



Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee

WATCHING BRIEF 20-11

Slipping through our fingers – peace through diplomacy

As Quakers we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

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The relevance of diplomacy in today's world has been muted by the growing focus on military defence and security. In Australia, both the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Chief of the Defence Force agree that 'diplomacy is our first line of defence against forces that threaten our way of life'. And yet, around the world political leaders are focusing on military rather than diplomatic solutions to a growing number of threats and challenges.

This Brief looks at the origins of Quaker diplomacy and peacemaking, the current trends in global diplomacy, and the prospects of its re-emergence as a major means for achieving peace.

Quakers and Diplomacy

The Quaker peace testimony is the basis for a commitment to build a peaceful world through Quaker 'good offices' at international level. Before 20th century this mainly took the form of visits by prominent Quakers to leaders on one or both sides. For example, in 1678 Robert Barclay addressed the ambassadors gathered in Nijmegen to negotiate the end of the Franco-Dutch War; in 1854 Joseph Sturge led a Quaker mission to Tsar Nicholas in Russia in an attempt to avert the Crimean War. In 20th century Quaker 'embassies' or 'offices' were established to provide places for representatives of nations in conflict to meet, and diplomat conferences were arranged. After World War 1, under the auspices of British Quakers, centres were set up in Berlin, Frankfurt, Nuremburg, Vienna, Paris, Warsaw, Moscow and Salonika.

The aftermath of World War 2 saw the formation of the Quaker United Nations Offices (QUNO) in Quaker Houses in New York and Geneva. Private conversations are held among diplomats, sometimes in cases where no other opportunity exists for such face-to-face meetings. Residential conferences for diplomats (initiated by the American Friends Service Committee) were held between 1952 and 1976 (usually for at least a week) to reinforce commitment to ethical principles, discuss research findings from social science and peace studies, raise issue of Quaker concern (such as refugees, disarmament, human rights), and

to facilitate human contact across political divides. Shorter conferences have been held since then.

The Quaker approach is summed up by the following QUNO statement – *Our work is rooted in the Quaker testimonies of peace, truth, justice, equality and simplicity. We understand peace as more than the absence of war and violence, recognising the need to look for what seeds of war there may be in all our social, political and economic relationships.*

Indigenous Diplomacy

Indigenous diplomatic practices have existed on the Australian continent for tens of thousands of years, governing relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island clans and nations, as well as overseas traders.

Message sticks were a tradition between distant communities to maintain diplomatic relations. The sticks were decorative and also carried signs intended for particular recipients. The carrier would usually have memorized a statement to make to the recipient. An example on display in the 'Endeavour' exhibition at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra is a filmed re-creation of how Indigenous people passed along a message that James Cook's expedition had arrived and was travelling up the east coast of Australia.

On 8 October 2020 new Senator Lydia Thorpe (a Gonnai and Gunditjmarra woman from Victoria) entered the Senate chamber carrying a large message stick with 441 carefully painted marks. The lines represented the First Nations people who have died under police supervision since the 1991 Royal Commission into Deaths in Custody. In 2019 Alwyn Doolan (Gooreng and Wakka man from Queensland) walked from Cape York to Canberra via Tasmania and Melbourne to submit a tribal law notice to the Australian government to declare First Nations sovereignty and open a new dialogue with the First Nations of this Land.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart (2017) was itself a form of diplomacy, inviting all Australians to walk with Indigenous people. It affirmed the spirituality basis of First Nations sovereignty that co-exists with the Crown; called for a Voice to be enshrined in the constitution, and a Makarrata commission to supervise agreement between governments and First Nations and enable truth telling about our history.

The Australian National University's College of Diplomacy has introduced an inaugural course in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diplomacy in recognition of the traditional principles which are seen as important to creating legitimate dialogue. Case studies will initially be drawn from Yolgnu culture in East Arnhem Land, and from the Torres Strait.

Women and Diplomacy

Elise Boulding (Quaker Historian and Peace Researcher) has identified several significant elements of women's contribution to diplomacy over the years:

- The emergence of women's peace societies occurred around the time of the Treaty of Vienna (1815) and focused particularly on militarism, the effects of arms races, and

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ways to help end war. Berthas Suttner wrote *Down with Arms* and persuaded Alfred Nobel to endow the Nobel Peace Prize.

- The work of women in pressing for a permanent league of states to keep the peace was instrumental in the setting up of the first Hague Peace Conference in 1889 and the Universal Peace Congress in 1894.
- Women scholars formed the Women's Peace Study Group of the International Peace Research Association in the 1970s to work to eliminate social violence. Women were active in the anti-nuclear movement and the ending of the Vietnam War. The spread of women's NGOs worldwide eventually led to the 1995 International Women's Conference.

Karin Aggestam and Ann Towers (*Feminist Journal of Politics*, 6 July 2018) say that the reconstitution of diplomacy is linked to gender and the practice of exclusion and inclusion of women and men over time. "We understand diplomacy basically as a set of assumptions, institutions and processes for managing international relations peacefully". There is a need to

provide more focus on Africa, Asia and Latin America. Ethnographic research and feminist theory can generate transformative change in diplomacy. In 2014, 85% of ambassadors were

men, and an even higher proportion of negotiators and mediators were men. The UN Security

Council 'Women and Peace' resolution 1325 has helped change things to some extent, but formal diplomacy still shows a predominance of men.

Susan Harris Rimmer (Griffith University) wrote in 2018 that "one of the most important changes

to modern diplomacy is the increased participation of women, both as foreign policy elites and in wider transnational networks. If the most fundamental aspect of diplomacy is human interactions, then the new representation of women and LGBTI persons in the practice of diplomacy since the mid-twentieth century should have made a profound impact on the field of diplomacy studies. Moreover, societal changes in gender relations have affected some of the content and focus of foreign policy, along with the advent of female foreign ministers". She adds however that "the 'business model' of diplomacy has been resistant to transformation on gender equality grounds so far, and the ideal diplomat is still gendered heterosexual upper-class rational and masculine".

Melissa Conley Tyler and Richa Jheengun (*Australian Outlook*, 8 March 2020) say that, after many years of under-representation, the number of women in senior positions in foreign policy and diplomacy has increased significantly in Australia. Forty percent of career ambassadors, high commissioners and consuls are female. This is the result of a *Women in Leadership Strategy* over five years. This compares with 18% in India, 12% in Indonesia, 2% in Japan, and 5% in South Korea. Sahera Suman (Executive Director of UNAA) says that greater diversity brings benefits for diplomacy- more creative solutions, deeper engagement with constituents, and differentiated dialogue.

Diplomacy At Risk

The Macquarie Dictionary defines 'diplomacy' as the science of conducting negotiations between states. It involves skills of artful management. It has become common practice for

nations to allocate significant resources to professionals who practice diplomacy. There are two 'tracks' of diplomacy used today – official diplomacy and unofficial or informal diplomacy. However, trends over recent years have led to a reduction in priority for official diplomacy, as highlighted by the following:

- In Britain, there are 14,000 employees of the (now re-named) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, but the number of overseas staff has been cut by 1000 in the past 30 years (*The Guardian*, 18 June 2019) leaving core diplomatic funding at its lowest for 20 years (and a drop from 0.5% to 0.1% of public spending since 2013).
- In Canada, there are concerns at the lack of resources, dilution of professionalism, and greater security threats to diplomats (*Global Affairs*), and aid has dropped to 0.28% of GNI – 15th in the OECD.
- In the first 8 months of the Trump Administration in USA, 12% of foreign affairs officers departed, mainly ambassadors and senior public servants, and hiring freeze slashed intake from 366 in 2016 to 100 in 2017. 160 overseas postings are vacant (*The Informant*, 12 Oct 2020).
- The resourcing of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has 'flatlined'. According to the Lowy Institute (Interpreter, 7 Oct 2020), over the last three years GDP has tripled, defence spending about the same. There are now 860 diplomatic staff posted overseas, 90 fewer than in 1989. This covers 86 missions and is one of the smallest networks of all developed nations. The latest federal budget has little extra to offer, despite the more challenging international environment. Aid spending is also at an all-time low.

Australia and Diplomacy

John Langmore (University of Melbourne) is principal author of a new book *Security Through Sustainable Peace* (Melbourne University 2020), funded in part by DFAT. It includes two research projects: the first was to find out how some other states (Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, UK and USA) support peace processes; the second was surveying 120 current and former Australian diplomats, academics, police and defence officers. His book makes the following points:

- There is a global imperative to prevent violent conflicts and support positive through political rather than military means. Yet the build-up of military forces has not been matched by enhancing diplomatic resources.
- Australia has done well through its peace-related activities in Cambodia, the Solomons and Bougainville, and has the capacity to do more. The lessons learned can be applied elsewhere. The commitment to the Pacific as a result of these interventions shows that value of taking peace initiatives and working cooperatively with partners in the region. An example could be a Regional Neighbourhood Development Program to promote self-help, civil society, and effective aid.
- Australia should give priority to strengthening the rules-based international order, building regional dialogues, and encouraging bilateral relationships with countries with which we have economic, environmental and social interdependence.
- Public awareness could be raised through the creation of a Ministry for Peace. The Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade should take on analysis and fact-finding. The Civil-Military Centre should move from Defence to Prime Minister & Cabinet and given extra funds for conflict resolution work. The new

Diplomatic Academy in DFAT should be developed to ensure better training about emerging issues and about skills such as negotiation and mediation.

- Australia should increase its contribution to the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Australian Mission to the UN should be increased.
- Australia should reinforce its good efforts on enhancing women's civil society leadership and participation in decision-making in our region.
- In view of Australia's active role in creating the Arms Trade Treaty in 2014, there should be an independent review of the government's defence export strategy to ensure it will not add to the potential for violent conflicts.
- "Reforming the balance between diplomatic, military, aid and intelligence expenditure would be a necessary feature of implementing a strategy of security though sustainable peace".

Alison Broinowski (ANU Crawford School of Public Policy, and former diplomat) wrote in 2016 that 'such power as DFAT used to have in the bureaucracy has been eroded by Australia's increasingly presidential executive structure, in which the Prime Minister's Department is now a mini-government, with an elite cadre of specialist advisers, while DFAT is largely left with the mundane tasks'.

Jonathan Pryke (Lowy Institute) wrote in July 2020 that, despite the Prime Minister stating that "defence, development and diplomacy" are part of Australia's response to a less secure world environment, the balance is askew. The DFAT budget will be smaller in 2022 than 15 years earlier, our diplomatic 'footprint' has shrunk, and the aid program has been cut by a third since 2013 while defence will grow by a third in the next few years. He says that diplomats are vital in building relationships and understanding culture and context to help inform decisions.

Richard Moore (Australian Institute of International Affairs) reported that, at Alexander Downer's initiative as Minister, in 2006 DFAT set up the Office of Development Effectiveness. Julie Bishop as Minister reinforced its importance as a way to maintain scrutiny of the aid program. But DFAT has now disbanded the office without public announcement. This will reduce the effectiveness of the aid program and diminish DFAT's ability to argue its case for more funding in future national Budgets.

The Challenge

Diplomacy has vital features that are still essential for the world – the capacity to bring people together for sharing dialogue, building mutual understanding, and reducing tensions. The skills involved (whether in a formal or informal process) include communication, impartiality, patience, risk-taking, and sensitivity to the particular situation and the personalities involved.

In Australia, there is now an imbalance between military and diplomatic energy and resources – with the result that the more thorough diplomatic approach is being sidelined by 'sabre-rattling' and militarization – not only in defence but in civil crises such as bushfires. Our political representatives need to hear more from us as citizens about the value of diplomacy and non-violent options for peacemaking.

QPLC Priority

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QPLC is considering ways in which greater attention can be brought to this, possibly through a special gathering of people who can cast light on the ways forward.

In the meantime we encourage Friends to take every opportunity to reinforce positive moves to (a) promote diplomatic responses to global conflicts, (b) affirm the role of women in being more fully drawn into diplomacy, (c) encourage diversity in recruitment of diplomats, and (d) upgrade the role and staffing of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to include deeper analysis of global issues.

Canberra
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