



From the President: Reflections on Hiroshima

Dr Jenny Grounds

Hot and humid Hiroshima was the setting for the biennial IPPNW Congress in August. A dozen MAPW and ICAN people, some accompanied by children and grand-children, represented Australia. For those of us on our first visit to Hiroshima, it was a pilgrimage to the place where the first atomic bomb was used.

The determination to test the powerful new weapon on a whole city of people now seems totally inhumane to us, evidence of the addictive nature of power and particularly of destructive power – but I was reminded that even back then many scientific and political advisors opposed its use.

It was very moving to see Hiroshima as it has recovered and rebuilt itself as a City of Peace, and to visit the Peace Museum next to our conference venue in the Peace Park. Here the whole story is told in painstaking words, disturbing pictures and poignant displays of artefacts. One is transported back to the time of the flash, blast, fire and radiation which utterly overwhelmed the people of Hiroshima and their homes, schools, businesses, hospitals, water supply, food supplies — leaving a charred landscape and huge number of deaths and dreadful suffering. Just across the river stands the A-Bomb Dome, now a shrine to the survivors.

An ICAN international meeting kicked off the week, ably presented by its leaders from around the world including Australian staff Tim Wright and James Norman, with Tilman Ruff; Rebecca Johnson and Akiwa Kawasaki as chair and co chairs.



Jenny Grounds on Hiroshima's Peace Boulevard.
"Ground Zero" and the A-Bomb Dome behind

The mood was of optimism and determination to push on towards a non-nuclear world via a nuclear weapons abolition treaty, as well as opposing uranium mining and nuclear power.

There is a renewed push for a **Nuclear Free Zone in the Middle East**, through the enthusiastic Middle Eastern ICAN staff and a December 2012 conference in Helsinki. ICAN welcomed the important commitment of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The Norwegian Government will sponsor a conference on the **humanitarian dimension of nuclear weapons use** for major players and governments, in Norway in March 2013. We should all ask our government whether they will attend this meeting, and what emergency response and recovery plans they have

for a nuclear attack on our cities or military installations.

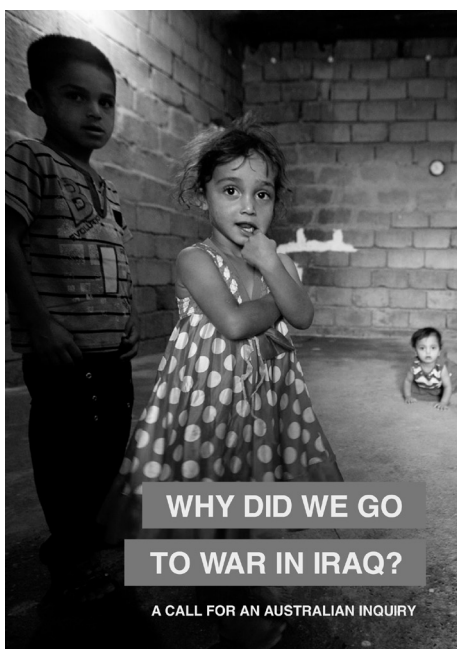
We heard from Project Now, a Hiroshima-based art project calling for nuclear weapons to be abolished (www.p-now.com).

We launched *A Thousand Paper Cranes*: Hiroshima school students will send 1000 paper cranes to every world leader, asking for a message supporting a global ban on nuclear weapons. Other notable reports included *Don't Bank on the Bomb* – how to disinvest from the nuclear industry, written by Tim Wright; and Ira Helfand's IPPNW report *Nuclear Famine: A billion people at risk*, reviewed in our last edition.

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MAPW played a key role in bringing together the newly established Iraq War Inquiry Group, which consists of prominent Australians from diverse backgrounds who are concerned that

MAPW pushes for Iraq inquiry

there has been little informed public discussion of the lessons to be learned from the decisions that took us to war in 2003.

The 16 September launch called for an independent inquiry into the reasons behind Australia's participation in the invasion and a review of the war powers of the government, to draw lessons for the future.

The case for an inquiry is set out in detail in a 84-page booklet.

MAPW's Dr Sue Wareham, one of the major organisers, wrote the chapter on health with our President Jenny Grounds. They review the 2002 predictions of a humanitarian disaster, and the war's health impacts as known now. ACT Branch member Michelle Fahy ably assisted with media liaison.

Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser has supported this initiative and wrote the booklet's foreword, posing many questions and suggesting that an inquiry could look at the role of parliament in authorising armed force to be used abroad.

Help this important campaign. Sign the petition at this website, and send the link to your friends:

<http://iraqwarinquiry.org.au>

Ask us to post you a copy of:

- *Why did we go to war in Iraq?*
- IPPNW's study: *Nuclear Famine: A billion people at risk*

We can also send bookmarks, stickers or membership forms to distribute.

Call Monday-Thursday: 03 9023 1958

Arms Trade Treaty: keep up the pressure

Four long weeks of negotiations for an Arms Trade Treaty at the UN in July failed to produce agreement, after the US and others blocked the treaty during the last week.

The treaty proposal now remains in limbo. It could be considered at the UN General Assembly in coming weeks, or a further UN conference could be sought. If a conference happens, a

key question will be whether it operates on majority vote, or by consensus as in July. Consensus runs the risks of failing again, or of weakening the treaty.

Treaty text drafted at the end of the July negotiations provides a basis for states to build on. Campaigners are hoping that loopholes in the current draft can be removed in a final document, such as exemption of arms transfers covered by

defence cooperation agreements. Trade in ammunition and weapons parts also needs to be fully covered.

It's essential that our government keeps being reminded that citizens support a strong and effective treaty. We'll keep you posted with developments.

- This is an important issue to raise with your local parliamentarian.

Medical students listen to Dr Jenny Grounds (perched at left) explain the links between peace and health, at the 2012 Global Health Conference in Cairns on 19 September.

Among those standing at the back are Cairns members Dr David Bradford and Dr Quentin Reilly, who helped staff the MAPW information stall and introduced many interested students to the work of MAPW. We also gave out yellow cake for morning tea, our now-traditional good-taste pun.



Fukushima: contamination and hope

Dr Peter Karamoskos

It is not what I had expected. Fukushima prefecture has some of the most stunning and beautiful countryside I have seen. Rolling, heavily wooded steep hills, dense vegetation and dark rich fertile soil in the valleys below.

More than a year on from the Japanese tsunami, which claimed an estimated 19,000 lives and caused the Fukushima nuclear disaster, I visited the nuclear zone as a medical practitioner to hear the testimony of the local people whose lives had been irrevocably changed.

Evacuation and resettlement: The Kawauchi Village area, home to 3000 people, is largely a farming community, with a third of the area falling in the 20-kilometre mandatory exclusion zone to the east and the remainder in the voluntary exclusion zone. As we drove into the mandatory exclusion zone, it was a ghost town. Vegetation had overgrown many of the dwellings, some of the houses were beginning to appear dilapidated and the paddy fields were occupied by thousands of large bright blue plastic bags containing contaminated soil that had been shipped here from areas attempting decontamination.

We stopped at an emergency housing site established in an asphalted clearing and composed of many small, cramped demountable-style dwellings. Once proud farmers were now welfare recipients with a poky existence and very little to do. Most were elderly. Younger people, particularly those with younger children, had moved to where they were more likely to find work. Others had sent their children to live with relatives away from the risk posed by the radioactive contamination, separating families at a time when the support of an intact family was most needed.

We spoke to an elderly farmer who had lost his farm. He spoke with hope, but despair was written on his face. His greatest fear was that he would spend his final years in this makeshift camp. Farmers in the evacuated zones were required to slaughter their livestock. One farmer in another village was forced to kill 1000 of his cows — and then killed himself. Suicide is unfortunately not uncommon given the degree of psychological trauma engendered by the disaster. Surveys in some of the most affected regions reveal the majority suffering some degree of emotional distress or specific psychological disease.

Transparency and openness are essential to regaining citizens' trust and encouraging them to return. Part of achieving this was being frank about radiation levels. We drove by numerous radiation meters in public areas (*see picture above*) which gave a real-time measure of ambient gamma dose rate (groundshine). It is a confronting experience to see a gamma dose rate meter where one would normally expect to see a statue or fountain, or to see radioactivity levels on fresh produce sold at the market (confirming that it is below the regulated threshold) where prices are normally



It would be wrong to assume that despair pervaded. We visited an elderly organic farming couple who beamed with pride that their farm had been chosen to show foreign experts. He and his wife (*above*) spent much time in explaining the intricacies of gamma dose rates and radioactivity levels in the soil and their crops, yet they had no scientific background. As we stood beside a pond with dozens of ducks he told us of his scheme using ducks to decontaminate his property of radiocesium. How this was meant to work didn't quite add up for us, but it didn't matter: they were on their ancestral farm doing what they loved, and were feeling empowered by regaining some control over their lives. They had hope, vital for any recovery from a major trauma. They had to destroy last November's entire contaminated potato crop, but hoped this November the crop would be suitable for sale.

posted. Progressively, we came to appreciate the importance of continuity of a community in the recovery from a nuclear disaster. Decisions to relocate come with trade-offs that need to be considered in the decision to return.

Informed decisions: At an excess of 10mSv (roughly three times standard background radiation levels in Australia) the approximate risk is one extra cancer per 1000 people. Science can assist by providing an estimate of the risks, but these decisions are beyond the realm of science and only able to be made by an informed populace.

Broken trust: Ultimately, the earthquake and tsunami not only caused physical destruction, but also, through the associated nuclear disaster, ruptured the delicate threads of trust that bind citizens and their elected leaders responsible for their welfare. The government was revealed to be part of the corrupt *nuclear village*, which promoted the nuclear industry's interest at the expense of the public's safety. Trust will only be regained slowly, if at all, and recovery will be commensurately compromised.

The consequences of the nuclear disaster pervade every level of Japanese society and will continue to echo for decades.

Peter Karamoskos is a nuclear radiologist and MAPW's Treasurer. He has written and spoken widely on the health risks of ionising radiation and of the nuclear industry.

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IPPNW students met for two days with energy and commitment. Many, including Queensland's Misha Byrne, had cycled in the heat from Nagasaki over 10 days, spreading the nuclear abolition message along the way. They are planning a delegation to Iran in December, a conference in India in January, and Nuclear Weapons Inheritance projects in the Middle East.



Elected IPPNW Co-President at Hiroshima: MAPW's Tilman Ruff, with IPPNW's Aki Morizono, editor of Vital Signs newsletter which members receive 6-monthly.

The Congress is sandwiched between IPPNW Council and Board meetings. **Tilman Ruff's** work was recognised by his election for a two-year term as one of four Co-Chairs, with Bob Mtonga (Zambia), Vladimir Garkavenko (Russia) and Ira Helfend (USA).

Prominent Japanese and international peace academics, activists and advisors kicked off the Congress proper. Former Hiroshima Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba, now Chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative, inspired us with his optimistic philosophy, appealing to the better angels of human nature to abolish nuclear weapons. Dr Helen Durham, international law advisor to the Australian Red Cross, spoke about Australia's legacy of nuclear testing, and the International Red Cross's new commitment to nuclear weapons abolition.

Abolition of nuclear weapons was naturally, in Hiroshima, the main focus. We heard from doctors treating Hibakusha (survivors); one was inspired by his terrible experience of burns

and the loss of his family at age 11 to become a healer and lifelong peace activist.

The **Arms Trade Treaty** is an IPPNW priority; Bob Mtonga and other African delegates have worked tirelessly for better small arms control to reduce the horrendous levels of morbidity and mortality in many countries. After a month of UN talks in New York (in which time 50,000 people died due to armed violence) the US government, facing pressure from the gun lobby, refused to agree to any more than self regulation. Bob is one of those doing detailed hospital-based research under difficult circumstances to establish levels of arms violence around the world.

IPPNW Germany announced a bike ride and conference in the Black Forest next May, near the home town of gun makers Heckler and Koch, to challenge **arms manufacturers** in developed countries to take responsibility for the effects of their products.

Green Legacy Hiroshima distributes seeds of trees which germinated or re-sprouted from post-bombing devastation. We were astonished to see a Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus Melliodora*) survived to grow at Hiroshima Castle.

There was much discussion and debate on **health effects of radiation**, especially post-Fukushima. Debate continued to a packed Tokyo public symposium organised by IPPNW with other Japanese anti-nuclear and medical groups. The next day 30 people visited Fukushima Prefecture, speaking to community members, doctors and administrators about the difficulties and complexities of their lives in a post nuclear melt down world *(see page 3)*.

Congress is a great opportunity to meet people from other places facing different challenges

MAPW DIARY DATES

◀ Melbourne, 12-14 October
MAPW NATIONAL COUNCIL
Includes seminars and workshops on key campaign issues, and Saturday night dinner. All members welcome.

◀ Melbourne, from 9 October
HIROSHIMA EXHIBITION

◀ Adelaide, 3 November
RED CROSS CONFERENCE
On nuclear weapons, with MAPW and international speakers.

◀ Around Australia
MAPW MONTHLY MEETINGS
Regular times include Hobart first Monday lunchtime; and Melbourne, second Tuesday evening.

DETAILS AND MUCH MORE:

www.mapw.org.au

in maintaining their stand against violence and war. From our region, Balinese student Arta Basuta and young Philippino doctor Michael Gnilo are working hard to mobilise students to activism.

I felt both inspired and somewhat daunted by the Congress experience. As health professionals and antiwar activists we have a very particular and challenging role to play.

Jenny Grounds, President



MAPW Secretary Carole Wigg (right) with ICAN Turkey's coordinator Arife Kose, in front of Hiroshima's A-Bomb Dome