

# The Australian Friend

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## Alternatives to Violence



# Editorial

In this edition we are looking at alternatives to violence – in the home, in schools, in prisons, in communities, and between nations. This is a vast and complex topic, yet in some ways the Quaker approach is simple. Quakers believe that there is that of God in all people, and that only by answering that of God can we help people to overcome the violence that is in us all.

Naomi Klein, the winner of the Sydney Peace Prize for 2016, says that ‘to change everything, we must change everybody’. In other words, we cannot have change at the institutional level until we have change at the personal level. This belief is expressed in many ways in the articles in this issue. Bob Douglas urges us to develop mindfulness, empathy and compassion. David Purnell tells us that we need a vision to create peaceful solutions. Facilitators in the Alternatives to Violence Project believe that everyone can learn to use Transforming Power.

Personal change is where it starts, but it needs to lead to structural change. Quaker Service Australia promotes non-violent solutions to community conflicts. The Knitting Nannas and the Quaker Grannies call on us to find non-violent solutions to violence against our environment and other people. The film *War on Trial* challenges us to find bold solutions, and to ask what sacrifices we are prepared to make.

What problems does violence solve? If it only creates further problems, we desperately need to call on all the resources of our Quaker and Christian heritage to find a better way.

In our next issue we are calling for papers on the subject of Reconciliation with Indigenous People. The issue of recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution seems to have slipped from the political agenda, but there is unfinished business here which must be attended to. What do Quakers have to say?

And as the year draws to an end, we wish you hope and joy at Christmas time.

**THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM**

## THE AGM OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) IN AUSTRALIA INC.

WILL BE HELD AT 9.30AM ON SUNDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2017, AT MT LAWLEY RECOGNISED  
MEETING, 35 CLIFTON CRESCENT, MT LAWLEY, PERTH.

9.30am AGM

11.00am Meeting for Worship

12.30pm Shared lunch and fellowship, followed by departures for airport

NOTE: This schedule allows for Friends travelling to other parts of Australia to leave in a  
timely manner.

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Cover photo: Mandala of the Alternatives to Violence Project

# The Power of Vision in our Peace Witness

DAVID PURNELL | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING



**T**he Quaker peace testimony offers a remarkable vision – of a world where we deal with each other and the planet with love, respect and trust. It emerged at a time of serious civil strife, division and violence. Yet it expressed what early Quakers saw: the possibility of transformation in the hearts and minds of all people through the Spirit of Christ. George Fox’s testimony that he lived ‘in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of war’ is for me the epitome of that vision. He capped it off by affirming that peace came before strife and war – or, as I might put it, peace was the natural order of things.

Over the years I have found it both inspiring and essential to maintain this vision. If I am engaged as a mediator in helping people in conflict, I need to be centred in my being, and hold those people ‘in the Light’. Only then can I offer a space in which they can handle the difficult and often painful process of listening and healing. I need a powerful vision that constructive change can occur for mutual benefit. In my personal relationships I seek to pay attention to the differences among people while at the same time becoming aware of their common humanity and how I might build bridges between them.

Early Friends were of course very clear as to the Christian basis for their testimonies. This commitment has been modified over the years for many of us, yet I consider it still important to acknowledge a Spirit beyond myself.

Many of the principles expressed in Jesus’ life have been mirrored in the lives of other great faith teachers and leaders, and have been included in international standards of human rights, development, ecological harmony and conflict prevention.

In my life the vision expressed in the peace testimony has led me to a number of significant moves. It helped me see the value of working with people as a counsellor for Life Line, as a mediator in conflicts, as national secretary for Australian Quakers, and as a worker for the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA). It also led me into forming a support agency for men, facilitating workshops for Australian Frontier to enable people to explore current challenges in society, and setting up opportunities for dialogue among diplomats and public officials (similar to what is done through the Quaker UN Offices).

Within Quakers I have relished the opportunity to be part of the national peace committee, with its focus on national and international peacemaking. I have found it stimulating and challenging to prepare briefing papers on many subjects (*Action Alerts and Watching Briefs*) to assist Friends and others to see openings for action to promote our vision of peace. When the peace committee joined with the earth-care committee in 2013 to produce a report called *Towards a Vision of a Peaceful and Sustainable Australia* I was part of the editorial group that received many responses from around the country and drew them together. The vision that came out of all this was notable to me for its reinforcement of the traditional Quaker peace values.

## Here are a few of the points:

- We recognised that any military forces were most effective when

they were seen as a police force acting in defence of Earth and its people, in effect an Earth Defence Force. We therefore committed to reducing and changing all our military thinking, hardware and operations to being part of an international police force under the control of the United Nations and the International Courts.

- The old fashioned notion of war has been replaced by an emphasis on removing the causes of violent conflict, and the use of negotiation and mediation with minimal armed police intervention in rare circumstances.
- Priority was given to promoting sexual and reproductive health, with increasing decision-making autonomy for women, youth and children, humanitarian response to disasters, and the extensive development of water and sanitation programmes, especially in Asia.
- When we decided that it was to our benefit to make Australia peaceful and sustainable, we found many other countries followed our lead and developed trade and economic relations on a sustainable basis as well.

I have been a solid supporter of the work of Quakers within the international system especially the United Nations. To me it remains a vital repository of global vision for a peaceful world. Despite regular criticisms of its reality, the organisation does provide a core set of values that point us all as individuals and nations toward what might be, and sets goals and standards to which we can aspire. The most recent example is the Sustainable Development Goals whereby all countries can be held to account for their efforts to raise

living conditions and achieve justice for minorities, as well as pay close attention to environmental impacts of growth and exploitation of resources.

At the same time I am aware that division and conflict are often more visible today, and appear intractable in many cases. We may have more education and more capacity to respond, yet we can sometimes get caught up in the despair of too much tragedy and inhumanity. This is why I find it so vital to be part of a worshipping community of Quakers. Usually when I enter worship I feel a weight lifted from me and a shared experience of connectedness. As Rufus Jones said at the time of chairing the first world conference of Friends in 1920: 'I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles, in which vital and transforming events take place'.

Similarly, the experience of a business meeting grounded in worship gives me confidence in the leadings that emerge and the energy that can be released to carry forward deep concerns for peace at all levels. The Spirit of Love can indeed work through us in this way. Two recent examples come to mind in which I was directly involved. One was the leading by the national peace committee to apply for funds from the Anzac Centenary Program to hold a series of public meetings and publish resource material on alternative narratives about war and peace. Another was the leading to hold a series of meetings at Canberra Meeting House to hear the stories of Aboriginal people connected with our region. In both cases the results have been heartening in raising awareness of peace and justice concerns and drawing in a wider range of people.

I am inspired by the example of many Quakers and others who have shown in their lives the value of a clear

vision. I will mention several:

- Our New Zealand Friend Kevin Clements (Peace Centre, Otago University) speaks of having a 'reinvigorated humanistic vision in which people and communities strive to realise justice, peace, compassion and truth in their personal, social and political relationships'.
- Jonathan Powell (Inter-Mediate) spent years negotiating in secret with the leaders of the IRA, building up trust that led to a peace agreement. He emphasises the need to avoid assuming that any situation is beyond resolution.
- Some of the greatest peace builders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been religious leaders such as Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.
- Ham Sok Hon (Korean Quaker) was fearless in speaking out for justice and peace. When the Olympic Games were held in Seoul in 1988 he convened the Seoul Assembly for Olympeace which drew up a declaration calling for world peace, and which was signed by more than 600 prominent citizens, including world leaders and Nobel Peace Prize winners.
- Elise Boulding (American Quaker) gave her life to working for peaceful relationships at all levels. In a book called *Cultures of Peace* published in 2000, she drew attention to the many examples in history where people have co-operated with each other rather than engaged in war and violence.
- Adam Curle (British Quaker) who founded the Bradford School of Peace Studies, demonstrated in his life the connection between the international and the local – being

a mediator in international conflicts whilst also working at grass roots level to educate and encourage others in the ways of peace.

- Marjorie Sykes (British Quaker who lived in India for many years) said: 'We all know the fruits of the Spirit and recognise the beauty of holiness in our own ancestral tree. The flowers of unselfish living may be found growing in other people's gardens and rich fruits of the Spirit may be tasted from other people's trees. They spring from the same Holy Spirit of Truth, the same seed of God, whose power moves through Christ'.
- The African Great Lakes Initiative, begun 17 years ago by American Friends in cooperation with those in Kenya and Burundi, has been an ongoing initiative in the face of severe conflicts in that region. David Zerembka, the coordinator of the program, has said that the major ingredients for success are grassroots peace-building, healing and reconciliation, and conflict prevention.

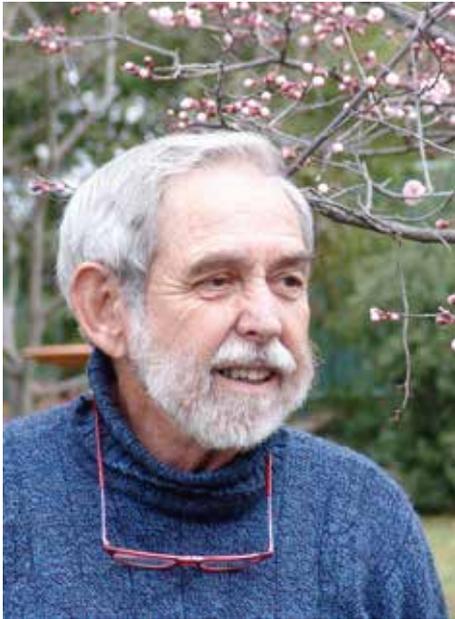
We Quakers have always had a positive vision of a peaceful world, and a high level of trust in the capacity of people to make that a reality. Whilst insisting on the individual's right to make choices about where to place their priorities for living, we have used corporate and community support to maintain the focus on the potential for a better future. We need to keep sharing our visions to strengthen our peace witness.

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# Avoiding Violence and Existential Threats

## *Mindfulness, Empathy and Compassion*

BOB DOUGLAS | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING



**A**t least ten systemic issues that are bearing down upon us are often described as ‘existential threats’, by which is meant, threats to the continued existence of human and other life on Earth.

These include the progressive collapse of life supporting ecosystems and the massive extinctions of species; the depletion of the earth’s natural resources; the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; the currently uncontrolled pace of human induced climate change; the extensive poisoning of our environment by man-made toxins, chemicals and pollution; the insecurity of the food system on which the human population

depends; the still growing human population and expansion of cities everywhere; the prospect of pandemic diseases spreading like wildfire through huge centres of overcrowding and poverty; the clever technologies that we are devising, that we imperfectly understand and are uncertain how to control; and finally the extent to which we delude ourselves that somehow, by continuing to grow our numbers and economic demands on the planet, we will stumble on a mechanism for outwitting the inevitable limits to growth.

These 10 existential threats are interlinked and together they add up to the near certainty that, without urgent transformative change in the way we behave as a species, the days of our progeny are seriously numbered. Add to those systemic threats, the appalling inequality of access to resources and protection against these growing threats, and the fear of these threats to millions of people, and we have a perfect trigger for expanding violence among and between human groups.

And yet there is a deep silence in our society about these matters. If they are mentioned at all by our political leaders it is to treat them as single independent problems that will hopefully be solved by continuing economic growth or by clever innovative technology.

Few brave souls are facing the stark reality of the human predicament, but a notable exception is Pope Francis whose encyclical, ‘Laudato Si: On care for our common home,’<sup>1</sup> was published in 2015. The Pope’s letter is being largely ignored by the world to which it

was addressed. In the closing chapter of this remarkable document Francis says

*Many things have to change course but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin; of our mutual belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us and it requires that we set out on the long path of renewal. We must regain the conviction that we need one another; that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world.*

In a recently published book, *Surviving the 21st-Century*<sup>2</sup>, Canberra writer and science communicator, Julian Cribb, boldly examines these 10 great existential challenges and identifies the ways we can approach each of them.

Cribb says

*The greatest challenge lies not in the physical threats we face, but in our own minds. Our flawed human narrative often diverts and undermines our efforts to work together for our survival.*

The author agrees with Pope Francis that this must radically change.

*Ignoring existential threats does not banish them. Inevitably, it only renders humanity less prepared.*

*There is no other way to resolve a complex problem than to face it, to understand it thoroughly and then to take resolute and agreed species wide action to prevent it.*

I think that the prevention of the inevitable violence that will result

from the deteriorating state of the human world, demands a combination of Mindfulness, Empathy and Compassion, which was the subject of a recent Australia21 Forum held in Melbourne in June 2015.<sup>3</sup>

Mindfulness means paying attention to what is happening in the present moment in the mind, body and external environment with the attitude of an observer. This innate human ability, which requires regular practice, is the essence of composure and the source of high-performance by many who practice it. A mindful approach to the existential threats identified above, requires first that we examine them in a non-judgmental and non-emotional way, recognising their complexity and proximity and the fact that they affect first and most seriously, the weakest, voiceless and most underprivileged members of the human and nonhuman world.

Empathy is the skill of stepping into the shoes of another person, understanding their feelings and perspectives and using that understanding to guide subsequent actions. Empathy has been viewed as having a number of components including emotional sharing, a capacity to share another's emotions; empathic concern, which is the motivation to care for another's welfare; and finally, developing the ability consciously to put oneself into the mind of another through cognitive and social reasoning. It is often argued that an empathic approach is part of the essential transforming quality we must now develop in the 21st-century, and

that we must move beyond empathy in individual exchanges towards a collective empathy to other groups and species as we confront the existential threats of our age.

Compassion provides the motivation for empathy. Compassion has been defined as 'being sensitive to the suffering of others, with a deep commitment to try and prevent or relieve it'. The 2008 Charter for Compassion which was drafted by religious leaders from Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism and Confucianism, opened with the words:

*The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves.*

Social activism by Christians has a long and proud history. Many of us are convinced that our human species is hurtling down the road towards an impossible and impenetrable brick wall. How can and should we act?

Transformative change in the way we deal with each other and with the planet would appear to be the only logical way to avert catastrophe. We need to shift our own gaze from our current preoccupation with the lives of our own privileged group of humans, away from selfish anthropo-centrism to a new and compassionate understanding of the health of the whole human race and of other bio-diverse species and our shared dependence on the natural world and the health of the planet, ie eco-centrism.

Pope Francis is right. We must embark on a change in our understanding of who we are as a species and how we can best promote a viable future for our descendants.

Mindfulness, empathy and compassion are three key elements of the move we must make. A violent future for our descendants seems otherwise inevitable.

*Emeritus Professor Bob Douglas is a retired public health academic, a director of Australia21 [www.australia21.org.au](http://www.australia21.org.au)*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis. Encyclical Letter 'Laudato Si' of The Holy Father Francis on 'Care for our common home.' June 2015

<sup>2</sup> Julian Cribb. *Surviving the 21st Century. Humanity's Ten Great Challenges and How We Can Overcome Them.* 265 pages. Springer 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Australia21. *Mindfulness, Empathy and Compassion: The building blocks of a mindful nation.* The report of a forum held at The University of Melbourne 10 June 2016, and available as a free download from the Australia21 website [www.australia21.org.au](http://www.australia21.org.au).

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# Domestic violence – are Friends aware?

TOPSY EVANS | SOUTH AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING



In September 1983, while I was working as a Child Welfare Officer, I had to tell two children aged 7 and 5 that their father had killed their mother, Maureen. I knew the family because they had been attending Meeting since the beginning of the year. After a few months Maureen had felt supported enough by Friends to leave her husband. She told me and some other Friends that she feared her husband would kill her, and we set in place some safety mechanisms to help her, in line with the accepted practice at the time. I know that we only partially saw the reality of her danger. After all, 'these things don't happen in Friends'.

The little 5 year old boy's response will stay with me for ever. He said quite matter of factly 'I suppose he hit her too hard this time'.

How could this happen in Friends?

The Meeting responded well to this crisis, and within a fortnight the children had been transferred to their extended family in USA. However, it was harder to shake Friends' underlying assumption that this had been a 'one off', and as such there was no need to make any changes in the way we care for each other. After all, the family had only been attending the Meeting for a few months. Later, when I had learnt much

more about what positive responses are helpful when someone gets the courage to talk about what is going wrong in their domestic relationship, I offered to run a workshop for our Elders and Overseers, so that they would feel more confident if anyone else were to approach them with a similar problem.

The response I received will also stay with me for ever. 'Oh, we don't need that, we'll just pass them on to you.'

Two aspects of that reply worried me. The first, and least important was that I had not been asked if I would take on that role. The second was the total ignoring of the courage needed to confide about intimate personal relationships with anyone, let alone be asked to tell the story all over again to someone else, not necessarily of your choosing. They chose to tell you, not anyone else.

It was almost as though no-one wanted to be involved with behaviour which is so unlike how we believe that Friends behave. After all, we respect other people, love them, care for them. Don't we? We visit prisoners, work with refugees, we work for peace and non-violence. Why is violence within the family different?

Then I found an article in a Friends' publication written by a Friend who had assisted in conducting a well accepted nationwide university-based survey on the incidence of domestic violence in USA. This survey had been rigorous and examined the incidence of various forms of spousal violence in the general

community. After the survey was completed, she asked for and obtained approval to conduct an in-house survey of all the Members of one of the Yearly Meetings in USA. After all, she reasoned, such a survey would show that the peace-loving Friends would have little or no domestic violence in their intimate relationships.

The results were personally devastating for her, and would have caused embarrassment to the Yearly Meeting concerned. Doubts were raised about the methodology of the survey. But it was the same as that used in the earlier nationwide one which had been widely accepted. Certainly the incidence of the more extreme forms of spousal violence were reduced in Friends, but overall the total number of reported incidents was very close to the national average. This could only mean that the incidence of the 'lesser' forms of violence must be higher than the national average. However what has become clear is that these 'lesser' forms of violence can be very damaging to their recipient.

From now on, please don't take offence when I use 'his' and 'her' in connection with spousal violence. If it is necessary to use terminology applicable in all situations, the result will be long-winded and tortuous. The reality is that in the overwhelming majority of situations of domestic violence, the violence is used by a man against a woman. Not always, but usually. Same sex couples can have similar problems,

and very occasionally it is the male partner who is the victim. So if you need to change the pronouns as you read, please do so!

What has become clear is that spousal violence in whatever form it takes, results overwhelmingly from an insistence on the part of one partner, usually the man, to take control of the other partner.

The means used vary widely – psychological undermining, social isolation, financial deprivation, sexual abuse, and of course physical threats and abuse. Sometimes, as a way to ensure dominance, threats are made to harm her children, family or pets. The end result will be the same – the undermining of her confidence and a stunting of her personality, together with a realistic element of fear about what he will do should she decide to leave. All this is aimed at keeping her under his control.

Sometimes this can look, from the outside, as an extremely close and caring relationship, but over time the person ‘cared for’ loses confidence and the ability to manage her own life. She does not have the space or support to develop her full potential, nor does she feel safe, or respected by her partner – quite the reverse. Many women feel shame about their predicament, which makes it even more difficult to seek help.

So it takes a huge amount of courage to tell someone ‘outside’ about the problem. So if she does so,

it is important that she be listened to, believed, and her confidence kept.

If she comes to you for help it is important to believe her, not to take over, and to encourage her to discuss possible ways to keep her safe, and to put her in touch with professional help. No amount of ‘trying harder’ to please him will alter the situation. She’s been doing that!

Maureen’s death was well publicised and it drew attention to the paucity of services for women trying to escape from violent relationships, and the ineffective legislation in Tasmania, under which the Police had insufficient powers to intervene in domestic disputes, and their training was weak. As a result of her death, the law was strengthened, and for a short time at least people were made aware of the danger endured by many women in the community. A Crisis Unit was established and its staff now attend with the Police to ensure that the woman and her children are cared for.

What is not clear to me is how far Friends’ attitudes changed. I would hope that our Meetings could be seen as understanding, informed and supportive environments where it is not assumed that just because we are Friends, family violence is not possible. Perhaps as is encouraged by Beyond Blue, we may be able to ask something like ‘Are you OK?’ if we suspect that one of our number is having problems of control or even physical violence from her spouse.

If she does tell you about a problem of spousal violence, will you be able to listen and know where she can seek professional help, with your continuing support?

Are you aware of the support services available?

Do you know where she could go to be safe, and what preparations she would need to make when she does decide to leave?

Can you support her to either leave the relationship permanently, or at least stay away until a long lasting change in his behaviour has been achieved and that it is clear that underlying assumptions about his role in the relationship have changed? He will need to change to living independently, rather than controlling others, before it is safe for her to return to the relationship. If she goes back, only believing that he will change in the future, the whole cycle of control and violence will start again.

She will need long term support to stay away to establish herself as an independent person, able to resist promises of change by her partner not backed up by a real change in underlying assumptions of his right to control the relationship.

I believe that this is possible in Friends’ Meetings if we acknowledge the reality of domestic violence in our Meetings, and the enormous courage needed to build new lives after spousal violence.

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# The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)

*A Quaker partnership contributing to alternatives to violence in our community*

KATHERINE AND MALCOLM SMITH | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



Over the years a relatively small number of Quakers have influenced many people in the areas of peace and social justice. One of the success stories of Quaker influence is the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). Most Australian Quakers are familiar with the AVP story that was so eloquently detailed by Sally Herzfeld in the 2015 Backhouse Lecture ‘This we can do: Quaker faith in action through the Alternatives to Violence Project’.<sup>1</sup>

The partnership between AVP and Quakers includes:

- The involvement of Quakers from New York Meeting in the foundation and growth of the first AVP groups which conducted AVP nonviolence workshops in New York State prisons. The principles and practices of AVP grew from Quaker principles and practices.
- The involvement of a number of Quakers worldwide as AVP facilitators and participants in workshops, and as organisers of workshops and in the AVP organisation.
- The many Quaker groups around the world that have partnered with local AVP groups and provided financial and other support to both start and maintain local AVP groups, with such support as the provision of venues and the promotion of workshops.

AVP Australia, part of the

international network of autonomous AVP groups, acknowledges with gratitude the invaluable support we have received from Quakers in Australia over the last 25 years.

Violence can occur at many levels – the personal level, the inter-personal level (relationships), and systemic level (institutional, national, international and environmental). Violence and harm can take many forms from physical through verbal to emotional, psychological and spiritual. AVP addresses all forms of violence at the level of personal and interpersonal violence. This is the ‘entry’ or foundational level of nonviolence and peace making.

Childhood and later trauma and experiences dramatically impact the size, development and structure of the brain. The brain develops in response to these experiences. The impact of trauma is often greater for children than for adults as adults have a wider life experience and more resources.

John Shulford, a psychologist and a facilitator, introduced AVP into Delaware prisons in 1990. He writes:

*‘The most significant impact of trauma is the shattering of the belief that the world is safe and that important people in the child’s life can be depended upon for protection and/or safety. The result is the child will protect itself by withdrawing and, at least emotionally, disconnect from others, which leads to the child*

*disconnecting from him/herself.’*

Drawing on the ideas of Dr James Gilligan<sup>2</sup>, Shulford says:

*‘These unhealed traumas resulted in the development of coping behaviours that were appropriate for survival as a child, but have since become destructive and have led to addiction, mental health problems and/or criminal behaviour. The psychological impact of this is disconnection from the outside world for protection which leads to a disconnection from oneself and one’s emotions. The shame, lack of empathy and lack of effective interpersonal skills that result are a leading cause of violent behaviour.’*

Responding to violent behaviour only by retribution, punishment and shaming is just treating the symptom and often aggravating the underlying condition. The AVP model directly counteracts this condition of disconnection, alienation and feelings of hopelessness.

AVP workshops are fun, engaging, connecting and transformational. An AVP workshop exposes participants to new experiences or reinforcement of past experiences of connection, safety, self-esteem, social confidence and social skills. AVP helps people to connect with themselves and with others, and gives them experiences and skills that can transform their attitudes and expectations of themselves.

Shulford expresses it thus: *‘AVP improves attitude skills (self-awareness, empathy and personal responsibility) and interpersonal skills. Each workshop begins by creating an atmosphere of affirmation, respect and caring, which build trust, intrapersonal and interpersonal connection and a community of safety. Then communication and cooperation skills are taught and that fosters hope and personal responsibility, which leads to personal and group transformation. When participants feel truly safe (physically and psychologically), which for some may be the first time in their lives and certainly the first time in prison, they lower their barriers and then are open to new ideas and to clearly see who they truly are and not who they have had to be due to circumstances or expectations of others. This reduces shame, increases empathy and when added to improved interpersonal skills, addresses the three causes of violent behavior (Gilligan). AVP is based on the premise that laws and structure make people conform, but connection and community empower people to transform.’*

Research has shown that experiencing an AVP workshop can result in the reduction of violent attitudes, incidents of violence, and the trait of anger; the improvement of attitudes, behaviour and interpersonal skills; and the reduction of prison recidivism.

AVP directly accesses the subconscious parts of the brain which impacts attitudes, habits and unhealed trauma. Being experiential in design AVP methodology can be easily adapted and replicated to suit any community and any setting around the world. People from a community can be trained to facilitate their peers and will have a high degree of credibility in

their community. AVP style workshops require few resources and are relatively easy and inexpensive to set up and run.

Over the years many experienced AVP facilitators have taken their skills using AVP methodology to educational and training settings outside AVP. One such program is ‘Transforming Conflict’, a TAFE national module that was included in many TAFE courses taught across Australia. AVP USA is currently working with a number of AVP-informed spin-offs such as ‘Recovery to Practice’ a mental health recovery training program, to develop a formal association with AVP.

AVP continues to grow and develop. Internationally AVP is a network of non-profit, secular, autonomous national and local groups that connect with a grassroots structure, so that the people who conduct local workshops run their own organisation within the informal AVP network.

Support is being expanded for newly starting groups and for the sustainability of older AVP groups. Manuals are being revised to include the wisdom and experience of AVP facilitators from around the world. Research is being conducted about how AVP works to reduce violence, how to improve the effectiveness of the workshops and the impact of AVP on the workshop participants and their communities.

One of the recent developments is the Education Best Practice Team’s development of the Core Values of AVP. This draft list of AVP core values is currently being reviewed by AVP facilitators around the world.

How have the fundamental principles and practices of AVP grown from Quaker principles and practice? You be the judge.

**Some of the core values that are being explored by AVP facilitators are:**

**Good Within Everyone:** The belief that there is something of value in all

of us and we seek to affirm and connect with that capacity for good.

**Transforming Power:** We are guided by our optimism that when we are open to Transforming Power, every situation has the potential to have a hopeful, positive outcome.

**Community:** Building, rebuilding and maintaining a sense of belonging, connectedness and safety with others. Respecting and caring for oneself while respecting and being present for others.

**Consensus:** Trusting that a level playing field exists where all are part of the process to find a way forward that everyone can accept, work with, and apply.

**Personal Nonviolence:** Taking personal responsibility for not harming oneself or others. When we recognise there are alternatives, violence is no longer an answer to conflict.

**Shared power and leadership:** Acceptance that in AVP we are all teachers and all learners. We share responsibility and draw on the strengths and wisdom of each group member. We work as a team.

**Journey of Personal Exploration:** The understanding that each person’s path is different. We each empower our own path and are open to change.

**Safety:** Creating an environment that is conducive to collaboration, personal growth and taking risks to change ourselves.

**Mutual Respect:** Building strength and confidence in oneself and honouring dignity and connection with others.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.quakers.org.au/mpage/29>

<sup>2</sup> Gilligan, J 2001. Preventing violence. Thames and Hudson, New York.

# The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)

## *Working with Aboriginal people*

SALLY HERZFELD | WESTERN AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING

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AVP has been conducting workshops in Western Australia since 1995. One of our first workshops was done with Aboriginal Social workers. The facilitators were worried that they might make cultural mistakes and specifically asked if they'd said or done anything inappropriate. They asked for honest feedback and were only told positives such as how much they liked the circles involved. We sit in a circle, our diagram that represents ways to transform a violent situation into a peaceful one is made up of two concentric circles with 'Transforming Power' written in the centre, and for an exercise we do on communication, we sit facing a partner in a double circle to practice speaking and listening. They appreciated the inclusive story-based format and that there was no lecturing or teaching. The team was obviously learning along with the participants. The conclusion was, 'Don't change anything!'

A few years later, we did another workshop with Aboriginal Social workers in the Metropolitan area. This time we had a young Aboriginal woman on our team. This made a great difference and it has become very important to us to have an Aboriginal presence in workshops with indigenous people. Our team member was such an asset because participants appreciated her leadership skills and knew what it had taken for her to get to the point of being a facilitator. We now have several Aboriginal facilitators both in

prisons and in the community. We train inmates to become facilitators.

Of course every group of participants is different. In a workshop with six Aboriginal participants in South West Australia there was a range of abilities from intellectually disadvantaged to highly intelligent, and illiterate to well educated.

There are the employed who live in good houses in towns, there are the homeless and there are those who live in outback communities still acting according to original cultural laws. As you can tell, it would be very hard to generalise. However, domestic violence, substance abuse, lack of employment and family loyalties do cause problems.

Our first Kimberley (north-west of Western Australia) workshop was in Broome prison with all indigenous participants. Those who were illiterate were helped by those who could read and write. For most, English was not their first language, but there was lots of laughter and shyness gradually disappeared. More than the usual tea breaks were included. The workshop was held on a verandah next to red soil, so diagrams to illustrate AVP philosophy were drawn on the ground.

Substance abuse in that region was a big problem and probably the main reason why these men were in prison. When this was being discussed, the participants asked the white facilitators about their relationship with alcohol and drugs. That was a bit of a challenge! It was surprising how easily the group

acted in role plays, even reversing gender roles.

My experiences with prison workshops in Broome, Derby and Darwin have been very encouraging. In the West Kimberley Regional Prison (Derby) we trained the first women inmate facilitators last year and this year we trained the first men. In both sections these people are now on the facilitation teams. This gives more hope to the participants. They see what the program has done for people who are in the same situation as themselves. To me, there is often a difference between the men and the women. The men speak more softly and less, and often seem reticent about looking to be superior to their mates by leading workshops, and are generally not as well educated. The women are more confident, more literate and don't mind leading.

A beneficial scenario for a role play is 'You are just being released, family members have come to welcome you and then they try to persuade you to celebrate with drink and drugs'. This is one of the areas in which family loyalties cause a problem.

Elizabeth Kwan has managed to initiate AVP in the new Darwin prison. After running the three levels, Basic, Advanced and Training for facilitators, she and I recently ran the first workshop with trained inmate facilitators. The prison Administration is so pleased with the results that they want us to run one workshop every month. In the lunch room, an officer told us that we



had made their job so much easier.

One reason for this, is that our workshops had proved that men who were at mixed security levels could work safely together in a program.

Imagine the satisfaction a facilitator would feel when a man says, 'I used Transforming Power with an officer last week, and although I had to go back a level in security rating, it worked! I kept my temper and my self respect!' Another touching moment for me was when I told a young man who had been in the news lately, that he was the same age and looked just like my grandson. He answered, 'I wish you were my grandma.' We often invite inmate facilitators to write their story. This is a quote from one in Darwin. He had been in prison for 7 years and in solitary confinement – again – just three weeks before: 'I was lucky enough to find myself in the first ever AVP workshop in Darwin prison. It was fun and a chance for me to get out of the block. I laughed and I made friends, but just as importantly, I saw and held words in my hands that held within them a peaceful path I could follow – the beginning of a journey. I remember walking back to my block after the final day of the first Basic workshop. I remember feeling happy I had finished something. I remember thinking with a smile across my face, perhaps words can save a life.' (He gave us his whole story for publication.)

We have also run workshops in schools. In a community school near

Perth there is a fair proportion of Aboriginal as well as New Zealand students. Here, the school psychologist and school chaplain were AVP facilitators so it was easier to organise youth workshops. They were usually conducted away from the school in a camp situation. The initial idea was to build community amongst the Aboriginal students who didn't know each other and help them to develop leadership qualities. Having only indigenous students in a workshop enabled them to explore their own backgrounds in a safe place, away from other students who might not have to face the same intergenerational problems of violence, poverty and abuse etc.

At that school, the program ran successfully for 5 years and trained some students who became adult facilitators. The AVP Youth programme became an endorsed subject for the WA Certificate of Education (yr 12). Other youth workshops with Aboriginal students have been run with mixed success, but we are learning every time – include music breaks, use practical and relevant examples, be prepared to change the agenda often to address the emotional needs of the group, have plenty of activities ready to use while waiting for late comers AND, as I stated before, always have Aboriginal adults either as team members or participants.

In addition, several Basic workshops have been held successfully in remote communities. These are limited

because of the expense of travel and accommodation. The aim, of course, is to train facilitators in the communities. In the town of Broome, we have conducted series of workshops with social workers from groups like Anglicare, Dept of Corrective Services, Men's Outreach and Alive and Kicking Goals. These groups allow their employees to do our program as Professional Development and mostly pay them to facilitate in work time because the mission of the organisation is similar to that of AVP. The Aboriginal facilitators trained through these workshops have been necessary and very important members of our teams when working in the schools or prisons. Part of the world-wide philosophy of AVP is that we are all volunteers, but young people need money and young people are good facilitators. It is very hard to get AVP going if we have to depend on volunteers in country areas.

### Note

Are there any Quakers who would like to train to be facilitators and help us spread our peaceful conflict resolution ideas? Active retirees are especially welcome!

Thank you to Jim Thom, Olwyn Maddock and Jo Vallentine from AVP WA for information I have used in this article.

AF

# How AVP works with very different groups of people

VALERIE JOY | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING



Many Friends are familiar with the Alternatives to Violence Project, which has proven its effectiveness in prisons, primary and secondary schools, community groups, universities and TAFES. In Brisbane, facilitators have developed programs which are flexible enough to reach into the damage suffered by people who were institutionalised and abused as children.

We have developed a special program at a school for troubled teenagers, which is now recognised as part of their curriculum. The basic workshop was carefully adjusted to meet the needs of the participants. The point of these workshops was to get some student leaders into the facilitating team. When students see their peers facilitating, the program feels more relatable.

Mental health is a priority. We need to be aware that inclusion is difficult at times because of the emotional vulnerability of some students. While the school ethos and practices are inclusive, and even when many of the students are accepting of difference, it is still apparent that some students find it very difficult to risk vulnerability. Some students have hair-trigger sensitivity, some students go from zero to 100 with no graduating levels in between. For some, self-esteem is so low that they feel irrelevant, despite school practices.

The most significant factor in our workshops was that the students were all boys who have difficulty with social skills for a variety of reasons. Problematic relationships, difficulties with holding conversations and maintaining friendships, paying attention, being still and those kinds of personal and interpersonal abilities and qualities are probably amongst

the reasons for them being at this alternative school. All of them 'lose it', occasionally. Some have diagnosed and verified learning disabilities or emotional disorders.

As a result we had to slow right down. The students needed to learn to not interrupt each other, the facilitators and participants, and to a certain extent, that was happening. Affirming and communicating were the key focus areas of the AVP agenda, and students went canoeing together before the workshop started and then did a ropes course on the last day in the time when we would normally do trust exercises. That was perfect. All participants loved it. Parents and other adults commented on significant behaviour changes following these workshops.

Following a workshop, a student said, 'Because of their experience at other schools, a lot of kids at our school think they are useless, dumb, the bad kids, but really we are all just different.'

Another program we have developed is called 'Peace Leadership' targeted at the Forgotten Australians. The Forgotten Australians are now a recognised group, who were formerly in Children's Homes, or were part of a child migration program from the UK.

The most recent apology to this cohort was made nationally by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in November 2009. One victim is quoted saying 'I need this apology today to release me from the pains of my past and to help assist me out of victimhood that I still get when having any dealings with any government official'.

This program was run at Lotus Place, a dedicated support service centre for Forgotten Australians and former child migrants. The workshop format was an

experiment. It was set up as six sessions, each session to be held on successive Wednesdays. The idea was to lessen the strain on participants who were and continue to be traumatised by events in their childhood. The AVP process is challenging and often tiring for people unused to such activities, particularly if the process brings up traumatic memories.

Lotus Place management are happy to offer AVP to their clients, both for its potentially intrinsic value, and to encourage their clients to successfully commit to attending the six weekly sessions.

We were innovative and adapted exercises and stretched out debriefing as long as we felt the group needed and benefitted from the input – this was one of the keys to success. It was also necessary to adapt exercises to suit the particular background of the participants, and to meet needs that became apparent during the process. The facilitators were able to trust each other to make such changes on the spur of the moment with only a 'clinic' for consultation.

All AVP programs are rigorously evaluated. The following quotes are taken from these reports.

## From a participant:

*Getting to know Alternatives to Violence brings me peace inside; Listening to others; Discovering how impatient I (still) can be and allowing myself the freedom and power of being patient; I hope I have changed on the inside – it seems other people can see it, so it must be so. I feel great that I came all the*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

# Another Way To God

REG NAULTY | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING



The four ways to God identified by Hinduism are now fairly well known. They are the way of knowledge, eg., the argument from the orderliness of the world to a designer; the way of devotion or prayer; the way of meditation as practised by yogis, and which finds its way into the Neo-Platonic tradition in the West; and the way of good works.

And there is another, mentioned by two high profile writers in their autobiographies: the way of art. Thus Robert Hughes, author, and for thirty years art critic for *Time Magazine*:

'Art was the symbolic discourse that truly reached into me...It wasn't a question of confusing art with religion, or trying to make a religion out of art. As some people are tone deaf, I was religion deaf...But I was beginning, at last, to derive from art, from architecture, and even from the beauty of organised landscape, a sense of transcendence that organised religion had offered me – but that I had never received.'<sup>1</sup>

The number of religion-deaf people whom we now encounter is immense. It is not easy to know how to help them. For Hughes, however, 'hammered gold and gold enamelling 'worked wonders. 'Tears would roll down my face,' he writes. It is probably significant that Hughes uses 'transcendent' instead of 'God'. He had witnessed a world 'higher' than this one, but he wasn't sure what it was.

And he wasn't the only one. The late eminent Australian historian, Manning Clark, is another. For him, it was the Madonna in Cologne Cathedral which reached deep within:

'The sight of that face worked a great miracle within me. The tempest within subsided, the ghosts from the past

stopped tormenting me...I will read of many men and women who have known a moment of grace while contemplating the Madonna in Cologne Cathedral... Many years later when I risked talking about the experience my whole body shook.'<sup>2</sup>

There are the 'transcendentals': truth, beauty and goodness. Solzhenitsyn speculated that if truth were too obscure, and goodness too confused by conflicting opinions, then perhaps beauty could do duty for all three. But for Hughes and Clark, what opened the door was more specific than beauty. It was works of art. Note that Clark writes that the door was opened to something from beyond, 'grace', but he doesn't go any further.

Opening the door is not yet stepping into the room. Something more must be done. Hughes was not interested enough to do any more. But Clark was. He was a deeply religious man, a genuine seeker if ever there was one, but he doesn't seem to have got into the room either. What happened? I suggest that what prevented him getting any further was a particular concept of what God is like, and how God stands in relation to humanity. If God is conceived as infinite in power and goodness, and nothing like the sinful, finite, ignorant creatures that we are, then getting closer to God is ruled out. Clark seems to have had that concept.

What is to be done here? More friendly persuasion? That may help, but the best way of persuading people that they can get closer to God, is by them seeing instances of people who have. Unfortunately, such people cannot be produced on demand, but most religious traditions have them in their records. One of the most famous examples is in

the Russian tradition, St. Seraphim of Sarov, who, in the nineteenth century, was transfigured, as was George Fox:

'And after this I passed to Cambridge that evening, and when I came into the town it was all in uproar, hearing my coming, and the scholars were up, and were exceeding rude. But I kept on my horseback and rid through them in the Lord's power. 'Oh!' said they, 'he shines, he glisters'.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, to accept such accounts is to rely not on sight, but on testimony.

There is an understandable belief that transfiguration is just a conventional way of representing sanctity – haloes. I shared that belief until I saw it myself, several times. The first two were at the ANU in about 1970. One was a visiting physics professor, another was an Anglican theologian giving a talk about the reliability of the gospels, another was at a yearly meeting in Adelaide, in, I think, 2002. She has since died; she was well known among Friends, but it wouldn't be appropriate to name her.

I have pointed out that art can give an experience of the transcendent, but to advance further, we need to be convinced that it is possible to do so, and the best way of being convinced is by seeing people who have done it, or, failing that, by reading about them.

[1] Robert Hughes. *Things I Didn't Know. A Memoir*. Random House. Sydney. 2006. ISBN 978 1 74166 475 1 [pbk] 513p. p.348.

[2] Manning Clark. *The Quest For Grace*. Penguin Australia. 1990. ISBN 0 14 014335 1 p.221.P75.

[3] Douglas V. Steere. *Quaker Spirituality*. SPCK. London. 1984.334p. P.91

AF



# QSA Notes

## Peacebuilding

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



Community members restoring a kanmai.  
Photo credit – Vasandham Society



Community protests, and awareness raising campaigns in Tamil Nadu. Photo credit – Vasandham Society

For development work in Australia, and around the world, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form the main guidelines. Agreed to by all 193 members of the United Nations in 2015, the SDGs aim to achieve peace, prosperity and sustainability for all people by 2030. It is recognised that to address poverty, the world must also address the growing inequality within and between countries, the increasing strain on the world's resources and the global environment, and the burgeoning threats to peace and stability. Goal 16 in particular is relevant to peace building as it states:

*To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The ideas to drive progress on this goal focuses on a range of elements that underpin peaceful, inclusive and*

*effective societies, particularly the impact of conflict and violence.*

Although QSA's work addresses issues such as food and water security, environmental restoration, and poverty alleviation, many of QSA's current projects funded in part by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, have specific actions designed to bring about peace.

### Tamil Nadu

For example, in the work of project partner Vasandham Society in Tamil Nadu, south India, a key issue creating disharmony within these communities is access to resources, and in particular water. There are nine open reservoirs, called kanmais, which Vasandham Society maintains to ensure that farmers do not encroach on the periphery by planting crops in the fertile, damp soils, or construct fences which prevent cattle

and villagers from accessing the water. If Vasandham Society, and the 150 women's self-help groups it has helped to form, discover access to the water supply has been denied, they report this to the authorities in the hope that they will take action. If no action takes place, as has been the case in the past, then the community rallies behind Vasandham Society and peaceful protests take place. Vasandham Society also provides a range of workshops for the community, on topics such as reduction of violence towards women and girls, and issues relating to preventing child marriages.

### Cambodia

Another example comes from Cambodia, and the work being undertaken by QSA's project partner Khmer Community Development. QSA has reported several times about the specific peace building activities being conducted in



Gender workshop given by staff from Khmer Community Development Photo credit - KCD



Hon Non and Tin Sokha. Photo credit Khmer Community Development

the community of Prek Chrey near the border with Vietnam. Here they have established a peace club in the school, which helps students address instances of bullying, and the project overall is working to reduce inter-racial tension between the Cambodian and Vietnamese groups. Recent workshops have also been working to address peace within the home, by running gender awareness sessions.

Some of the participants had some interesting comments to make. Tin Sokha who is the sub-chief of the village, attended the workshop with his wife Hon Non. They are both very active in supporting community initiatives. Tin Sokha said KCD had invited him and his wife several times before to join the

gender workshop, but he did not attend because:

*I thought that all families who learn about gender were families who have problem such as violence. This time was the first time that we had attended the gender training, and it turned out to be different from what we thought it might be.*

Now he understands about the meaning and concept of gender, sex, and gender quality and gender equity. He plans to share his knowledge with other families in the community and is happy that he understands more about his wife's feelings. Hon Non said:

*Thank you so much KCD and the donors that you give us this chance to learn and understand about gender.*

Mean Seoun is a 56 year-old farmer who lives with her mother and brother. She said before she was ashamed to interact with other people and only stood in the house and did not go anywhere. But now thanks to KCD who invited her to the training and gave her a chance without discriminating, she was able to learn a lot and to be more confidence. She continued to say:

*KCD staff have always encouraged me to join with the community and to participate in other KCD activities. Now I know a lot especially about gender and I think in a positive way and love myself and others.*

AF

### A message from QSA

The Living Gifts catalogues will be in your Meetings by the time you are reading this edition of QSA Notes. We are happy to accept donations at any time, either by cheque, credit card or direct credit to QSA's bank account with the CUA, BSB 814 282, account number 505 85902. It is really important that if you do use direct credit or simply send funds via your credit card that you also either send the office an email, to [john@qsa.org.au](mailto:john@qsa.org.au) or [administration@qsa.org.au](mailto:administration@qsa.org.au) or phone us on 02 9698 9103 so that we know who the donation has come from, and to which of our funds you wish it to go to. With this information we can then send out a receipt, and Living Gifts cards if appropriate.

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development, and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The Purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

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# Who are these Knitting Nannas Against Gas?

HEATHER SAVILLE | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



**K**nitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG) was established in the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales in June 2012, in response to a growing awareness of the exploration for unconventionally mined gas in our prime agricultural land. We have grown out of the Stop Coal Seam Gas movement and have strong links with the Lock the Gate Alliance (more of that later).

As our website says, ‘we peacefully and productively protest against the destruction of our land, air, and water by corporations and/or individuals who seek profit and personal gain from the short-sighted and greedy plunder of our natural resources. We support energy generation from renewable sources, and sustainable use of our other natural resources. We sit, knit, plot, have a yarn and a cuppa, and bear witness to the war against those who try to rape our land and divide our communities.’

KNAG aims to bring attention to the environmental damage associated with CSG extraction, to raise awareness of the dangers of such mining to individuals’ health and our drinking water, to gain media attention using direct non-violent action and humour, and to increase support for ending Coal Seam Gas mining.

To do this we employ a variety of tactics from sitting on the pavement outside politicians’ offices (having, of course, notified both the politician and the local media in advance), to seeking support for petitions to State Parliament, and attending protests and blockades. Regular protests include knitting outside the offices of AGL and other gas companies to lobby staff, shareholders and others passing by. Recently nannas from all over New South Wales were part of a large demonstration at the AGM of AGL in Martin Place in Sydney.

We aim to make protests and blockades safe, to support people asserting their right to protest. We want to make sure that our servants, the politicians, represent our democratic wishes and know they are accountable – to us. We are very happy to remind them of this – often. We represent many who cannot make it out to protests – the elderly, the ill, the infirm, people with young children and workers.

We usually knit in yellow and black to identify with ‘Lock the Gate’ triangles mounted at the entrance to many properties. Lock the Gate Alliance aims to make very clear that its members do not want mining on or under their land and will peacefully

prevent it happening.

KNAG draws on a long history of knitting used as a tool for non-violent political activism, though we view our knitting skills as less important than the act of bearing witness while we knit. Our knitting choices range from functional items for sale to more symbolic objects, including long lengths of knitting, which are thrown over fences and gates in danger from drill rigs, and cushions for those who have locked themselves onto barriers.

There are now local KNAG groups in many places around the country, each employing their own methods of gaining support for the aims of KNAG. In the Illawarra, which is my local group, we have been the mainstay of the Stop CSG stall in the regular Friday Wollongong Markets. The stall has sought to raise public awareness of the dangers of CSG mining generally, and especially in the drinking water catchment areas. The Illawarra Stop CSG movement arose in 2011 when it became clear that there were 16 exploration licences on the geologically unstable escarpment above the city. Our emphasis at the stall has been to garner support for petitions that can then be presented at State Parliament, thus generating debate about the whole



question of CSG mining and the risks it poses to agricultural land and drinking water catchment areas.

Joining the Nannas and others at the stall has been Cuthbert, who is the mascot of the Illawarra KNAGS. As you can see, Cuthbert does his bit to encourage signatories for the petition.

In the lead-up to both the 2015 state election and the July federal election the Illawarra KNAGS visited the offices of many candidates (both sitting members and others) and put to them three questions:

- Do you support a ban on coal seam gas mining in the drinking water catchment?
- Will you vote for legislation for a permanent ban on coal seam gas mining in the drinking water catchment?
- Will you move legislation for a permanent ban on coal seam gas mining in the drinking water catchment?

A fourth question is now being asked, following the Victorian Government announcement prohibiting CSG exploration and mining in that state: 'Would you support a ban on unconventional gas development in NSW similar to the one announced in Victoria?'

When KNAGS began in 2012, around 65 per cent of New South Wales was covered by exploration licences. Exploration licences, it should be understood, are not authority to go ahead and mine. They are issued for a set

time period during which exploration is supposed to be undertaken, to determine whether a follow-up application to proceed with mining will be sought. These exploration licences had been granted by both Labor and Coalition state governments over decades, sometimes to small and little-known companies. The actual extraction licences are then taken over by larger well-recognised companies. This system has sometimes meant that landholders have given permission for entry to their land, or worse, sold their property, without fully realising the use to which it was going to be put.

The Stop CSG movement, which of course includes the Knitting Nannas, has undertaken a wide range of activities designed to bring the dangers of CSG mining to the attention of the public. The movement's efforts contributed in large part to the huge swings against Coalition politicians in northern NSW in the March 2015 election – over 27 per cent in one seat and 30 per cent in another. One of these was won by the Greens, in an electorate that had been held by the National Party for decades.

Mining companies' tendency to be somewhat 'economical with the truth' regarding their activities has contributed to the change in public opinion. One example of this late last year was in the Gloucester area, where a mining licence had been issued and extraction had commenced. The wastewater from the extraction process – known as fracking – contains huge

quantities of toxic chemicals. This was illegally dumped into the Hunter Valley water supply, with the dumping being recorded by local activists. Mining has now ceased in the Gloucester area.

Following the March 2015 New South Wales election, the Coalition government assessed the political risks and came to the conclusion that exploration licences should no longer be allowed in drinking water catchments and prime agricultural land. As a result, most of the then-existing licences were cancelled, reducing the proportion of NSW covered by such licences to 9 per cent. However, this apparent success may well be temporary, as without legislation there is nothing to prevent future governments or future ministers from reinstating or issuing new licences.

Until recently the various protests, (including blockades) have been treated fairly leniently by the NSW government and the courts. However, that seems to be changing. At the end of October, legislation was enacted designed, in its own words, to crack down on 'interference with mining and other businesses or undertakings'. This follows similar legislation passed in the Tasmanian parliament to be used against anti-logging protestors.

While this new law is clearly intended to enable mining to proceed unimpeded by troublesome radicals trying to preserve the country for future generations, KNAGS believe that the cause is worth defending.

AF

# Quaker Grannies at Pine Gap

JO VALLENTINE | WESTERN AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING



Dawn Joyce, Helen Bayes and Peri Coleman set up breakfast to share at the gates of Pine Gap. Photo: Glenn Todd

Quaker Grannies made quite an impact in Alice Springs/Pine Gap last month.

Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Pine Gap, a military war-making spy base in the living heart of our country, people gathered from all over Australia, and international guests from Japan, Guam, the Philippines too, countries which also experience the presence of U.S. military bases in their countries.

The Independent Peaceful Australia Network organised a well attended public meeting and a day-long conference, plus a cavalcade to the gates of Pine Gap.

There was an activist element – people concerned to their make their nonviolent civil disobedience actions obvious, prepared to be uncomfortable while they discomfited the military.

Then there were the Quaker Grannies – a small group of witnesses for peace who organised a listening post in the Todd Street Mall, who offered croissants to the base personnel at dawn as they arrived for work, and who were appreciated as a solid and peaceful presence wherever their bonnets and banners were spotted. There were so many positive comments and photos in the local paper.

It was good to be part of such a group. In all, seven Quakers were present around Alice, although not together at any one time. Most of the Grannies were billeted together, and we began each day with a reading and reflection, which stood us in good stead for the day's activities. It was a busy and fulfilling time: a well attended public

meeting during which we heard about the added roles of Pine Gap, especially in conducting drone warfare; the AGM of IPAN where Quaker involvement in the management committee of IPAN was discussed; the stimulating conference itself where we heard from indigenous Arrente people, as well as others involved in challenging various aspects of the war machine; workshops where participants were invited to suggest ways forward; a lamentation from ANZAC Hill with a lantern procession through the town; a final cavalcade to the gates of Pine Gap where a Quaker tabard was requested by the chief police officer as a memento; attendance at the Alice springs weekly Quaker meeting, which was a joy!

For me, helping organise the IPAN aspects, mostly by phone over the last year, resulted in my appointment as facilitator for the Saturday conference – quite a big job as there were many sessions and speakers to co-ordinate. But it was all worthwhile, and we demonstrated that a national committee can work together effectively and co-operatively over long distances and over time. But we didn't manage to close Pine Gap ... not that that was an expected outcome, but we live in hope, and in witness to peace, and in opposition to war.

## First make your bonnet

*Peri Coleman, South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting*

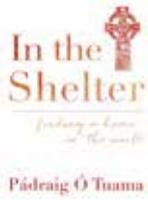
It always surprises me how many people 'remember' the Quaker Grannies as dressing in full period clothing. We don't, you know. We dress in our

everyday clothing. The only things that mark us as Quaker Grannies are a bonnet and, optionally, a kerchief. Such a simple yet profound little change.

While Helen and Dawn had been given, or found, beautiful antique bonnets and Jo has a cotton kapp, I needed to make my bonnet and that process was a journey through the testimonies in itself. I wanted the bonnet to have its own integrity, to be true to the past but to also be a real, usable bonnet for today. The Quaker bonnets of the 1860-90s with their formed brims, silk material and wide ties looked beyond my capacity as a seamstress, so I looked further back in time to the 1760-1800 poke bonnets you may have seen in the pen drawing used to illustrate Lancaster University's 'Radical Spirituality' online course. I purchased a carefully researched pattern. It arrived, and I opened the packet. The directions were frightening, so I took the pattern down to my local fabric store and told the store owner what I was trying to do. She found me some soft, crush resistant wash'n'wear fabric, as well as modern stiff interfacing that can stand the occasional gentle dip in water, the right threads and ribbons and the correct needles so that my sewing machine would not 'skip' when sewing the various weights of materials. I went home full of gratitude. I obviously could not do this without community – the pattern researcher and the fabric shop owner had smoothed my path and I was full of confidence again.

I ended up making two bonnets,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21



## In the Shelter – Finding a home in the world

**PÁDRAIG Ó TUAMA**

published by Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. ISBN: 9781444791709

When I heard Rachel Kohn's interview with Pádraig Ó Tuama on the ABC, I was impressed by his gentle humour and his compassion, so I ordered his book. I was not disappointed.

The title comes from an Irish saying 'It is in the shelter of each other that people live'. Pádraig is the leader of the Corrymeela Community in Belfast,

Northern Ireland, Ireland's oldest peace and reconciliation organisation.

*In the Shelter* is a collection of memories, anecdotes, poems and reflections which follow Pádraig's journey from a time of confusion about religion and identity to a place of acceptance. The style is informal, and like the very best told stories, engages the reader, mind, heart and spirit. Although the stories flow easily, the lengthy references at the end of the book reflect the author's careful scholarship and high regard for his many sources which include the Bible, *Lord of the Rings* and Leonard Cohen's song lyrics.

I admire Pádraig's imagination, his ability to see the good in people and the potential for good in all situations. '...there are always moments when goodness makes its own way to the centre, despite our best efforts' (p25). Pádraig sees ordinary, everyday moments as potential gifts of grace, moments of truth.

The author was raised a Catholic in Ireland. After training for the priesthood, Pádraig was confronted with the conflict between his church's attitude to homosexuality and his identity as a gay man. He left the priesthood, moved away from home and lived in Northern Ireland, England, USA and Australia.

Working as a chaplain with the Uniting Church in Melbourne, he organised retreats for school children and adults. His book describes teaching experiences at these retreats, as well as his own learning from the students.

Pádraig's website states that his main interests are in storytelling, theology and conflict. This is certainly true. However, what appeals to me most about Pádraig's book is his curiosity and genuine interest and love for all people.

**JO JORDAN**

*South Australia and Northern Territory  
Regional Meeting*

### QUAKER GRANNIES- CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

with deep and shallower brims, and used my machine for all sewing bar the lining, in order to make the bonnets sturdy. The finished bonnets are quick to put on, and can take a bit of robust handling. They don't need a bonnet box, as they roll up when not in use – you can actually store them in a postage roll!

While I was preparing for the journey north, my daughter and a grandson visited, both donning a bonnet to send an electronic message of solidarity with

the Quaker Grannies for Peace. Once the bonnet is on, it seems to remind us we are equally ministers. And this was so in Alice Springs as well. I came new to 'Quaker Granny' not having been with Helen, Dawn and Jo at Shoalwater Bay. Once bonneted however, it was easy to slot into the work of listening to the bypassers in the Todd Street Mall, providing support to the other activist groups, dialoguing with the local and federal police, participating in

our own 'tea table' action and meeting other activists, tourists and local people 'where they were'. The days were long, and often I was more than ready for bed when I finally reached it. We worshipped, reflected and lamented. We did not see the immediate closure of Pine Gap – really! But I felt we were engaged throughout the time in Alice Springs in some serious works of peacemaking.

AF

### HOW AVP WORKS – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

*Wednesdays. I am happy with myself; I loved Role play – so I can see what others see in different situations; Remembering to connect with the Transforming Power within.*

**From a facilitator:**

*What impresses me is the interest and enthusiasm participants have in processing the exercises – probing*

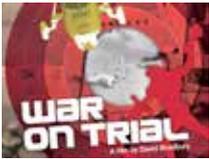
*really deeply into their own experience. In our own feedback session, we see that we still need to be mindful of slowing down the pace and ensuring that all have had an opportunity to share. Silence is OK.*

I hope readers not familiar with AVP can develop understanding of the program through these two examples.

Other States report on similar adjustments they have made to the program, whilst keeping true to AVP's philosophy. Please give any support you can to this entirely voluntary program, which is bringing peaceful change to lives of people damaged by early trauma.

VALERIE JOY IS PRESIDENT OF AVPQ INC

AF



## Film review: War on trial

A FILM DIRECTED BY DAVID BRADBURY

On October 20th 2016, at Devonshire St Meeting House, the NSW Quaker Peace and Justice Committee hosted a screening of several peace related films. One of these was *War on Trial* directed by David Bradbury. *War on Trial* premiered at Australia Yearly Meeting 2016.

This film documents activities of two courageous peace activists, Bryan Law and Graeme Dunstan, influenced by the work of the American Plowshares Movement. The American Plowshares movement focused their antiwar activities on symbolic targets referencing the Biblical text from Isaiah:

‘And they will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation nor will they train for war anymore.’ Isaiah 2:4

Bryan Law, in 2011, with help from Graeme Dunstan, took bolt cutters to the gate of the enclosure where a \$68 million Tiger helicopter belonging to the Australian armed forces was parked during war games conducted by the US and Australian armed forces near Rockhampton, Queensland.

We see Bryan, furnished only with an adult tricycle and a garden mattock, evade a security guard, approach the helicopter and with the mattock whack a hole in the helicopter about the size of a Violet Crumble. By this act he created damage to the value of approximately \$160,000, apparently because of the high quality of the special paint on the helicopter’s surface. One cannot escape an awareness of the massive cost of military hardware perhaps better spent elsewhere.

Both men were charged with damaging Commonwealth property but sadly Bryan Law passed away before the charges came to court. So it was only Graeme Dunstan who went to court in August 2013.

Now by this point in the movie I found myself about 10 per cent grumpy with the whole idea. I would never take a whack at an extremely expensive object; like some other Quakers, I’m much too ‘nice’. It seems so exhibitionistic and, dare I say, violent.

So I’m glad I got the DVD from Quaker Peace and Justice in order to take a second look at it.

Graeme Dunstan emerges as a very complex individual. Inspired by his revered grandfather, a Boer War veteran who enlisted in the First World War and was killed on his very first WW1 engagement, Graeme starred in the cadets through school, and went enthusiastically on to Duntroon. By his second year at Duntroon he was completely disillusioned by the level of bastardisation and other attitudes. He left, went to Uni, and immersed himself in the anti-conscription movement at the time of the Vietnam war. He has spent his life within the peace activism and environmental fraternities.

He is frank in the movie that ‘nice’ protests (my phrase) change nothing. Something more powerful is necessary, like the attack on the helicopter which symbolically references the quote from Isaiah. The publicity generated by such action also touches a large number of the members of the public and stimulates thinking about the issue. He stresses in the film that he and Bryan Law didn’t set fire to the helicopter and destroy it (which they easily could have done); their action was calculated to be symbolic of beating of a sword into a ploughshare.

Graeme was supported through the courtcase by a wide spectrum of faith-based and non-faith-based activists, including Quaker Dawn Joyce from Queensland Regional Meeting.

Support also came from Rev. Simon Moyle of the Baptist Church, Donna Mulhearn who had been a human shield in Iraq, journalist Jackie Dent, and Sean O’Reilly who acted as his McKenzie Friend (not a lawyer but someone who supported him in court, because, as he was pleading guilty, he was not eligible for Legal Aid.)

Graeme demonstrated that it is really the helicopter which is on trial when it is exposed to the world, murdering and creating terror. At his trial he screened the Wikileaks documentary footage, now known as Collateral Murder, which was leaked to the world by US Servicewoman, Private Chelsea Manning. It shows a hovering US helicopter crew watching Iraqi civilians tending wounded countrymen (including children) in the wake of a bomb attack. This shocking footage is included in *War on Trial*. We hear the helicopter crew request permission from their command to destroy the group aiding the wounded and removing the corpses. And we hear the permission granted. Then the helicopter crew do indeed blast away the wounded and the people helping them.

These are theatres of war to which the Australian Government had committed us, and the battle culture with which we have aligned ourselves.

Servicewoman Chelsea Manning is serving a 35-year prison sentence for releasing this footage to the world.

*War on Trial* gets tense during Graeme’s courtcase, because his offence carries a potential sentence of ten years gaol. The jury are absent for a long time. It is known to be a ‘hung’ jury, having difficulty reaching a conclusion. Graeme sees this in itself as a ‘win’, because it makes the point that the jury, a sample of typical Australians, is finding his guilt a matter requiring very deep thought and consideration.

The outcome of the case?

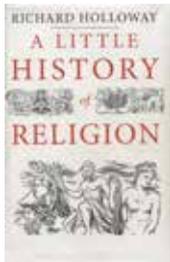
Aha! That would be telling! Do you remember what it was? If not Google it, or borrow the DVD from Devonshire

St LM library. Maybe you could screen it at your Local Meeting.

And guess what? You get the Quaker Grannies on the same DVD!

**ACEY TEASDALE**

*New South Wales Regional Meeting*



## A Little History of Religion

**RICHARD HOLLOWAY**

published by Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2016.

“What is religion? And where does it come from? Religion comes from the mind of the human animal, so it comes from us.”

An opening like this might be expected to herald an attack on orthodox religion. On the contrary, Richard Holloway – formerly Primus (senior bishop) of the Episcopal Church of Scotland – presents a sympathetic, non-judgemental description of the world’s major (and many minor) religions. His approach is summed up in his opening chapter:

‘Sceptics wonder whether some of these prophets even existed. And they doubt the claims made in their visions and voices. Fair enough, but that is to miss the point. What is beyond dispute is that they exist in the *stories* told about them, stories that still carry meaning for billions of people today.’

Holloway starts his review of religions in an approximate chronological order with Hinduism, with its belief in reincarnation, and its offshoots, the Buddhists and the Jains. He then reviews the Old Testament, the foundation of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, from Abraham

to Job. His retelling of the old stories contains insights into their significance to the Jews at the time of writing.

He then covers Zoroastrianism and its offshoot in the Indian Parsees. Holloway suggests some aspects of Persian Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism during the captivity in Babylon. The next group covered are what he calls the pragmatic Chinese religions, Confucianism and Taoism. These are really philosophies for living, with little supernatural content. Then follows brief surveys of Japanese Shinto, and Greek religion and its Roman derivatives.

Holloway gives a good overview of Islam, and of the Sikh religion, founded by Guru Nanak in an attempt to meld elements of Islam and Hinduism. But probably of greatest interest to us is his coverage of Christianity.

His approach to Christianity is unusual in that he starts by discussing Paul, and his relationship with the other Apostles. As he points out, Paul’s interest in Jesus is mainly centred on actions after his death, rather than during his life. Paul must get the credit, however, for insisting that Christianity was not a Jewish sect, but belonged to the whole world.

When Holloway finally discusses Jesus, he includes the caveat: ‘I don’t want to get into arguments about how or where he was born and how exactly he rose from the dead. . . I want to stick to the most generally accepted facts about him. They are compelling enough.’ His discussion of Jesus’s life, therefore, focuses on his teaching on relationships between people, rather than with the supernatural.

Holloway discusses the history of the Church through its adoption by Constantine, its development as a monolithic power, to the Reformation. He contrasts Henry VIII’s reformation, in which the authority of the Pope was refuted, but the structure of the Church left largely intact, with the more radical reformation under Knox in Scotland.

In his coverage of American religion,

Holloway covers African-American Christianity, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, and the various Adventist sects. He then describes the Church of Scientology and the Unification Church (‘the Moonies’), attempting to remain non-judgemental – as far as possible.

He ends his book with a chapter on ecumenism, both within the Christian Churches and in movements such as Baha’i, a chapter on the anger which has arisen within fundamentalist faiths against changes in the modern world, some thoughts on holy wars, and the future for secular humanism and the possible end of religion.

Within his book Holloway has one chapter devoted to Quakers, in which he describes George Fox as ‘one of the most attractive figures in the history of religion.’ The chapter is mainly devoted to the Quakers’ part in the abolition of slavery, particularly in America. He says:

‘And they knew by the light that guided them that slavery was just plain wrong. If all people were of equal value then it was wrong to treat some of them as less than human, as property rather than children of God. And if the Bible said otherwise *then the Bible was wrong!*’

With attitudes like this, Holloway points out, Quakers promoted a more intelligent way of reading the Bible, which eventually led to the historical-critical study of scripture.

He sums up his chapter with:

‘The Society of Friends may be one of the smallest denominations in the world but its influence is enormous. It remains Christianity’s conscience.’

If you are a student of the world’s religions and need to know the more arcane theological specifics, this book may not be for you. It is, however, an ideal book to introduce a young person to the world of religion, guided, as it were, by a kindly uncle.

**DAVID SWAIN**

*New South Wales Regional Meeting*

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# The Australian Friend

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- 1 August for the September edition
- 1 November for the December edition.

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