

## **Towards a Timeline – of Australian ‘Seeds of Peace’**



*If you were to create a historical timeline of key Australian ‘seeds of peace’ who have helped cultivate peace and work for just reconciliation, who and what would you include? Here a few starting thoughts to build upon...*

### **Aboriginal Resisters to invasion and dispossession**

(see eg. Paul W. Newbury *Aboriginal Heroes of the Resistance*):

Pemulwuy, Windradyne, Yagan, the Kalkadoons, Jandamarra and many more...  
(their own violence the last straw in a campaign for just peace)

### **Non-Indigenous ‘Whisperers in our Hearts’**

(cf. H. Reynolds *This Whispering in our Hearts*)

such as Lancelot Threlkeld, John B. Gribble, Athol McGregor and Ernest Gribble...

### **Nineteenth century voices for peace**

particularly in response to the Crimean War 1854-56; the Sudan campaign 1885; and the Boer War 1899-1902.

### **Early 20<sup>th</sup> century voices for peace**

in relation to the Boxer Rebellion 1900-01; the Peace Societies 1905-14; compulsory military training 1912-14.

### **1st World War peacemakers and Resistance to conscription**

#### **Anzac Day memorials**

On 25 April every year Australians commemorate Anzac Day, remembering the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (the ANZACs) at Gallipoli.

What is it however that Australians commemorate on Anzac Day?

*This ‘is surely at the heart of the Anzac story, the Australian legend which emerged from the war. It is a legend not of sweeping military victories so much as triumphs against the odds, of courage and ingenuity in adversity. It is a legend of free and independent spirits whose discipline derived less from military formalities and customs than from the bonds of mateship and the demands of necessity.’* (Former Prime Minister Paul Keating, at the Entombment of the Unknown Soldier at the Australian War Memorial, 1993)

#### **Mid-twentieth century peacemakers**

- in the inter-war period 1918-39 and the Second World War 1939-45

#### **1936 Torres Strait Islander trochus boat strike**

The strike lasted for four months in the western islands, while in the east the Murray Islanders boycotted the government-controlled fisheries until after world war II. Their gardens and the sea could sustain them. Indeed, Murray islanders are believed to have instigated the strike. They had always been noted for their self-assertive independence and had been dubbed ‘the Irish of the Torres Strait’, and, on Mer, ‘everyone *mamoose*’, the Meriam said of themselves, ‘everyone is a chief.’ Throughout much of the colonial history, strong Meriam leaders had emerged to limit as much as possible the intrusion of Queensland’s colonialist controls into Meriam life.

## SEEDS OF PEACE

1938 On 26 January the Aborigines Progressive Association declares a **Day of Mourning** and hold the **first Australian Aborigines Conference in Sydney**. The conference resolves to appeal to the nation to give Indigenous Australians full citizenship

### **Australian Military Personnel in Peacemaking Missions**

Australia's involvement in Peacekeeping began in Indonesia in 1947 with the United Nations Good Officers Commission and has included some 27 Areas of Operation and 48 missions up to the present day. See further [www.peacekeepers.asn.au/start.htm](http://www.peacekeepers.asn.au/start.htm)

### **Resistance to Vietnam War and conscription 1965-73**

#### **Aboriginal Land Rights and Justice Campaigns**

*including:*

1963 *Yolngu people of Yirrkala bark petition* to Federal Parliament requesting a parliamentary inquiry into a government decision to grant bauxite mining leases for mining on their traditional land.

1965 *Charles Perkins leads Freedom Ride* of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians through western NSW protesting discrimination and living conditions.

1966 *The Gurindji people at Wave Hill, NT, led by Vincent Lingiari went on strike* regarding poor living conditions and low wages, and began the campaign for the return of their traditional lands. One of the most important of all Australian photographs is the image of Gough Whitlam pouring red dirt into the hand of Vincent Lingiari, symbolising the return of Wave Hill to the Gurindji people.

*'We want to live on our land, our way'* - Vincent Lingiari.

**Faith Bandler** and her active campaigning for justice – including the 1967 Referendum which saw 92% of Australians vote to give the Commonwealth power to legislate for Aboriginal people and to allow Indigenous Australians to be counted in the Census.

**Aboriginal Tent Embassy** - first erected 26 January 1972

**1972**                    **Protests against the Springboks tour**  
**1972-4**                **Protests against French nuclear testing**

#### **Dr.Helen Caldicott**

- and Physicians for Social Responsibility, nuclear sanity and environmental healing

#### **Forest protests from the 1970s onwards**

*including John Seed -*

at Terania Creek in northern NSW John and some few hundred locals banded together and began a blockade here in 1979 that saved the area from devastation. John has gone on to be a leading international rainforest campaigner and seed of ecological peace.

#### **Franklin Dam Protest 1982-3**

The decision was the culmination of a long campaign to protect Tasmania's "last wild river" from the dam-building Hydro-Electric Commission (HEC). The successful campaign grew and saving the Franklin became an issue of national and international repute.

## SEEDS OF PEACE

### **Community Night Patrols in Aboriginal communities**

Night patrols, in their various forms, are a common feature of Indigenous communities throughout Australia. They take on various names, roles and functions depending on the needs of the communities from which they operate. They may be known as street patrols, community patrols, foot or bare-foot patrols, mobile assistance patrols or street beat programs. They may provide a safe means of transport home or to refuges and safe houses for people at risk of offending or victimisation. Typically this includes young people or intoxicated adults. One of the first night patrols began operating in Julalikari (an Aboriginal town camp in Tennant Creek, NT) in the 1980s. Its objective was to resolve problems in town camps, settle disputes and support and assist local police in their dealings with the community. Approved unpaid volunteers staffed the patrol. The basic concept of night patrols has now spread across Australia and patrols are routine in many communities, particularly in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales. A common element is the aim of preventing or stopping harm and maintaining community peace, security and safety.

### **Men Against Sexual Assault: group in Victoria in 1980s/90s.**

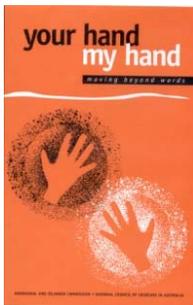
#### **Palm Sunday rallies –**

eg. 1<sup>st</sup> one in Brisbane, organised from ALP Senator George Georges' office, April 1980.

### **Eddie (Koiki) Mabo**

Eddie shared a long life of struggle since he first left his home in the Torres Strait Islands, and found work in northern Queensland on the railroads and in the sugar cane fields. He gained an education, and became an activist for black rights, working with his community campaigning for things such as the right for Aboriginals to have their own schools. He worked with members of the Communist Party, the only white political party to support Aboriginal campaigns at the time. The quest for his ancestral land began when he realised that, despite his traditional ties, the land was legally the Crown's. The court case he waged was not merely to reclaim his land, but to prove that it always had been his and his family's. Mabo rejected the more militant direct action tactics of the land rights movement, seeing the most important goal as being to destroy the legal justification for the land theft.

**In 1992 the High Court of Australia at last ruled in the Mabo case that native title exists over particular kinds of land - unalienated Crown land, national parks and reserves - and that Australia was never *terra nullius* or 'empty land'.**



### **Reconciliation Actions**

**Camilla Cowley and Ethel Munns:** voluntary recognition of Indigenous land and example of community reconciliation at its best

1997 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission release the ***Bringing Them Home* report** into the separation of Indigenous children from their parents.

**Dick Estens:** action through the Moree Aboriginal Employment Strategy, an inspiring example of community-driven reconciliation which has transformed the community of Moree in northern NSW.

**Avis Gale:** one of the stolen generations herself from the age of one week, who after an anguished and turbulent 50 years of life, is now running a hostel in Adelaide for women released from prison – both indigenous and non-indigenous women in her care. *'I used to hate non-indigenous people,'* says Avis. *'I have learned to forgive, even if I can't forget.'*

## SEEDS OF PEACE

### ***Aunty Ida West and the Healing Garden at Wybalenna on Flinders Island.***

The passion of Elder Aunty Ida West from Tasmania for justice and reconciliation, expressed through her strong Christian faith, has been the inspiration for much of the healing between



indigenous and non-indigenous Tasmanians over recent decades. One tangible legacy she has left to motivate and encourage is the setting up of a Healing Garden at Wybalenna, on Flinders Island. Having grown up on that isolated Bass Strait Island herself, Aunty Ida carried within her family memory, and within her own heart, the pain of the history of the virtual elimination of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Yet this Healing Garden is her testimony to the power of good over evil, of the strength of forgiveness over bitter resentment, of the

healing capacity of love over angry retaliation. Her words are engraved on a garden table there: *'Where the bad was, we can always make it good.'*

### **Denis Doherty and Hannah Middleton and the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition**

(formally launched in December 1986 at a national conference attended by over 250 activists) Pine Gap has been a major focus of the Coalition because of its major strategic importance to the US, and because of its symbolic significance in central Australia (the AABCC recognising that the starting point of its struggle is the recognition of the sovereignty of the original inhabitants of this land - the Aboriginal people). However, the AABCC has also actively campaigned against other US bases and related facilities in Australia. The AABCC, in recognition of the wider regional struggle for independence and self-determination, has over the years also developed links with organisations in Belau, Timor, West Papua, Kanaky, the Philippines and throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

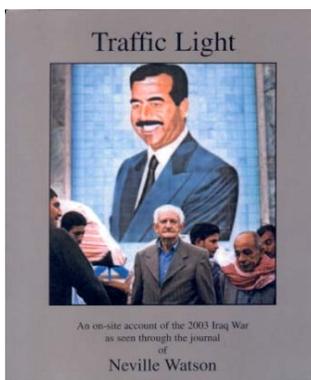
### **Australian campaigns for Bougainville and East Timor**

#### **2000 Bridge Walks for Reconciliation.**

#### **Australians for Asylum Seekers and Refugee Advocacy**

See further -

*'What if no one had spoken out against this policy': The Rise of Asylum Seeker and Refugee Advocacy in Australia.* (by Diane Gosden: Centre for Refugee Research, School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, June 2005). This paper examines the rise of an asylum seeker and refugee advocacy movement in Australia in recent years. The speech is found at this site: [www.ajustaustralia.com/informationandresources\\_researchandpapers.php](http://www.ajustaustralia.com/informationandresources_researchandpapers.php)



#### **Anti-Iraq War Peace Actions**

Including millions on the streets protesting in early 2003 and a whole host of diverse accompanying actions, plus the witness of 'human shields' such as **Ruth Russell** and **Rosemary Gillespie (Waratah)**, and the peace witness (as on other occasions) of peace pilgrims such as the **Rev. Neville Watson**.