

Anzac Centenary 2015

A Coalition of Citizens and Organizations calling for a national conversation on Australia's identity and the place of war in its past and future

We do not believe that Australia as a nation was born in war. We honour all Australians who have died and suffered in war, and respect the contribution and suffering of their families and loved ones.

We appreciate that many young Australians died and were wounded at Gallipoli. We deeply regret the tragic loss of life in the killing fields of the First World War. This and other wars have had terrible consequences not only for the soldiers but for their loved ones and descendants, and for Australian society generally. The experience of war encourages us to redouble our efforts in peacemaking and peacebuilding.

We believe that Australia should not in future be involved in wars at the behest of 'great and powerful friends'. Australia, like all other countries, must abide by the UN Charter which stipulates that force may be used in only two circumstances: in self-defence or in operations authorised by the United Nations.

We wish to celebrate a story of Australia as a nation which:

- brought together peacefully six colonies in one Federation;
- pioneered universal suffrage for all including women, and brought in the eight hour day and the living wage;
- since 1945, has welcomed 6.5 million migrants seeking a new life;
- has successfully shaped a multicultural, multifaith community;
- has supported humanitarian projects and UN peace missions.

Much remains to be done to: officially recognise the violent colonisation of this land and resolve the troubled relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians; strengthen Australian multiculturalism; constructively engage with the peoples of Asia and the South Pacific; warmly welcome refugees and asylum seekers; actively support the United Nations and its programs; and promote peace with justice for all.

To this end we propose to:

- mount and support a range of community reflection and education programs;
- provide appropriate resources for teachers and students;
- make representations to governments and members of parliament;
- contribute to an informed public debate in religious, ethnic and mainstream media as well as social media; and
- advocate the establishment of new institutions, including a peace museum and a government agency dedicated to disarmament, mediation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The Coalition includes:

Australian Christian Student Movement (ASCM); Borderlands Cooperative Limited; Brigidine Sisters, Kildara Centre; Derek McDougall; Gallipoli Centenary Peace Campaign; Lorel Thomas; Medical Association for the Prevention of War (MAPW); Pace e bene Australia, Inc; Pax Christi Victoria; Philippine Caucus for Peace; Rev Ian Smith; Soka Gakkai International Australia (SGIA); The Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church; Victorian Council of Churches (VCC); Jeff Wild.