



# **THE BULLETIN**

**Of the Australian World Citizens Association**

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## **Editors Welcome:**

Welcome to the latest edition of the Australian World Citizens Bulletin. Scanning through the Bulletin it is interesting to see how quickly we have grown in our short history, and how involved we are becoming in Australian and world society. This issue includes reports on an aid project in Bangladesh that we are supporting and a parliamentary initiative by the Australian Democrats to promote a Commission for Peace in Australia. But of course even as we grow as an organisation there remains so much more for us to do. This year will probably see an election in Australia, next year an election in the USA. Now more than ever is the time to make our views known and try to influence coming events. Anybody who wants to be involved can read this Bulletin and see that we are a growing group with an ever-expanding range of activities. Please feel free to browse through this Bulletin if you are not already a world citizen and look at some of the things we do. It is never too late to become involved and the need for a democratic world political system will not go away. Join us as a world citizen and be part of building humanity's future!

Lyndon Storey

## **A Peace and Non-Violence Commission for Australia**

*A proposal by the Australian Democrats*

In a world as consumed by violence and conflict as ours it should be considered a major shortcoming that there is no Act of Parliament establishing peace and non-violence as an objective and responsibility of national governments. The humanitarian, environmental and economic cost of war and violence is great and there are enormous advantages in peaceful co-existence for individual relationships, the family, schools, the local community and internationally.

In the last decade alone violent conflict in the Middle East, in Africa, Kosovo and Timor, terrorist attacks on New York, Washington, London and Bali, and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have destroyed the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians.

Australian Governments once played a leading role in promoting international peace. For instance Australia set up the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. But it was disbanded soon after reporting in 1996 and little progress has been made on its recommendations in the intervening ten years.

In fact 27,000 nuclear weapons still exist with India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea and perhaps Iran having now developed their own nuclear arsenals, while the small arms trade to developing countries alone has reached more than \$1 trillion.

Combating conflict and violence is also a primary domestic concern. A responsibility our current government has too often avoided. Ignoring humanitarian and refugee law in detaining innocent people, turning a blind eye to torture at the hands of our allies and now

planning to override international treaties by selling uranium to India are all indications that a change is needed.

For the first time in Australia's history defence spending (\$22 billion) is greater than education spending. This makes Australian defence spending the 11<sup>th</sup> highest in the world and, on a per capita basis, second only to the United States. The defence budget is far more geared to war fighting capability than peacekeeping.

It is into this environment that the Australian Democrats have, not for the first time, promoted the idea of a Peace and Non-Violence Commission (PNVC). The Democrats first envisaged such a body twenty-five years ago; however the idea itself dates back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1792 Benjamin Rush, a co-signer of the United States Declaration of Independence proposed the establishment of a Peace Office which was to carry equal weight in Cabinet to the War Office.

Unfortunately such visionary thinking did not prevail. But as the world continues to blunder down its destructive path there remains a strong case for a different, more effective approach: A counterpoint to the established approaches that have thus far proved so ineffective in ameliorating violence and conflict.

The idea of a Peace Commission is gaining traction. Similar statutory bodies to the PNVC have been proposed in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Japan and Italy. In Australia the idea has been well supported by peace groups, both longstanding and emerging, groups such as the Conflict Resolution Network, the Peace Organisation of Australia, Ministry for Peace Australia, Global Citizens for Peace and the Australian world citizens.

The PNVC would work to align Commonwealth government activity with United Nations policy in the promotion of peace and advance Australia's obligations under international humanitarian law. The Commission would have seven distinct areas of responsibility:

- The Office of International Peace Activities will provide training and deployment of non-military conflict prevention and peacemaking personnel. This office will also advocate the creation of a multinational non-violent peace force, sponsor conflict prevention and dispute resolution initiatives, and provide for post-conflict reconstruction and demobilisation in war-torn societies.
- The Office of Domestic Peace Initiatives will be responsible for countering the factors that give rise to violence and conflict within society, including terrorism, and to foster peaceful conflict resolution. The Office will also have a role in developing domestic policy to address related issues such as drug and alcohol abuse and the prevention of crime.

- The Office of Arms Control and Disarmament will make recommendations for reductions in weapons of mass destruction and provide advice on Australia's obligations, responsibilities and negotiations in relation to treaties and international agreements and matters relating to defence and security. The office will also make annual reports to the Prime Minister on the sale of arms and munitions from Australia to other nations and how such sales affect peace.
- The Office of Peaceful Coexistence and Non-Violent Conflict Resolution will develop new ideas and structures for the resolution of disputes by non-violent means. This office will forecast the comparative costs of violent and non-violent solutions to problems as they arise as a basis for advice.
- The Office of Education and Training will develop a peace education curriculum that will include the civil rights movement, peace agreements and circumstances in which peaceful intervention has worked to stop conflict. It will impart communicative peace skills and non-violent conflict resolution skills.
- The Office of Human Rights and Economic Rights will assist in incorporating the principles of human rights into all agreements between Australia and other nations. It will conduct analyses of the sources of conflict in the world. It will develop strategies regarding the sustainability and management of aid funds and the impact of conditions set by funding agencies on peace and stability in the countries in receipt of such funds.
- The Office of Technology for Peace will provide grants for the research and development of technologies that are non-violent in their application. It will encourage the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in order to prevent future conflicts regarding scarce resources.

Ultimately the aim of the Peace and Non Violence Commission is to be an authoritative voice and counter-point to those who would have us continue down the path of violence. The PNVC has the potential to change the way we do things, to change attitudes and behaviour, to save lives and to start the process of making the world a more peaceful, safer, and just place.

*Note: The Peace and Non Violence Commission Bill was tabled in the Australian Senate by Senator Lyn Allison, Leader of the Australian Democrats in June. It is waiting to be debated.*

Paul Watson

## A Thought on Doug Everingham's "Defining Utopia"

I recently had the chance to look at a version of the report "DEFINING UTOPIA" by Australian world citizen Doug Everingham, which was sent to the Alliance for Human Empowerment <http://humanemp.org>. This report is quite interesting. I quote below one of its first principles:

### *"HUMANITY & EARTH*

*1. Beasts matter. Utopia should seek justice for all sentient beings – 'earthlings' – in harmony with Earth's web of life. That should include a family of 'humanity' reconciled in 'humanism' but also something wider: a world order that could be called 'earthlinghood' supported by nearing universal agreement or 'earthlingism'."*

This is definitely something to think about. I am going to discuss some possible implications of this idea without advocating a conclusion and hope that in future issues readers may respond with their own views on Earthlinghood.

As world citizens we are not unfamiliar with finding ourselves at the extreme end of political debate. We can be accused of being too generous by seeking to include all of humanity in our concept of what is just. When we face this accusation we are in effect being told we go too far in seeking to extend justice to all. But what about the critique that we do not go far enough? This criticism is more rarely heard. But it can be found in Doug Everingham's concept. Why not include animals and any being which can include pain in our concept of world citizenship?

There is a strong argument for saying that we should extend our sense of sympathy and compassion to any being that can feel pain and suffering. This would justify extending some form of principle of fair treatment to non human or sentient beings. If we are opposed to the needless suffering of our fellow humans, it seems we should also be opposed to the needless suffering of (our fellow) sentient beings who can feel pain. The logic is emphasised when we consider that not all humans are wholly good, there are plenty of people who engage in unjust acts, yet we still believe that all humans are entitled to certain basic principles of justice. The objection that not all sentient beings are wholly good, e.g. predatory wild animals, could therefore be dealt with in a similar manner to the objection that not all humans are wholly good. This type of argument, based on extending our sense of compassion to beings which can feel pain and suffering, can definitely be developed to the point where it supports some form of workable fair treatment principle; such as avoiding the imposition of unnecessary suffering in our dealings with other sentient beings. But what about a broader concept such as earthlinghood?

If we broaden out from a principle of avoiding unnecessary suffering to a principle of political involvement some other issues arise. It would be possible to object that animals cannot be members of a political community as they do not have the necessary ability to observe whatever rules the political community governs itself by. Consequently they themselves could not be punished for violating the principle of earthlinghood as they cannot reasonably be expected to understand and uphold it. The other issue that seems to

immediately arise with earthlinghood is the question of identity being based on personality or territory. Do we define our common community by some concept of personality or by some form of geographic location? For instance, if “earthlinghood”, a concept based on territory (i.e. the Earth) was the key defining principle then a human colony on Mars would be governed by earthlinghood principles even though they were off Earth. Their governing principle, earthlinghood, would automatically exclude a non Earth sentient being were they to encounter one (admittedly highly unlikely on Mars). They could, in a sense, be described as imperialistically bringing earthling values to Mars.

On the other hand if identity was defined in terms of personality; e.g. sentient beings, then the imaginary Mars colony should not have to deal with the problem of their own imperialism if they encountered a sentient being. Their principle of respect for sentient beings would already give them a goal for their relationship with the new sentient being which the territorial principle of earthlinghood seems not to.

I do not want to reach a final conclusion on these issues but put them forward for readers to consider. Do we need to include animals in our political program as world citizens? Is earthlinghood the best path to follow? What do we make of the differences between political identity being defined in terms of personality or territory?

Lyndon Storey

## **Bangladesh Aid Project Developments**

Last year, world citizen Wali Islam visited Bangladesh with his daughter Tasnima to help flood victims. Many people’s homes, farms and indeed livelihoods have been swept away by periodic flooding. Many of them are now reduced to living in roadside humpies.

The idea was to provide a small amount of scholarship money to enable the children at least to get some schooling. The WCA contributed \$500, and Tasnima, Ray Fang and their friends raised a rather larger amount for the cause.

Being swamped with applications, Wali decided to award some 30 scholarships in amounts of only \$30 each. Tasnima and he also helped to establish a school for the children, with five teachers and more than 100 students. Ongoing assistance will be needed to keep the school going. This is a remarkable result for such a small-scale 'micro-aid' project, and shows just what can potentially be done.

Unfortunately there have been even more catastrophic floods this year, as we have seen recently on the news. We are hoping to continue and enlarge our work on aid projects in the region, to show our solidarity with our neighbours as world citizens. We will be putting in an application for official status as a charitable fundraising organization very shortly. We would also like to find a worthwhile aid project somewhere in the Pacific Islands: if anyone knows of a suitable opportunity, please let Wali know.

Chris Hamer

## **President's Column: A Turn for the Better?**

If we look back on the last year, it seems that the outlook for world citizens like ourselves has grown brighter. The Democrat victory in the Congressional mid-term elections has marked a shift in US public opinion away from the neoconservative, unilateralist doctrines of President Bush and his friends, and back towards a more multilateral stance on international relations. A similar shift seems to be underway in Australia. There has also been a shift in attitudes towards climate change, the pre-eminent global problem of the moment, and a recognition has emerged that something, at least, must be done, even if it is not clear what that something might be.

Some interesting suggestions have been thrown up recently. I saw the other day that Libya's Colonel Gaddafi, of all people, had proposed the formation of a 'United States of Africa', following the example of the USA and (probably) Europe. Africa is perhaps the least fitted of all continents to sustain such a governmental superstructure, but it shows that the tide is still flowing strongly towards regional integration. In the US, the Republican presidential candidate John McCain has proposed a 'League of Democracies', which would perhaps be a step towards the 'Community of Democratic Nations' which we have discussed previously. This provoked a hot debate on the Community of World Citizens chat site [worldcit@googlegroups.com](mailto:worldcit@googlegroups.com) on whether it was really a good idea, and what the structure of the League should be. Many people are afraid that it would be too exclusive.

Members are entitled, as always, to ask what the WCA has been doing in the last six months to earn their continued support. Quite a lot has been going on behind the scenes. There are items elsewhere in this Bulletin about our work to support the campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, and a Commission for Peace and Non-violence within Australia. Most importantly, there is a report on Wali Islam's aid project in Bangladesh, which represents a new departure for us. We hope that charitable work as 'global citizens' will grow to become a more important part of our activities, offering scope for more of our members to participate in the work of the WCA. At the recent Annual General Meeting, we adopted a new Constitution which will hopefully allow us to apply for official status as a charity, and undertake fundraising activities. We will have to wait and see how that works out.

We are also hoping to establish a student branch at Sydney University on a firm footing next semester. That would give us some more young and enthusiastic members, who might hopefully establish a regular program of seminars or talks, and participate in future aid projects in Asia or the Pacific (or even here in Australia).

Finally, I would like to thank Lyndon Storey for agreeing to edit the Bulletin once again, on his return to Australia. We know from previous experience what an excellent job he will make of it.

Best wishes to all, from

*Chris Hamer.*



## Roundup of AWCA Activities

### Peace Commission and Non-Violence Bill

Meetings entitled ‘Round Table for Peace’ were held this summer in Brisbane and Melbourne. The Brisbane meeting was co-chaired by Stella Cornelius, and the Melbourne meeting was chaired by our Victorian branch president, Michael Ellis. The Melbourne meeting was hosted by Senator Lyn Allison of the Australian Democrats, and included Dr Jager Holly, Ms Lesley Pocock and Ms Anna Kumashov, as well as WCA members Michael Ellis, Chris Hamer, Lyndon Storey and our international patroness Liliane Metz-Krencker, as well as Stella Cornelius by phone.

The major resolution was to support the formation of an Australian *Commission for Peace and Non-Violence*. The idea was to introduce a ‘Ministry for Peace’ as opposed to the conventional ‘Ministry for War’; but a new Commission can be proposed in a private member’s bill, whereas a new department cannot. Similar movements are on foot in several countries around the world, such as the movement driven by Senator Dennis Kucinich in the United States. For further information see [http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/peace\\_party](http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/peace_party). Michael Ellis has set up a new group, Global Citizens for Peace, to support these ideas. To find out more, or lend your support, go to [www.globalcitizensforpeace.com](http://www.globalcitizensforpeace.com)

Senator Allison has tabled a bill to this effect in the Australian parliament at the end of June. The article by Paul Watson in this Bulletin discusses the Peace Commission proposal in more detail.

This initiative follows a growing international movement for the creation of Departments and Ministries of Peace in all nations. Citizens in 11 countries, including the USA, UK, Canada, Japan, and parts of Europe, are now taking action in support of Department of Peace initiatives. The USA, UK and Canada have also seen significant progress in citizen lobbying for grassroots support of these initiatives and developed comprehensive models of Legislative Bills for the establishment of Departments of Peace, incorporating principles of the United Nations treaties and conventions for a culture of peace.

### Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA)

A campaign for the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) was launched in April, led by the Committee for a Democratic UN (CDUN). The aim is for a “gradual implementation of democratic participation and representation on the global level”. Initially the UNPA could be composed of a small number of representatives from each national parliament, and would have only an advisory role. However, the appeal suggests that over time, the assembly should be vested with “genuine rights of information, participation and control”, and could eventually be



composed of directly elected members. In the long run, the campaign envisages the UNPA evolving into a world parliament. “A Parliamentary Assembly would make the UN more transparent, more efficient and more democratic”, says former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, one of the supporters of the appeal.

More than 1000 people have registered their support for the campaign, including 378 MPs from over 70 different countries. We sent out letters and brochures promoting this campaign to all Federal parliamentarians – thanks to Michael de Mol and Hadrian Judge for helping with this. Most of the replies were merely polite acknowledgements; but Christine Milne of the Greens has indicated she will try to get in touch to discuss it. At last count, only four Parliamentarians, four of our members and a handful of others from Australia have signed up. Can we encourage everybody to lend their weight to this campaign? The appeal website is at [www.unpacampaign.org](http://www.unpacampaign.org)

### **Inquiry into Australia’s Aid Program in the Pacific**

Our submission to the inquiry into Australia’s Aid Program in the Pacific by the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has been received, after it was apparently first deleted as spam! We have advocated that Australia’s aid be channelled as far as possible through the South Pacific Forum, and aimed at building up stronger governance and more self-reliance in the Pacific. No feedback has yet been received, and the Committee has not yet completed its report. Our submission is listed as number 31 on the parliamentary website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/pacificaid/index.htm>

### **University of Sydney Student branch**

After a good response at Orientation week, we held an inaugural meeting to found a student branch at Sydney Uni. Unfortunately the timing was bad, and only three students turned up, besides our committee. However, we have had offers to help from Ray and Ashley Fang, Tasnima Islam, Rainnie Jiao, Brett Samuel, Sophia Leon de Barre and one or two more, and we plan to relaunch the branch at the beginning of next session.

### **Education**

Chris Hamer presented a General Education course at UNSW on ‘International Governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ in Session 1, discussing the need for a democratic world federation. The allocated 40 places were fully booked, and we might try for 60 next year.

## Literary Corner

Members of our association are maintaining their prolific output of new literature!

**Andrew Greig** has written a new book entitled '*Taming War: Culture and Technology for Peace*'. It looks at the causes of war, and asks, why do we still allow ourselves to be led into the misery of war by psychopaths and second-rate politicians? He suggests ways in which all of us can play a part in taming war.

Andrew has had an amazingly varied career, from deckhand to public relations officer, and has had first-hand experience of conflict as a member of CARE Australia in Zaire and Rwanda during the Rwandan refugee crisis. Find out more about his book at [www.tamingwar.com](http://www.tamingwar.com), or email [info@tamingwar.com](mailto:info@tamingwar.com)

**Michelle Cavanagh** is continuing to tour and promote her book on 'Margaret Holmes: The life and times of an Australian peace campaigner' (New Holland, 2006), RRP \$29.95.

**Lyndon Storey's** book '*Humanity or Sovereignty: A political roadmap for the 21st century*' is available from [Peter Lang Publishing](http://www.peterlang.com) , US\$32.95.

**Keith Suter** has produced another new book this year in his impressive series, called '*Teach Yourself Globalization*' (Hodder), US\$12.95, which has a chapter on world federalism.

**Michael de Mol** has written a paper on '*The Role of Multi-National Corporations in Globalisation*', which he forwarded to the Australian Conservation Foundation, aiming to forge some links with them.

## Annual General Meeting

The 2007 annual general meeting of the world citizens association was held on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007 at the University of Sydney. At this meeting a new Constitution was adopted which should be an appropriate Constitution for us to become a registered charity. The following office holders were also elected:

Chris Hamer unanimously elected as President.  
Michelle Cavanagh unanimously elected as Treasurer.  
Michael de Mol unanimously elected as Secretary.  
Wali Islam unanimously elected as Vice President.

## JOIN THE WORLD CITIZENS OF AUSTRALIA



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