

National Newsletter



Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia)

Autumn 2009



The Alice Springs community opposing new uranium mines planned close to the town. MAPW's Hilary Tyler is holding the "V". (Story page 7.)

Welcome to MAPW: 2009

By Nancy Atkin, MAPW EO

This National Newsletter once again documents the extraordinary work of MAPW members.

Around the country, our members scarcely rested over the summer: using their expertise to advise both communities and our governments, on issues ranging from the toxic effects of uranium mining, to nuclear

safeguards, and the alarming use of "conventional" weapons in Gaza.

As our President Sue Wareham notes overleaf, these are important times. While bushfires draw attention to our society's sustainability, the new US government brings new hope for progress on nuclear weapons, and for a less bellicose foreign policy.

Welcome to the steady stream of new members supporting our work — especially to students and new graduates, who play an growing role in MAPW activities around Australia.

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Affiliated with International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW): Nobel Peace Prize winner 1985

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MAPW President's report

Change is a-brewing

By Dr Sue Wareham OAM

2009 holds much promise.

That might come as a surprise, following the horrifying start to the year in Gaza, and terrible wars raging in Darfur, Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

And, as I write, the extent of the unprecedented bushfire catastrophe in Victoria unfolds, possibly a sign of a world heating up and becoming more conflict-prone. Our sincere condolences to members and others in Victoria who have suffered loss.

However there are changes afoot. The greatest is the inauguration of US President Barack Obama, who has enunciated his goal of a nuclear weapons free world.

Here in Australia, Prime Minister Rudd's International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, and also the parliamentary inquiry into our nuclear treaty commitments, have put the issue of nuclear weapons right back on the political agenda. MAPW, IPPNW and other organisations have pushed for these opportunities.

MAPW and others will also be drawing attention this year to the stark economic and other costs of a rising military budget, and to the Talisman-Sabre joint US-Australia military exercises in Queensland in July.

Change is possible, but it doesn't just happen. We make it happen.

Here's how you can help.

MAPW has one major request to make of you. Please find us another member before June 30. We need to grow in numbers and financial strength.



Sue Wareham

Recommendation from a colleague is by far the best way for us to gain recruits.

And remember, you do not need to be an "active" member to be a valuable member. Every member adds to our credibility and influence.

Just give an MAPW brochure, or even just the website address, to one or more of your colleagues, and that is a great additional contribution.

For those of you who are time-poor but not short of funds, it's easy to strengthen our work even more.

Every extra \$100 or \$500 or \$1,000 you give to MAPW (tax deductible through our new Peace Fund) will be put to very good use.

As we report on page 5, you will soon be invited to donate to ICAN Give, to ensure the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons continues beyond June this year. Please do what you can to make sure it does.

Peace to you in 2009. Onward with creating the future our children and grandchildren deserve.

Membership forms are on our website

www.mapw.org.au

or call us, 03 8344 1637

Dirty and dangerous

By Associate Professor Tilman Ruff

In November I undertook an extraordinary journey through India, as guest of our sister organisation, Indian Doctors for Peace and Development.

Commemorating Jawarhalal Nehru's major contribution to peace and nuclear disarmament on the anniversary of his birth, I spoke about ICAN in six cities across India: to medical schools, hospitals, the Indian Medical Association, media, and civil society organisations.

I also visited communities in Jadugoda, where most of India's uranium, including for its nuclear weapons, is mined. The opportunity to share their experiences and build international links was deeply appreciated by village leaders and the community-based Jadugoda Organisation Against Radiation. They greatly valued discussing the health and environmental dangers of uranium mining and nuclear power, and want to use the posters MAPW has developed on the nuclear fuel chain in their communities.

Leaders of all the 12 villages closest to the mines have worked together to force the Indian government to abandon, at least for the time being, its plans to build nuclear power plants in the area.



MAPW Vice President Tilman Ruff in Dungridgh-2 village, at the foot of the wall of tailings dam 3. This village has been repeatedly flooded by tailings waste. Here, village leaders receive copies of the Indian Doctors for Peace and Development health survey, translated into their local language

I was appalled by what I saw, and the extent of the secrecy and callous disregard for the health of mine workers, their communities, and their lands and waters.

Mine workers described not having personal protective equipment in underground mines, rarely if ever being given film badges, and never being informed about their exposures when they were measured.

Villagers live, use water and grow food meters from tailing pipes and dams from which leaks have occurred at least annually. At least one village has been

inundated by tailings waste on several occasions, with essentially no clean-up.

No information on radiation or chemical contamination is publicly available, and the government Uranium Corporation of India both runs the mines and mills and is responsible for monitoring and regulating its operations.

It was a stark reminder of the unique hazards posed at every stage of this dirty and dangerous industry, even before the uranium gets into reactors or weapons.

Gaza: MAPW raises issues of concern

MAPW President Sue Wareham has been raising the humanitarian and health costs of the Gaza blockade with the Government, Israeli representatives, and the public; through letters and also supporting a newspaper advertisement calling for an end to the recent bombing. After Foreign Minister Stephen Smith replied to us on 4 February, Sue responded to congratulate the Governments on providing humanitarian relief to the people of Gaza, suggesting that aid be increased, and urging that Australia facilitate the passage of food and medical goods.

Sue's letter also raised the issue of the confirmed use of white phosphorous (WP) weapons in Gaza. MAPW asked whether reports that the Minister had suggested that this may have been justified, were correct.

MAPW included information about the effects of white phosphorous weapons on humans; and urged that the Government work for a complete ban on the use of phosphorous weapons.

Our letter noted medical reports of the apparent use in Gaza of a new type of weapon, possibly DIME (Dense Inert Metal Explosive) weapons, producing unusual injuries and many amputations.

We suggested that Australia urge Israel to disclose what weapons have been used. Our letter supported the cessation of arms smuggling and raised the responsibility of Israel's arms suppliers, including the US and also Australia.

Need for clear path to weapons abolition

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) initiated by Australia and co-chaired by Japan, held its second meeting in Washington on 13-15 February. Gareth Evans is the Australian Co-Chair.

Members of the Commission met US Vice President Biden, and other senior officials to hear their priorities, and push for measures including ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; negotiations on a fissile materials treaty; deep reductions in Russian and US stockpiles; commitments to no first use and not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear threats, and real progress before the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in May 2010.

The Commission will next meet in Moscow in June, focusing on the nuclear industry.

MAPW Vice President Tilman Ruff comments:

The initial outcomes of the Commission's meeting in Washington are encouraging.

No task is more important than ensuring nuclear weapons are never again used. That means getting to zero. President Obama's commitment to this goal with specific, time-bound steps provides an opportunity that must be grasped.

The most useful way the ICNND can be effective is to lay the groundwork for negotiations to start on a comprehensive treaty to abolish nuclear weapon — a Nuclear Weapons Convention. Conventions have already been achieved on chemical and biological weapons, landmines and cluster munitions.

A Nuclear Weapons Convention is long overdue, and would provide a clear roadmap to abolish weapons.

The Commission also needs to communicate its work, and engage the global public to help generate political will, and ensure the work of the Commission doesn't get buried — as was its predecessor, the Canberra Commission.

Australia must show it is serious about nuclear disarmament by no longer sheltering under a 'nuclear umbrella', and making sure that Australian facilities and personnel play no part in the possible use of nuclear weapons.

These steps would enormously boost the profile and credibility of the government and Commission, and make us all safer by reducing the likelihood of Australia being a nuclear target.

Associate Professor Tilman Ruff is Australian Chair of ICAN and, with Akira Kawasaki of Peaceboat in Japan, an NGO adviser to the ICNND Co-chairs.

Below: ICAN provided resources for students and teachers to work on the theme *I CAN imagine a world without nuclear weapons*, at the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning's 2008 Youth Action Conference.



Nuclear survivors blast French compensation proposal

French nuclear veterans have strongly criticised a proposed law on compensation for former nuclear workers and military personnel whose health was affected by French nuclear tests in Algeria and French Polynesia.

Civilian and military personnel who staffed the nuclear tests sites from 1960 until 1996 are concerned that the proposed legislation ignores a number of their key concerns, and has been designed to replace more comprehensive laws.

Polynesian nuclear workers organisation Moruroa e Tatou argues that almost no survivors would be eligible, and that thresholds for radiation exposure are well above accepted international safety standards.

For many years, France has maintained that no one was adversely affected by radiation exposure during their nuclear tests. In Algeria, France conducted four atmospheric and 13 underground tests (1960–1965). In French Polynesia, 46 atmospheric and 147 underground tests were held at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls (1966–1996).

See www.mapw.org.au for a 4-page report.

ICAN update

By Jessica Morrison

ICAN = WE CAN create a nuclear weapons free world

US President Barack Obama has taken our WE CAN slogan to a new level recently, mentioning nuclear weapons in his inauguration speech watched by millions worldwide.

ICAN's vital role in this new political climate has been recognised with the appointment of ICAN Australia Chair – and MAPW Vice President – Tilman Ruff as an one of two NGO advisers to both Co-Chairs of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

ICAN welcomes significant new partners: Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International, with 12 million members worldwide; Oxfam Australia, one of Australia's largest development organisations; Greenpeace Asia/Pacific; and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, who represent the Catholic Bishops Conference.

Jazz pianist Herbie Hancock, and hip hop megastar 2face Idibia, have recorded support messages for ICAN.

Nuclear Weapons Treaties review

One of ICAN's key asks to the newly formed Rudd Government was to undertake a comprehensive review of Australia's involvement in nuclear disarmament and the nuclear weapons-related treaties to which we are party. Late last year the PM asked the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) to undertake such a review.

ICAN called on its partners and members to make submissions, and many have done so: they are worth reading (see links on our website, www.mapw.org.au). This provides an important opportunity to promote parliamentary and public debate, including about the merits of a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The public hearings will provide a further chance for participation.

ICAN Australia – taking it up a notch

As ICAN prepares to enter its third year, we have refined our focus and priorities. We have been pleased to welcome Teri Calder to the ICAN staff this year. Teri will significantly increase our capacity and expertise in fundraising and communications.

Teri joins Jessica Morrison, working two days a week on outreach and administration; and webmaster Adam Dempsey. The staff are supported by an active committee of nine people, complemented by MAPW staff.

ICAN GIVE! Make a donation to ICAN Australia and it will be doubled!

For a limited time, every dollar you donate to ICAN Australia will be matched, thanks to a generous challenge grant from the Poola Foundation. Please consider making a donation today to help us meet this challenge; and approach others who may support our appeal. Members will be mailed the brochure (pictured on the back page) in mid-March.



The dignified professionalism of MAPW strikes again: above, ICANguru (Vice President Bill Williams) leaps with a nuclear umbrella towards Japanese television cameras, at Melbourne's Flinders Street Station in November

iCAN give

MAPW is pleased to inform members that the new tax deductible MAPW Peace Fund can now accept your donations.

To donate, please visit www.mapw.org.au and follow the 'donate' links. You can also post donations to PO Box 1379 Carlton 3053; or call Nancy at our national office, 03 8344 1637.

For tax deductibility, make out cheques to **MAPW Peace Fund**: please indicate that your donation is for ICAN, if this is your wish.

Gifts to the
MAPW Peace Fund
are tax deductible

SOUTH AUSTRALIA TARGETS ARMS TRADE



Members staff the MAPW display tent at Adelaide's Fair of Peace and Remembrance: from left, Adrian von der Borch, Sue Wareham (President) Jason Garrod (Vice President), and Susan Greenwood. Contact us to order those ICAN and MAPW t-shirts!

At Adelaide's Festival of Peace and Remembrance in November. MAPW President Dr Sue Wareham OAM launched a statement calling to

an end to all arms exhibitions in Australia, on behalf of 36 civil society organisations from across Australia,. Sue also launched a series of twelve

informative fact sheets on the global arms trade (see page 7).

Dr Wareham called for the Australian government, and state governments, to withdraw support from future arms exhibitions, and to seek economic security through industries that promote life, not death.

The Festival celebrated the cancellation, after public protest, of an arms expo planned to open in Adelaide that weekend.

The 36 signatories to the statement include major conservation and environmental groups, churches and faith groups, peace organisations, professional associations and trade unions. MAPW played a leading role in collecting signatories to the statement.

Dr Wareham has also written to individual Federal politicians, on behalf of MAPW, putting these requests directly to them.

QUEENSLAND: WAR GAMES TOXIC THREAT

From the 6-26 July, 15,000 US and 8,000 Australian troops will conduct exercises in some of Australia's most delicate ecosystems.

At Shoalwater Bay in Central Queensland, concerns include contamination of town water supplies, the effect of sonar on marine life, and toxic contamination of the land.

The focus of the exercises is the fictitious country of "Cameria" who, in its independence struggles, has blocked shipping lines through the Pacific.

The scale of US troops, and the exercises being undertaken under US command and with the aim of increasing 'interoperability' raises significant concerns.

Protest events are planned at Shoalwater Bay throughout the period, with a focus on 11-12 July.

Sign on and read more at www.peaceconvergence.com/ or contact MAPW's Queensland Branch to work with us on this issue.

WA: AUSTRALIA IS AT WAR — WHY?

This was the heading of a full-page advertisement in the West Australian newspaper on Remembrance Day, 11 November.

The advertisement suggested that readers write to Foreign Minister Stephen Smith to urge him to bring Australian troops home. It noted that the United States and its allies are spending more than \$US 720 million a day or \$US 500,000 per hour waging war amongst the poorest communities on earth.

The advertisement was prepared by former WA Premier Peter Dowding with support from MAPW WA.

It urged support for MAPW's work for peace and resulted in several donations and new members. With Australia now under pressure from the US to supply more troops to Afghanistan, the resultant debate was timely.



Consider making a lasting gift for peace, through a bequest to MAPW. For a brochure, call 03 8344 1637 or see www.mapw.org.au.



MAPW's Dr Tom Keaney speaks to a large community rally, on the health hazards of proposed uranium mines near Alice Springs: a major campaign for the MAPW NT Branch.

NT: MEMBERS FOCUS ON NUCLEAR INDUSTRY RISKS

NT members have been working with the local community in opposing the proposed development of the Angela Pamela mines near Alice Springs. The mining companies have been given an exploration licence in the face of massive community opposition. Branch members particularly working on issues of uranium and health.

Other campaigns include addressing the security risk of climate change; the threat to community safety from transport of uranium through Alice Springs from Roxby Downs to Darwin; and the Joint US Australia Defence Facility at Pine Gap.

The Branch meets regularly in Alice Springs to plan activities: see details at www.mapw.org.au.

TASMANIA: MEETING MONTHLY

The Tasmanian Branch of MAPW, known as MedAct, is now led by Dr Gerry McGushin as Coordinator and DR Sally Attrill as Treasurer.

Tasmania's monthly lunch-time meetings are now on Mondays, at the "Timeless Way" cafe in the IXL Jam Factory area of Hobart's wharves. These informal meetings proved popular during 2008, and effective in planning activities. All members are welcome: call 6231 3551 for details.

STUDENTS' O-WEEK ACTION

For 2009, student representatives are focusing on consolidating their networks around Australia, and building contacts in all universities with medical schools. Branches and student activists are holding O-Week displays on several campuses. MAPW will work again this year to participate in the Global Health Conference (GHC), a highly successful major event organised by medical students. This year's GHC is in Brisbane, in July.

VICTORIA: NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE DINNER

Associate Professor Michael Hamel-Green, Australia's foremost expert on nuclear weapons-free zones (NWFZs), was the guest speaker at a well-attended end-of-year dinner.

He suggested that the South Pacific (Rarotonga) treaty needs to be upgraded to include regular reviews of the Treaty's operation; and extension of the treaty to cover all the Pacific; cooperation with the neighbouring South East Asian Nuclear Free Zone; no shipping of nuclear weapons fuel through the zone; and prohibition of the deployment of missile systems in the Zone.

MAPW has raised these issues in its submissions to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's nuclear treaties (see page 5). Other submissions including Professor Hamel-Green's, will deal with Nuclear Free Zones in more detail.

The Victorian Branch will meet on the second Tuesday of each month, alternating between guest speakers, and planning meetings.

■ In 2009, members will receive four print newsletters : in March May, September; and with our annual pre-Christmas appeal. Please send items for the next edition by 20 April.

■ Send your email address to receive MAPW's Peace e-Script, our fortnightly (only) email full of interesting news and events. Write to mapw@mapw.org.au

MAPW BRIEFS

WHO'S WHERE

MAPW Vice President and IPPNW Deputy Chair Ruth Mitchell has moved to Melbourne to work at the Alfred Hospital. Our two student representatives, Lauren Finlay and Vice-President Sarah Gardiner, are currently both at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

MAPW FACT SHEET: NUCLEAR POWER AND LEUKAEMIA

New evidence clearly demonstrates that living close to a nuclear power station increases the risk for children of developing leukaemia. MAPW's fact sheet summarises and provides the major references — a recent German study, and a new meta-analysis — on childhood leukaemia and nuclear power. Medical student member Jocelyn Chan wrote this important fact sheet with MAPW Vice-President Tilman Ruff.

FRYING PAN AND FIRE: CLIMATE CHANGE AND NUCLEAR POWER

These MAPW slideshows give the key reasons why nuclear power is not the solution to climate change — health risks; nuclear war risks; substantial carbon emissions; and non-toxic alternatives. Longer and shorter versions available.

MAPW FACT SHEET: SMALL ARMS IN THE SOLOMONS

This MAPW case study details the casualties — and potential for further conflict — caused in one afternoon by one Singapore-produced, high velocity, assault rifle. A composite written from real-life stories, these cases illustrate the costs in human lives of the global weapons trade. Medical student Melanie Archer provided the stories from her work in the Solomons as a forensic scientist; and student member Krithika Murali prepared the fact sheet.

FACT SHEETS ON ARMS

12 fact sheets developed by MAPW, the Uniting Church, Pax Christi and the Quakers detail the Australian and global arms industry and its human costs.

GET RESOURCES from www.mapw.org.au — look for resources, then fact sheets on left-hand menu.

HELP WRITE RESOURCES

Contact mapw@mapw.org.au to volunteer to help us research and prepare resources on an area of your interest. Student members and interns (see above) have done great work over recent months!



ICAN 2008 staff, student interns and volunteers, with representatives from the Foundation for Young Australians, show one of several colourful banners produced by school students at the Youth Action Conference in Melbourne, November 2008.



You can play a part in supporting our highly effective International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons — ICAN. In March, all members will receive this attractive brochure, beautifully designed by ICAN volunteer Tim Wright, and a donation form. Please also consider using it to approach other potential supporters. See pages 4–5 for more ICAN news.

2008 Diary

- ▶ Melbourne, Tuesday 10 March
VIC MAPW DINNER MEETING
 Indonesia's nuclear power plans
- ▶ Sydney, Thursday 2 April
NSW MAPW FILM SCREENING
 'Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives', on environment and war: Parliament House.
- ▶ Sunday 5 April, around Australia
PALM SUNDAY EVENTS: Check with your local branch for details of annual peace events
- ▶ Adelaide, Thursday 23 April
SA MAPW BRANCH MEETING
 7.30 pm, Memorial Hospital board room
- ▶ 4-5 May, New York
NPT PREPCOM: MAPW and ICAN representatives will attend the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's Preparatory Committee.
- ▶ 18-27 May, Geneva
WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
 MAPW's Vice President Tilman Ruff will attend this major WHO meeting where the medical use of HEU (highly enriched uranium) will be discussed.
- ▶ 3-4 July, Brisbane
GLOBAL HEALTH CONFERENCE: MAPW supports and joins in this major Australian medical students' conference.
- ▶ 2-26 July, near Townsville
TALISMAN SABRE MILITARY EXERCISES: Environmentally destructive war games played by thousands of US, Australian and regional military forces.
- ▶ 6 & 9 August, around Australia
NAGASAKI AND HIROSHIMA COMMEMORATIONS: Check for events with your local branch.
- ▶ Weekend of 29-30 August
MAPW NATIONAL COUNCIL: Our annual meeting, in Melbourne. Elected Council members make formal decisions. All members are welcome.
- ▶ Monday September 21
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE
- ▶ Monthly: the first Monday lunchtime
TASMANIAN BRANCH MEETINGS
- ▶ Monthly: the second Tuesday evening
VICTORIAN BRANCH MEETINGS
- ▶ Details www.mapw.org.au or 03 8344 1637