

# A New Political Movement is Launched

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The Rainbow Alliance is an idea that has been in the making for more than two years. Although much has been accomplished, today is only just a beginning.

## The Vision

Our dream is of a society where women, men and children are treated equally; where all can develop their full human potential; where social relationships are based on mutual aid and co-operation rather than acquisitiveness and competition; where all, regardless of age, sex, nationality or background have a direct say in the major political and economic decisions that vitally affect them; where there is a deep respect for nature and life in all its forms; where we are all enriched by the diversity of cultures; where the planet is seen as an interconnected whole; where we feel directly responsible for building a just peaceful and sustainable future. *We have this dream because without it we would be less than fully human. This dream is part of our present reality, but also a key part of the reality we hope to create.*

The Rainbow Alliance has its origins in the insights and traditions of socialism, ecology, feminism and non-violence. As a project it derives its inspiration from the social and political struggles of the past 100 years and more.

## Why A Political Movement

Yet the Rainbow Alliance is not a political movement like the peace, anti-nuclear, environment, feminist, communalist, consumer right, gay liberation, animal liberation and other social movements. We share all, not just one of these concerns.

We wish to support all of these movements, work closely with them, but also go beyond them by connecting all these issues as so many pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. Our concern is with the *total picture*.

The Rainbow Alliance is not a coalition of movements or organisations. Were the Rainbow Alliance to be a coalition it would mean being a superstructure of existing structures, it would involve a bureaucratic approach with demarcation disputes, sap our energy and stifle initiatives. The Rainbow Alliance is not a negotiation at the summit but an informal alliance of constituencies at the grass roots.

The Rainbow Alliance is not a political party. Political parties are in disrepute in this land and rightly so. They have bred cynicism and despair; they manage the system on behalf of capitalism and the world market. They use the electoral system and are in process used by it. They practise the politics of the lowest common denominator. They are impotent to change the course of events. The purpose of the Rainbow Alliance is not to contest elections but to contest electoral politics — not to seize power but to transform it; not to manage the state but to democratise and humanise it.

The Rainbow Alliance is *not* a social movement; it is *not* a coalition; it is *not* a political party. What is it then? It is a political movement.

It is a movement which wants to make links between people, issues and ideas. It wants to build new bridges across social movements and develop a new political space.

Our purpose is to set a new political agenda that will in due course touch every institution — the media, the bureaucracy, local councils, parliaments, yes even political parties. How will this be done? By articulating a compelling vision of the future; by formulating engaging detailed and well-researched proposals for change; in action locally, nationally, internationally; by taking initiatives (and developing processes) that live out the future now.

The aim of the Rainbow Alliance is to shape a radical programme of social and political transformation. We reserve the right to contest elections at the right time and in the right circumstances. But electoral intervention is not the keystone of our programme. Our programme combines education, research and policy development, mass campaigns, local community action, cultural renewal, civil disobedience and other form of ethical resistance.

## Policies for the Future

May I bring to your attention two aspects of this programme which we are in the process of developing right now: **policy development and action campaigns.**

Let me begin by telling you something of the work we've been doing around the theme "*New Directions for the Australian Economy*". These ideas are still at the discussion stage, but we shall be looking at them at our forthcoming National Conference in Brisbane in June where we hope a draft paper will form the basis of a consensus.

In this paper we set out our long-term vision for the Australian economy some 30-50 years down the track. We begin by spelling out the principles which I mentioned at the beginning of my talk. We then go on to suggest a new structure for the economy based on 3 sectors: a democratic and decentralised public sector — vastly different from the one we are familiar with and making up two-thirds of the economy; with the remaining third of the economy comprising a small business sector; and an informal non-monetary exchange sector. A variety of co-operatives — small and large — would play an important role in each of these three sectors.

Other key features of the long-term vision include:

- a) democratic forms of planning at the local, regional and national levels
- b) equal sharing of paid and unpaid work (including domestic labour) between men and work
- c) sharply reduced working hours
- d) a new approach to economic activity that eliminates all environmentally unsustainable industries and practices and significantly reduces per capita resource consumption.

But how do we get from here to there? Here, a series of wide-ranging but closely knit proposals are put forward for the short to medium term (to be implemented over a period of 3 to 10 years). Let me mention just a few:

- \* full employment to be achieved over 10 years, with the creation of 250,000 new jobs each year, especially in housing, public transport, renewable energy sources, conservation, health, education and other community services

- \* equal pay for women by establishing the equivalent worth principle
- \* a guaranteed adequate income for the bottom 30% of income earners
- \* a radical restructuring of the taxation system to increase public revenue by some \$25 billion — not exactly what Mr Keating has offered these last few days
- \* a system of strategic environmental planning
- \* a comprehensive national and regional investigation of the environmental and social impact of all industries
- \* agriculture to be excluded from the environmentally most sensitive areas
- \* strict regulation of cropping and stocking practices
- \* the timber industry excluded from all areas of environmental significance
- \* production of fossil fuels to be cut by 25%
- \* limits on urban sprawl
- \* a waste management fund (to be levied on those who produce waste)
- \* a major public campaign on ecological practices (that we in the Rainbow Alliance can start here and now)
- \* a shift in industry policy from export orientation to import replacement (i.e. towards self-reliance)
- \* the complete overhaul of the financial system (setting up of a National Investment fund from public control of lending and interest rates; drastic limits on foreign investment)
- \* a great many other measures dealing with foreign debt, international co-operation, planning and administrative processes, media and advertising.

Let me now turn to issues of peace and security. Here we are considering an altogether new approach based on the principles of inner strength and a co-operative and demilitarised world order. Inner strength refers to the need to make our economic and political institutions more decentralised, diverse and self-reliant, and therefore less vulnerable to external threat. But we also have in mind new regional and global institutions in which people can directly participate and which have responsibility for monitoring and implementing the redistribution of resources, protection of the environment, and the disarmament process.

In the short and medium term we envisage:

- \* a non-nuclear, non-aligned Australia
- \* the dismantling of all foreign bases and all military alliances
- \* a new treaty of peace and friendship with the US based on the principles of equality and mutual benefit
- \* closer economic and cultural ties with all Southeast Asian countries and military ties with none
- \* a neutral and nuclear free zone covering the whole of Southeast Asia and the South Pacific
- \* a naval disengagement zone in the Indian Ocean
- \* a non-provocative defence policy that puts an end to the forward projection of military power
- \* increasing reliance on small, decentralised mobile units for the defence of the Australian continent
- \* introduction of non-military forms of defence.

Many of these ideas have yet to be refined, but we expect that they will form the basis for a public campaign against the new militarism that colours Australia's current defence planning. Such a campaign will be developed in close co-operation with the peace movement and other interested organisations.

There are many other areas that we are addressing, but one deserves special mention: the need for a new

relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia. Here we must acknowledge the past and present history of white abuse — but also the history of black struggle, *for we have a great deal to learn from Aboriginal survival in spite of 200 years of oppression. We must learn from Aboriginal culture.*

All Australians need to respect the law of this land which has been violated by the European invasion. We must recognise the prior and continuing sovereignty of Aboriginal communities. This means placing a significant part of Australia under Aboriginal control and within these boundaries respecting Aboriginal autonomy in government, economic development, culture and law. It means negotiating the establishment of a compensation fund.

But in all of this there are lessons for the Rainbow Alliance. For progressive social movements have often made mistakes in their relations with Aboriginal people. We too may make mistakes along the way, but we wish to go beyond white guilt and develop a new sense of trust. We want to be involved in serious reflection and dialogue with Aboriginal people and their organisations so that together we can build a just and multi-racial society.

## Action

In mounting our first campaign we have chosen the theme "Sustainable communities". Why the emphasis on sustainable? Because we want to stress respect for the rhythms and cycles of nature, but also social relationships that are stable but diverse, just and equitable.

Why communities? Because the struggle for change must focus on the cities and towns where people live. Hence the need to restructure and renew urban and country life. Here there is enormous potential for education and action. A national campaign kit is being prepared for this purpose.

As part of this campaign the Rainbow Alliance has decided to hold a National Day of Action on Environment Day, October 1st. In Victoria we intend to organise 10 days of activity throughout the state as a lead-up to that day, using the "Greenhouse effect" as a focus: But our approach will be rather different from the mainstream response. For we are **not** interested in technical fixes. Our intention is to project concrete demands with a sharp political edge. The issues to be canvassed include: the production and export of fossil fuels, energy conservation, development of renewable energy sources, total opposition to nuclear power, alternative forms of transport, the restructuring of industry, and the implications of all of this for employment, equity and justice, and community services. At this stage we are thinking of a 10 day walk taking in the whole of Melbourne and its environs connecting the various activities and issues to be canvassed as so many links in a chain.

These ideas have yet to be fleshed out, but you are all invited to participate in the planning and organisation of this challenging project. Individuals, groups and organisations — inside and outside the Rainbow Alliance — will all be able to make an important contribution.

I think I have said enough to make it clear that the Rainbow Alliance offers no quick or easy solutions. The invitation is to take part in a long, perhaps difficult journey. The journey is not for those who indulge in naive optimism. It is for those who wish to build a new politics of hope. I invite you to join us in this journey.