now seems closer than ever.

ICAN GROWS

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons was launched by MAPW and colleagues in early 2007. ICAN is now playing a key role in working towards abolition of nuclear weapons in Australia and, increasingly, internationally.

An exciting development in January was the opening of six ICAN hubs in Lebanon, Turkey, Bahrain, Egypt, Syria and Israel and the appointment of six Regional Coordinators to promote and strengthen the call for nuclear abolition in the Middle East.

By raising awareness on the continuing humanitarian, environmental and security dangers, ICAN aims to mobilise Middle Eastern governments and the public, to pursue practical and effective ways to achieve a ban on nuclear weapons.

ICAN: www.icanw.org

ICAN Australia: www.icanw.org.au

Global ICAN study reveals who's financing nuclear arms makers

A ground breaking ICAN report identifies more than 300 banks, pension funds, insurance companies and asset managers in 30 countries with substantial investments in nuclear arms producers. The 180-page study, *Don't Bank on the Bomb: The Global Financing of Nuclear Weapons Producers*, provides details of financial transactions with 20 companies that are heavily involved in the manufacture, maintenance and modernisation of US, British, French and Indian nuclear forces.

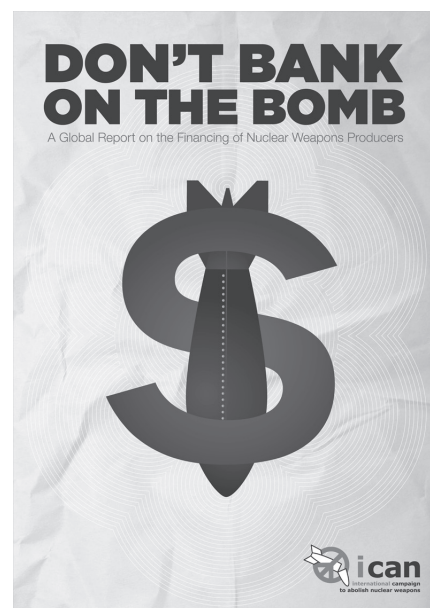
Australia's ICAN campaign director Tim Wright co-authored the report. He says that any use of nuclear weapons would violate international law and have catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

“By investing in nuclear weapons producers, financial institutions are in effect facilitating the build-up of nuclear forces. This undermines efforts to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world and heightens the risk that one day these ultimate weapons of mass destruction will be used again,”

South African Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu wrote the foreword, noting that divestment was a vital part of the successful campaign to end apartheid in South Africa. “Today, the same tactic can – and must – be employed to challenge man's most evil creation: the nuclear bomb. No one should be profiting from this terrible industry of death, which threatens us all,” he wrote.

Nuclear-armed nations spend in excess of US\$100 billion each year maintaining and modernising their nuclear forces, according to the report.

Five Australian financial institutions have significant bond or share holdings in nuclear weapons producers, or provided them with loans between July 2008 and December 2011. ANZ is the most heavily involved in financing nuclear weapons producers, with Commonwealth, Macquarie, Westpac and Platinum Investment Management also listed. Read more at: www.dontbankonthebomb.com



MAPW CAMPAIGNS

Questioning militarism

MAPW is producing eight new short papers on Australian militarism, in a joint project with the Sydney Peace Foundation funded through our tax-deductible MAPW Peace Fund. The series aims to provide a snapshot of the future Australia is helping create, and to raise questions for further consideration and research (in particular by students).

The first paper, written by historian Professor Marilyn Lake, discussed the militarisation of Australian history. Next out will be Dr Jenny Grounds' paper on the health effects of war and conflict, and those in the pipeline include the topical issue of Australia's military alliances, and an analysis of our military industry.

All papers will be available at www.mapw.org.au. Members who don't have internet access should contact MAPW to request copies. Please spread the word among students and teachers!

GET ACTIVE

VISIT A POLITICIAN!

It's a good time to visit your local Federal Politician as Parliament does not sit again until early May.

WRITE A LETTER

Email MAPW to join our letter-writers list and receive briefings on recent topics. Send us your letters, and we can circulate them further. Letters pages are widely read. Consider a letter for Global Military Spending Day - check the SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) website for facts.

SIGN A PETITION

Promote and sign the *Medical Alert for a Strong ATT (Arms Trade Treaty)* at <http://ippnw.org>

News briefs

FUKUSHIMA ANNIVERSARY

On Sunday 11 March rallies were held throughout Australia to commemorate the first anniversary of the disaster at Fukushima. MAPW members Drs Margaret Beavis - at right - and Bill Williams spoke at the Melbourne rally. Videos of Melbourne and Sydney events, including these speeches, are available through the news story at www.mapw.org.au



NUCLEAR WASTE

MAPW continues to inform the community on the issue of the disposal of hazardous radioactive waste. We have prepared fact sheets to clarify the Muckaty waste dump proposal. Legislation enabling Muckaty to go ahead recently passed Parliament after a lengthy campaign. However it could be overridden if Traditional Owners succeed in court proceedings, where they have just won the right to proceed, and gained access to key documents.

MAPW has reviewed and republished our nuclear waste policy (available on our website). MAPW's Dr Peter Karamoskos has spoken and written extensively on this topic - including on 21 March, on the ABC's 7.30 report (check the video online).

We have played an important role in explaining that Muckaty is not needed for nuclear medicine waste; and that hazardous intermediate level waste will be stored in a building: not a long-term disposal solution.

MAPW NATIONAL COUNCIL

PRESIDENT Dr Jenny Grounds
SECRETARY Dr Carole Wigg
TREASURER Dr Peter Karamoskos
BRANCH COORDINATORS
ACT Dr Sue Wareham*; **Qld** Dr Daniele Viliunas*; **NSW** Dr Anne Noonan* and Ms Lynn Saville;
NT Dr Tom Keaney; **Tas** Dr Gerry McGushin; **Vic** Dr Margaret Beavis*;
WA Prof Peter Underwood*
IPPNW COUNCILLOR
 Dr Bill Williams * *Vice Presidents*

Diary dates

- ◀ Around Australia
MAPW MONTHLY MEETINGS
 Regular times include Hobart first Monday lunchtime; and Melbourne, second Tuesday evening.
 - ◀ 17 April, everywhere
GLOBAL MILITARY SPENDING DAY
 Focusing on increased military budgets
 - ◀ 2 June, everywhere
NUCLEAR ABOLITION DAY
 Check for ICAN activities or consult them about organising your own!
 - ◀ 19 June, Melbourne
MORE US BASES IN AUSTRALIA
 Public meeting and launch of new MAPW paper on military alliances.
 - ◀ July, New York
ARMS TRADE TREATY
 Negotiation of the new Treaty, preceded by a global week of action
 - ◀ 6-9 August, around Australia
HIROSHIMA -NAGASAKI DAYS
 Anniversaries of the atomic bombing of Japan in August 1945
 - ◀ 22-29 August, Hiroshima
IPPNW BIENNIAL CONGRESS
 Learn about current issues, and meet IPPNW colleagues around the world, in historic Hiroshima.
 - 21 September, everywhere
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE
 Consider an activity, or write a letter.
- DETAILS AND MUCH MORE:**
www.mapw.org.au