

# DISARMING Pax Christi TIMES

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## PENNY WONG, COLONISATION, AND THE VOICE

Caesar D’Mello

Penny Wong’s visit to the United Kingdom in early February 2023 as Australia’s new Foreign Minister was noteworthy. A speech at King’s College, London, urging Britain to confront its colonialist past, triggered an adverse reaction within British circles, and shrill reportage in the British media. It was labelled “rude and self-indulgent”. The British Foreign Minister, James Cleverly, in a riposte seemed to suggest Penny Wong’s advice as misplaced, stating that present day Britain’s Prime Minister was of Indian heritage, he himself a Foreign Minister of African heritage, and the Minister of Social Services of Indian background.

In Australia, *The Age*, and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, carried a report by European Correspondent Rob Harris, headed “Wong’s Message got lost in clumsy swipe”. He wrote: “...Wong’s nuanced but nonetheless pointed remarks about British colonialism within Asia and the Pacific had left an impression she’d flown in specifically to harangue the old colonial master.” He viewed her presentation and reactions in the context of continuing efforts by both countries to increase mutual trade, the historical backdrop rele-



gated as an unrelated matter.

### What did Penny Wong say?

Why did the Minister upset Britain so greatly? She had emphasised the value of understanding and acknowledging the past for the opportunity that provided to find more common ground “than if we stayed sheltered in narrower versions of our countries’ histories”. She referred to her own personal history recalling her father who, with other Chinese, laboured in British plantations and mines: “(That...) side of my family had a very different experience of British colonisation”. *A fortiori*, then, the experience of this country’s indigenous people at the hands of the colonisers would have been shatteringly more traumatic. Ms Wong added that “such stories can sometimes feel uncomfortable – for those whose stories they are, and for those who hear them.”

### The Legacy of Racism.

Colonisation is inseparable from racism. In the matrix of factors that drove it, racism remained a

major constituent element. The belief of a people in their self-defined superiority over other peoples is innate to colonialism. Rudyard Kipling’s “The White Man’s

Burden” encapsulates such thinking. The Papal Bulls that blessed and legitimised Christopher Columbus’ expedition in an ‘Doctrine of Discovery’ conceptualisation provided another rationale for it. Within such a mindset pervading the times, the expansion of the British Empire was considered meritorious and beneficial for mankind. William Wilberforce, the champion of anti-slavery, for example, advocated it as “well suited for ‘God’s plan’ ” to bring ‘lesser or inferior people’ into the

### Contents

Penny Wong, Colonisation & the Voice.....	1
The Abdication of Australian Sovereignty .....	2
Maria Rohr.....	5
Aiding Myanmar’s Military Regime.....	6
US bases, A danger to the Philippines .....	7
No Permanent Allies, Only Permanent Power.....	8
<b>Book Review Sub-Imperial Power....</b>	<b>10</b>
Brendan Caulfield James.....	11

# DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

## PAX CHRISTI AUSTRALIA

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light of Christianity.

Racism still features in our society today, though it ought to be celebrated that it is no longer swept under the carpet. Nevertheless, hidden, implicit and unconscious racism is a reality. Many who publicly decry racism in their speech or statements can be seen to embody such racism. They can be easily identified – they are in our churches and church networks, in government, the business arena, NGOs, sports, and almost everywhere else. Perhaps unknowingly, they act in a manner that in effect is racist. They would be anguished if that was brought to their attention, but Australians from various backgrounds are faced with it regularly. And First Nations people have suffered from it all the time, and probably again in the face of resistance to the Voice.

### **Australia and the Voice**

Penny Wong's comment on stories from the colonial past as "uncomfortable" is apposite. A level of discomfort is obvious as Australia engages in an extensive debate over the Voice to Parliament, and the planned Referendum to follow, to effect a Constitutional recognition of the First Nations as the first people on this land. If ratified, it would undo in a small way the legacy of British colonisation that was justified with the fiction of *terra nullius*. In light of British resistance to Penny Wong's call to acknowledge their colonial history, and the approval there could probably be from some Australians here for this stance, it must be asked to what extent is the resistance to the Voice emanating from those endorsing and justifying, quietly or otherwise, the historical intrusion of a militarily powerful force into the way of life and culture of the first peoples. A notable exponent of such an attitude, former Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott, in his speech welcoming the then British Prime Minister David Cameron, declared that Australia owed a debt of gratitude to Britain for having brought its culture and civilisation to this land. The horrendous moral, human, cultural and environmental cost of that endeavour was spelt out by another former Prime Minis-

ter, Paul Keating, who summed it up in his Redfern Speech of 1992 with these heartrending words: "*We took their children from their mothers. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life.*"

We do not know how many of Australia's population share Tony Abbott's view, and probably object to the Voice. While leaving aside disagreements within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders community, on the surface there appears to be for some a plausible justifiability to the persistent calls for "details" of the Voice, but might it not be a way to conceal what really drives their resistance, namely, their endorsement of the colonisation of Australia?

No matter how the defenders of colonialism formulate it in legal/technical language, the historical seizure of Aboriginal land remains undeniable. Despite the proclaimed ownership in the monarch's name and the Union Jack unfurled over a new colony, it was still an act of occupation that had no moral basis. But the ensuing devastation was horrific, whether one considers the displacement and removal of whole communities of First Nations people consigned to reserved areas, the loss of land at the point of a musket as settlers established themselves, the disruption of culture evolved over millennia, the degrading of traditional ways of child rearing, the violence and loss of life accompanying most of the colonisers' actions vis-à-vis the native population, including in the Frontier Wars. The first custodians of the land have paid a terrible price for what was set in train on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1788. Two hundred and four years later, in 1992, Australia's High Court ruled in the Mabo case that '*terra nullius*' was null and void.

### **A hinge of Australian History?**

There have been significant and praiseworthy landmark moments in the history of Australia. The Referendum of 1967 granted indigenous people the right to vote. An Apology to the Stolen Generations was delivered in Parliament. 'Acknowledgement of Country', complete with the phrase

"sovereignty has never been ceded", increasingly commences big and small meetings. Growing numbers of people of goodwill in faith communities, businesses, educational and similar establishments, youth, cultural, sporting, advocacy and other community groups, as well as some politicians believe that justice for the First Nations people is long overdue. But good intentions have not matched delivery for Aboriginal people. The National Partnership on Closing the Gap was a fine initiative but has missed targets. Generally, federal, state, territory and local governments have failed the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people as policies, laws and decisions pertaining to them have been put in place without consulting or listening to them.

As 'Yes Alliance' campaign leader, Dean Parkin, at the launch of the

Campaign in Adelaide said: "We've been waiting a long time for this – 65,000 years of continuous connection, 235 years of the modern Australian nation, 122 years of silence in the Australian Constitution, 56 years since our forebears did it in 1967, six years since the Uluru Statement from the Heart. When we vote Yes, we get the recognition and we get the Voice. This is a very good deal for the country."

The 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' that emerged from the First Nations National Constitutional Convention, with two hundred and fifty indigenous leaders participating, eloquently and clearly articulates why Australia needs a Voice of the First Nations enshrined in the Constitution. The Voice to Parliament will not only prepare the ground for a Treaty and a Truth-telling process to be honest about the past, and allow our

indigenous people to talk directly to the leadership of the country, but as enshrined in the Constitution could also be a significant moment of national unity, helping to bring closer together and reconcile the First Nations and the rest of Australia. There is then a real prospect of the Australian people walking together with the First Nations of Australia. If we reject it, it will be a long while before it ever returns. Penny Wong's exhortation to confront the past applies to Australia, too. We must say 'Yes'.

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## THE ABDICATION OF AUSTRALIAN SOVEREIGNTY

John Menadue and Mike Gilligan

Feb 18, 2023

**R**educing the risk of Australia becoming trapped in an American war in Asia, again, requires the Australian government to give notice now to the United States that it wishes to withdraw from the Force Posture Agreement.

**An open letter to the Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese. February 17, 2023.**

The Abbott government's adoption in 2014 of a Force Posture Agreement (FPA) with the United States cedes control of certain military operations from our territory to the US. And Defence Minister Richard Marles' recent address to Parliament affirms nothing will change.

The ever-unfolding FPA means Australia is periodically home to US Marines trained to fight in the first Island Chain off China. Darwin and Tindal will host US naval and air assets with nuclear-weapon capability. Soon a new facility able to receive US nuclear attack submarines will be announced, in either Brisbane, Newcastle or Wollongong.

Permitting such forces to reside on Australian territory will direct hostile intent to Australia and diminish the



choices available to Australian governments. This will cause planning by regional States to alter, with counter measures directed against Australia, otherwise not entertained. Our security is undermined.

China is one such neighbour affected. A nuclear power able to strike Australia at will. Thus, through the FPA, Australian governments have chosen to risk hostile nuclear attack resulting in execrable loss of life and damage to cities and infrastructure.

Meanwhile our diplomacy is deeply disturbed.

Yet, no Australian government has presented evidence that it has assessed the risks and consequences of adopting the FPA.

**Lost sovereignty in declaring war**

The loss of sovereign authority extends to the government's control

over declaration of war. If America decides to go to war with China, China would assume the US will employ its forces located here. China justifiably could attack Australia in response to US hostility anywhere. Our government could simply find itself at war with China. It may be deprived even of ability to cease war. Thereby, the FPA cedes supreme authority on one of our government's most fundamental decisions: to wage war or not.

We have already witnessed an example of this folly. Former defence Minister Dutton most likely was influenced by knowledge of the FPA when announcing, in November 2021, that it would be "inconceivable" for Australia not to join the US should Washington decide take action to defend Taiwan. In inferring that Australia would have little choice in that war-decision, and not exposing the entrapment in the Taiwan/FPA nexus, the former Minister's careless regard for frankness and for sovereignty is laid bare.

And Minister Marles is little better. His speech asserts: "*any decision to go to war or to use Australian territory or assets in an armed conflict*

remains solely a decision for the Commonwealth Government of the day". Which shows how little thought this government has given to the predicaments which could now be visited upon Australia.

### **Government holds that sovereignty is intact**

In the FPA the government claims that sovereignty is preserved – by a policy.

The purpose of the FPA is given in Article II as:

2. *Through the consultation framework of Article III, this Agreement provides the necessary authorisations for the United States to **conduct mutually determined activities under the Force Posture Initiatives in, from, or through Australia.***

*Sovereignty is addressed in Article III by;*

1. *In **recognition of Australian sovereign interests**, the Parties shall consult in accordance with conditions and requirements under this Agreement.....*

2. *The conditions and requirements for consultation shall ensure that relevant mutually determined activities are conducted in accordance with **Australia's policy of Full Knowledge and Concurrence (FKC)**, where applicable.*

In the earlier establishment of US facilities such as Pine Gap, Australian governments claimed that sovereignty is preserved through the FKC policy, whereby the US volunteers information on activities followed by the consent of Australia. This is said to ensure Australia's supreme authority is preserved over intelligence and related activities "on, from and through" its territory.

That claim is made again with the FPA. However, the two agreements cover activities which are chalk and cheese.

The nature of the activity conducted within the existing facilities (essentially information) is distinct from military operations against a powerful State. Military operations are unpredictable. In situations of tense strategic manoeuvre, Australia cannot be assured of avoiding damaging outcomes by a policy purporting to proscribe activity of

foreign military platforms. No policy can ensure that military outcomes are as intended on missions under foreign command, whether on, from or beyond our territory.

And in the mere act of agreement governments could be ceding sovereignty in some cases. The policy of FKC is a fig leaf.

### **Is loss of sovereignty warranted by threat?**

Arguably, if facing extreme insecurity a State should consider ceding some sovereignty temporarily. But Australia is under no threat of attack. China is mentioned constantly, but China has not expressed intent to attack Australia. Nor does it possess the means for conventional assault. Official intelligence reports in the US show that China's military priority is its periphery:

*"the PLA... sets its sights to 2027... [to modernise] the PRC's armed forces. If realised, this... could give the PLA capabilities to be a **more credible military tool** for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to wield **as it pursues Taiwan unification**" (US Intelligence Community Threat Assessment 2022).*

*"The PRC aims to **restrict the United States from having a presence in China's periphery** and limit US access in the broader Indo-Pacific region. ... the PLA is increasingly able to project power into the Philippines Sea and seeks to strengthen its capabilities to reach further into the Pacific Ocean" (US DoD Report to Congress 2022).*

Northern Australia is 5,000 km from China's force development priority areas. It would be fanciful for an Australian government to plan for threat of conventional assault on our territory, and high-intensity warfare, with China, in the near term. Most likely is that China could be forced into nuclear strike on Australia's territory, that being its only means of countering attack from US forces based here. Against which Australia is utterly defenceless.

### **Minister not serious**

We have already noted Minister Marles' inability to discern when Australia's sovereignty is compromised. A security-minded govern-

ment would display genuine sensitivity to infringed sovereignty. Marles' speech does the opposite, resorting to cunning language, straw men and semantics to conceal reality. His claim that "A *fundamental principle underpinning these activities is longstanding bipartisan policy of having no foreign bases on Australian territory*" presumably rests on some rarefied definition of a "base". When everybody knows that US troops and weapons platforms are, and will be increasingly, located on Australian territory and be able to operate on, from and through Australia under foreign command and control.

Disingenuous stuff.

### **How to proceed?**

It is openly acknowledged that the US government has chosen to confront China militarily for its own geostrategic reasons, in a broad strategy to suppress competition from China. That is a sovereign choice of the US. But Australia has no treaty obligations to join that conflict.

Nor could Australia make more than a minor difference anyway – adding little to the potent forces and bases which America and Japan are building proximate to China. For Washington the common notion of "winning" would barely be relevant. So long as China is being reduced, the US goal would be met. Time would be in Washington's favour. To the extent that its allies carry the burden, America profits.

As a friend of the US, Australia should be counselling for constructive initiatives with China. Concurrently, our government must recapture its sovereignty foregone in the Force Posture Agreement.

Reducing the risk of Australia becoming trapped in an American war in Asia, again, requires the Australian government to give notice now to the United States that it wishes to withdraw from the FPA.

*The letter is signed by 38 distinguished Australians, Peace workers, former diplomats, academics, former politicians and senior public servants and church leaders.*

Published in "Pearls and Irritations, February 18, 2023

# MARIA ROHR (1945-2022), PUBLISHER & FRIEND OF PAX CHRISTI

Val Noone

Maria Rohr, who with her husband Henry used to be a publisher for Pax Christi Australia, died peacefully in Melbourne on Christmas Day 2022, aged 77, supported by her four loving children, Peter, Dominic, Anneliese and Monique, and five devoted grandchildren. The large crowd at the funeral at St Ignatius' Church, Richmond, agreed when Anneliese described Maria as "a strong, kind, generous, talented, witty and beautiful person".

Maria was born in Taree, New South Wales, in 1945, the youngest of Tom and Lila Peters' five children. At 16 she joined the Josephite Sisters at Lochinvar in the Hunter Valley (who, because of the colour of their habits, were known as the Black Joeys). She taught in NSW and Queensland, and, good musician that she was, studied at the Conservatory in Newcastle, becoming a popular piano teacher.

In the 1970s Maria Peters, nun, and Henry Rohr, a German-born Pallotine priest, fell in love and married, and, as Dally Messenger said at the graveside, "stayed the best kind of Christian". Maria and Henry soon earned a reputation for hospitality. Melbourne became Maria's home. She and Henry ran a small, ethical publishing firm called Spectrum, which lived up to its name, producing many books on prayer, church history and spirituality, music CDs, as well as biographies, political dissent, accounts by HIV sufferers, ecological materials and so on.

Their publication list must be in the thousands and it is beyond me to assess it thoroughly. Some names of authors who come to mind are Henry himself on meditation and spirituality, Father Gerard Dowling, Rev Francis McNab, Father Paul Gurr, Sister Deirdre Brown, Peter Kearney, Father Dan O'Donovan, Dally Messenger, Geoff Ballard, Frank Cain, Paul Ormonde and myself.

Spectrum's first job for Pax Christi was a booklet, *Steps to Nuclear Disarmament*, edited by Peg

Fitzgerald and Geoff Lacey, which was a report on the important 1983 Mount Evelyn conference on the history and future of the peace movement. Spectrum also helped the

Catholics for Peace group and at the funeral I was sitting with Val Flynn, a key person from that network.

In her eulogy Anneliese rightly concentrated on Maria's role as a mother and, among other things, mentioned the pivotal feature: at breakfast time on a summer morning in 1991, when the children were young, Henry had a heart attack at home and died.

All of us who knew Maria are in awe at the way she brought up their four children, took over the business, was active in the local parish, kept up her music and much more. Dally Messenger said she "was the most marvellous single mother who can be imagined". Those who know them are agreed that Maria's spirit, and that of Henry, live on in Peter, Dominic, Anneliese and Monique.

After the children were grown, Maria moved back to be near family in the Taree area. Later she volunteered at the Aboriginal centre of Tardun in Western Australia and later again worked for the Kimberley diocese in Broome. Over those years Peter Rohr, who had other business interests, nonetheless maintained a low-key Spectrum operation. As recently as 2018 he published Don Burnard's book on "the qualities needed to marry successfully".

In the last couple of years Maria came back to Melbourne. Illness took its toll but she showed perseverance. Staff at Blue Cross soon found that she always had a good comeback. Anneliese commented, "she never stopped being a



mother, grandma, aunty and friend".

In regards to Pax Christi, Maria and Henry were friends to Joe and Rita Camilleri and others. As for my personal links, I was a friend of Henry from 1965 when I worked in Sacred Heart parish, St Albans, and Henry would come to say the German Mass. I met Maria through Henry in the 1970s. After Henry died I had the privilege of working for a couple of months with Maria in the printery. In 1993 Spectrum published my book on Catholic morality and the Vietnam War, which was entitled *Disturbing the War*. When our daughter Catherine and I went to Broome in 2019 researching a booklet on the hermit priest Dan O'Donovan, it was Anneliese Rohr who organised our visit: she was at that time coordinator of volunteers for the Broome diocese.

Maria's Requiem Mass was celebrated by Fathers David Hofman and Gerard Dowling with music by Father Paul Gurr (who came down from Sydney), Brother Michael Herry and Adrian Newington. At the Springvale Botanical Cemetery Dally Messenger and Jurgen Malina led a dignified farewell and committal for Maria. Jurgen was a friend of Henry Rohr from student days with the Pallotines in Germany.

*Disarming Times* readers might enjoy – as Maria would have – Jurgen's quip at the cemetery when discussing how he and Henry came to be in Australia. Referring to the Pallotine mission in the Kimberleys, he said, "We were sent out here to bring God to the Aborigines but we found that God was already there."

This brief obituary is an expression of sympathy to Peter, Dominic, Anneliese, Monique and the rest of the family on their loss of Maria. It is also a token of our gratitude for Maria's friendship, and for her professional work for Pax Christi. May she rest in peace.

• Val Noone is a long-time member of Pax Christi and was co-convenor of Catholics for Peace

# A PICTURE OF GLOBAL COMPLICITY: AIDING MYANMAR'S MILITARY REGIME

Dr Binoy Kampmark

18/01/2023

International relations remains the sum game of vast hypocrisies, a patchwork of compromises and the compromised. Every moral condemnation of a regime's conduct is bound to be shown up as an exercise in double standards, often implicating the accusers. In the case of the military regime in Myanmar, double standards are not only modish but expected.

A number of international declarations and measures have targeted Myanmar's regime for its blood-soaked brutality, its genocidal practices against the Rohingya, and its general contempt for the human rights of its citizenry. In a [statement](#) last November, US Secretary of State, Antony J. Blinken took note of the military's "brutal campaign of violence against the people of Burma, carrying out lethal air strikes against the political opposition and the broader civilian population."

In response, the US Department of Treasury designated Sky Aviator Company Limited and its owner and director, Kyaw Min Oo "for operating in the defense sector of the Burmese economy." The company in question had "received multiple arm shipments from sanctioned entities", while Kyaw had been responsible for facilitating "foreign military officers' visits to Burma as well as the import of arms and other military equipment and provided assault helicopter upgrades."

Despite such seemingly bold responses, Myanmar's military junta is not short of business partners. Indeed, business, notably in the arms market, continues unabated and with some energy. Such conduct has also done much to make a mockery of the suite of sanctions and injunctions being imposed by the EU, United States and other states upon the country's entities and its military personnel, notably since the February 2021 coup.

Last year, for instance, the Indian company Sandeep Metal-

craft [supplied](#) 3000 fuses to Creative Exploration Ltd, Myanmar's arms broker formerly known as MySpace International). This is despite India being a signatory to the [Wassenaar Arrangement](#) on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, which obliges it to apply export controls on ammunition and associated products. This becomes particularly important where the supply of such material might be used in violation of the Geneva Conventions, or to aid and abet the commission of crimes and atrocities.

In August that same year, Justice for Myanmar also noted that as many as 116 Myanmar and Singapore companies with 255 directors and shareholders brokered deals involving the furnishing of weapons and other equipment to the regime, including the period since the February 1, 2021 coup.

In a [report](#) from three former United Nations experts as part of the Special Advisory Council on Myanmar (SAC-M), the verdict about companies in the United States, Europe and Asia is distinctly negative. Such entities are officially domiciled in thirteen states, including France, Germany, China, India, Russia, Singapore and the United States. Using source materials comprising leaked budget documents from the Ministry of Defence, interviews with contacts with the Myanmar military, and statements from witnesses of human rights violations showing security forces armed with various weapons, a dark picture emerges.

The authors note that Myanmar's military has progressively moved towards becoming more self-sufficient in weapons manufacturing in a number of areas. The state, however, is not entirely weaned off foreign assistance. The Directorate of Defence Industries (DDI) remains "reliant on international supplies, including for a variety of raw materials, parts and components and end-items, as well as machinery and technology, for the sustained pro-

duction – both licensed and unlicensed – of the weapons in its arsenal."

The DDI has also, whether through production taking place under license or not, "obtained the technology and know-how to produce a variety of its weapons through various types of transfer of technology (ToT) deals." Such deals have involved the receipt of whole weapon production plants, also known as turn-key projects, accompanied by engineer support for those supplying the technology. These include State-owned companies from Italy to Ukraine.

The report identifies the role played by automated machines, including Computer Numerical Control machines, manufactured by companies with domiciles in Austria, Germany, Taiwan and the United States. These are currently being used by the Myanmar military at factories responsible for its weapons production. To accompany this are software programs made by companies which have their legal domicile in France, Israel and Germany.

The authors are keen to point out the role played by Singapore, which "functions as a strategic transit point for potentially significant volumes of items – including certain raw materials – that feed Myanmar military's weapon production." Companies legally domiciled in Singapore have played significant roles in brokering deals and exporting military related items to the DDI or relevant civilian front companies for the Myanmar military.

Not to be outdone, Taiwan also fulfills an important role as transit point for the DDI's purchase of high precision CNC machines, including those from European manufacturers, that aid KaPaSa arms manufacturing, a country-wide complex which involves some 25 entities.

The authors are direct and unequivocal about their grisly findings. "In short, weapons produced by the Myanmar military in-country at its KaPaSa factories have been

used in the military's widespread and systematic attacks against civilian targets, prior to, during and after the 2021 attempted military coup, and continue to do so."

A [statement](#) from the SAC-M's Yang-hee Lee, a former UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, recapitulated the point: "Foreign companies are enabling the Myanmar military – one of

the world's worst human rights abusers – to produce many of the weapons to commit daily atrocities against the Myanmar people."

Lee went on to make the obvious point that such companies and their home states had "moral and legal responsibilities to ensure their products are not facilitating human rights violations against civilians in Myanmar." Not doing so made the par-

ties "complicit in the Myanmar military's barbaric crimes." It is a complicity that continues to be lightly worn in capitals from Washington to Brussels.

**Dr. Binoy Kampmark** was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He currently lectures at RMIT University.

## US MILITARY BASES ARE A DANGER TO THE PHILIPPINES

Fr. Shay Cullen

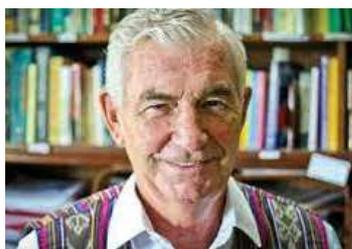
3 February 2023

If the Ukraine war has taught us anything, it is that any future military conflict especially in the South China Sea, the West Philippine Sea or the Straits of Taiwan will be a war primarily fought with short- and long-range missiles, even hyper-sonic missiles, together with all internet systems being disrupted by cyber-warfare.

The growing tension in the Asia-Pacific region with the Philippines at the centre makes it time for Filipinos to start to worry about possible war over Taiwan that would rain down Chinese missile strikes on any of the US bases, now or in the future, in the Batanes Islands, Cagayan, Basa Air Base or nearby Clark, Subic Bay and parts of Mindanao and Palawan. Last January 31, 2023, The Manila Times reported as follows. "A four-star US Air Force general has warned of a conflict with China as early as 2025 — most likely over Taiwan — and urged his commanders to push their units to achieve maximum operational battle readiness this year. In an internal memorandum that first emerged on social media on Friday, and was later confirmed as genuine by the Pentagon, the head of the Air Mobility Command, Gen. Mike Minihan, said the main goal should be to deter "and, if required, defeat" China.

So, if there will be a major conflict here it will be over Taiwan and most certainly not over the Philippine atolls and sand banks taken and occupied by China from the Philippines and the few tons of fish stolen daily from Philippine waters.

Taiwan is a small, democratic inde-



pendent state with a Taiwanese population of 24 million as of 2020, and 150,000 to 200,000 Filipinos living there. It is just 200 miles north of the Philippines. It is claimed by China as part of its sovereign territory. China has declared in recent years that it wants Taiwan back under Beijing's communist control even with the use of force.

Shortly after the visit of US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited the Island state in August 2020 in a show of US solidarity, China unleashed a mighty military show of force in protest with fly-bys and threats of invasion. Much of that may only be bluster but in fact Xi Jinping, the militant-minded leader in Beijing, is determined to get it back. Much like Putin, President Xi Jinping has grandiose imperialistic ambitions, fuelled by a desire to go down in history as the leader that won back what China calls its rebel province.

According to some analysts, the missile war will likely be won by those with the most effective and accurate hyper-sonic missiles launched from the air or those forces with multiple, widely dispersed missile launch sites on land and ships that are too many to be attacked and overwhelmed simultaneously.

The recent agreements between the United States and the Philippine government of President Ferdinand

pendent state with a Taiwanese population of 24 million as

Marcos Jr. seem to be paving the way for this kind of strategy in the Philippines. There are already many US marine missile bases dispersed, or will be, throughout the strategically located Japanese Senkaku Islands 170 kilometres from Taiwan and 330 kilometres from China. The marines from Okinawa are being retrained, re-armed and re-deployed in small fighting forces without massive tanks and heavy armour, much to the disgust of traditionalist retired military officers.

Instead they will be armed with a multiple missile capacity like the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), super effective in Ukraine and super accurate. The US will likely deploy them here anyway together with patriot anti-air missiles. The Philippines is fast becoming one huge US military base scattered into a dozen of its parts. It seems that the plan of the military alliance between the United States, Australia and the UK, known as AUKUS, is to surround China with a steel chain of island fortresses bristling with multiple missile sites, too many to be suppressed by counter attack, but that can subdue the Chinese navy and strike its land-based launch sites if ever it comes to all out conflict and an attempt by China to invade Taiwan.

The AUKUS missile bases in the Philippines and the Japanese Senkaku islands could devastate Chinese ships trying to make troop landings on Taiwan. The AUKUS nations are developing hyper-sonic missiles to counter the technological sophistication of China's missile strike force. Hyper-sonic missiles are deadly and

hard to detect because of their speed (Mach 5) and are very maneuverable.

This huge growing US presence in the Philippines, located inside Philippine military installations, is covered by the fig-leaf of the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) that shields the US from criticism it is violating Philippine sovereignty by already having regular use of Basa Air Base in Floridablanca town in Pampanga; Antonio Bautista Air Base in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan; Benito Ebuena Air Base on Mactan island in Cebu; Lumbia Airfield in Cagayan de Oro City in northern Mindanao and an army jungle training base in Fort Laur, Nueva Ecija, and other unknown secret bases. Subic Bay and San Miguel Base in Zambales are next for US occupation.

When the US occupies the Philippine air force base in Lal-lo, Cagayan in the north, it will have easy strike distance to Taiwan in the event of an invasion of Taiwan by China. The US air force flies surveillance planes in and out of Clark for several years already under the Visiting Forces Agreement. However, it is not just occasional visiting, the planes are on regular military operations from a civilian airport. All is done with a nod

and a wink from the Philippine higher command, permission is always granted on a permanent basis it seems.

Besides, the US military has unlimited access to other areas for its training and testing of weapons. It tested its M142 High Mobility Artillery rocket launchers in Crow Valley in Tarlac and has the use of the Colonel Ernesto Rabina Air Base in Tarlac and practically any other harbor or airfield it wants to use for so-called "visiting." For years, the US used the Batanes Island airfield for re-fuelling its planes. It used helicopters to light up the runway until landing lights were installed.

Subic Bay has been used for docking US Navy ships and loading supplies and now with a US company, Cerberus Capital Management, owning the former Hanjin shipyard in Subic Bay, we can expect more US ships to be based there like the USS New Orleans. For sure, Chinese missiles installed on the seized Philippine atolls are now aimed at Subic Bay and San Miguel Base, Zambales. The bay has recently been named as a Philippine Navy base, conveniently situated at part of the former Hanjin shipyard. That is another fig-leaf to justify US warships docking at Subic Bay.

The US military presence in the West Philippine Sea has not deterred China from grabbing more atolls and islands from the Philippines and arming them with missiles. The Mutual Defence Treaty between the US and the Philippines is of no help. There has to be an act of war by China against the Philippines to trigger a US military response. Any such response will need the approval of the US Congress. The presence of so many US military bases inside Philippine bases is making the Philippines an open and vulnerable target for retaliatory strikes by China.

The deployment of so many US servicemen in military bases all over the Philippines will speed up the expansion of the sex industry and, once again, we will see more human trafficking and sexual abuse and exploitation of women and children by US servicemen as if we don't have enough by Filipinos at present as in the past.

*Shay Cullen is a Columban Missionary priest from Ireland. He has worked protecting women and children from sex slavery and promoting human rights, peace, and non-violence in the Philippines since 1969.*

## THERE ARE NO PERMANENT ALLIES, ONLY PERMANENT POWER

Chris Hedges

*If we do not build left-right coalitions on issues such as militarism, health care, a living wage and union organizing, we will be impotent in the face of corporate power and the war machine.*

On Sunday, February 19, I was at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington at noon to speak at the anti-war rally, Rages Against the War Machine. I was joined by Jimmy Dore, Dennis Kucinich, Anne Wright, Jill Stein, Max Blumenthal, Cynthia McKinney, Anya Parmpil, David Swanson and other left-wing, anti-war activists I have shared platforms with for many years. I was also joined by Ron Paul, Scott Horton and right-libertarian, anti-war figures whose

political and cultural opinions I often disagree with. The inclusion of the right-wing has seen anti-war groups I respect, such as Veterans for Peace (VFP), refuse to join the rally. VFP issued a statement sent to me on Friday saying that "to endorse this event would have caused a huge disruption in VFP and had little effect on the outcome of the demonstration." The board of Code Pink asked its co-founder, Medea Benjamin, one of the nation's most important and effective left-wing and anti-war activists, to cancel her scheduled talk at the rally.

"The left has become largely irrelevant in the U.S. because it is incapable of working with the right," said Nick Brana chair of The Peo-

ple's Party, which organized the rally with libertarians. "It clings to identity politics over jobs, health care, wages and war, and condemns half the country as deplorable."

We will not topple corporate power and the war machine alone. There has to be a left-right coalition, which will include people whose opinions are not only unpalatable but even repugnant, or we will remain marginalized and ineffectual. This is a fact of political life. Alliances are built around particular issues, in this case permanent war, which often fall apart when confronting other concerns.

If I had organized the rally, there

are some speakers I would not have invited. But I didn't. This does not mean that there are no red lines: I would not join a protest that included neo-Nazi groups such as Aryan Nations or militias such as The Proud Boys or Oath Keepers.

My father, a Presbyterian minister who was an army sergeant in North Africa during World War II, was a member of Concerned Clergy and Laity about Vietnam, an anti-war group that included the radical Catholic priests Philip and Daniel Berrigan. He took me with other clergy, almost all veterans, to anti-war rallies. There was much in the anti-war movement that he and other members of the religious group opposed, from the Yuppies — who put forward a 145-pound pig named Pigasus the Immortal as a presidential candidate in 1968 — to groups such as the Weather Underground that embraced violence. He and the other clergy disliked the widespread drug use and propensity of some protestors to insult and bait the police. They had little in common with the Maoists, Stalinists, Leninists and Trotskyites within the movement. Daniel Berrigan, one of the most important anti-war activists in American history who was constantly in and out of jail and spent two years in federal prison, opposed abortion — a stance that today would probably see him deplatformed by many on the left. These clergy understood that the masters of war were their real enemies. They understood that the success of the anti-war movement meant forming alliances with people whose ideologies and beliefs were far removed from their pacifism, abstemious lifestyles and Christian faith. When I was about 12, my father told me that if the war was still going on when I turned 18 and I was drafted, he would go to prison with me. The jolt of that promise has remained with me my entire life.

The demands of the Rage Against the War Machine rally are ones I share. They include Not One More Penny for War in Ukraine; Negotiate Peace; Stop the War Inflation; Disband NATO; Global Nuclear De-escalation; Slash the Pentagon

Budget; Abolish the CIA and Military Industrial Deep State; Abolish War and Empire; Restore Civil Liberties; and Free Julian Assange

I know war. I spent two decades reporting on conflicts all over the globe, including many months in Gaza the world's largest open-air prison, containing two million people including over a million children. I saw thousands of lives destroyed by United States military adventurism in Central America, Africa and the Middle East. Dozens of people I knew and worked with, including Kurt Schork, a Reuters reporter, and the Spanish cameraman Miguel Gil Moreno de Mora, died violent deaths.

We must halt the decades of rampant and futile industrial killing. This includes ending the proxy war in Ukraine. It includes drastic cuts to the funding of the U.S. war machine, a state within a state. It includes disbanding NATO, which was established to prevent Soviet expansion into Eastern and Central Europe, not wage war around the globe. If Western promises to Moscow not to expand NATO beyond the borders of a unified Germany had been kept, I expect the Ukrainian war would have never happened.

To those who suffer directly from U.S. aggression, these demands are not academic and theoretical issues. The victims of this militarism do not have the luxury of virtue-signalling. They want the rule of law to be reinstated and the slaughter stopped. So do I. They welcome any ally who opposes endless war. For them, it is a matter of life or death. If some of those on the right are anti-war, if they also want to free Julian Assange, it makes no sense to ignore them. These are urgent existential issues that, if we do not mobilize soon, could see us slip into a direct confrontation with Russia, and perhaps China, which could lead to nuclear war.

The Democratic Party, along with most of the Republican Party, is captive to the militarists. Each year, Congress increases the budget for the war industry, including for fiscal year 2023. It approved \$847 billion for the military — a total that

is boosted to \$858 billion when accounts that don't fall under the Armed Services committees' jurisdiction are included. The Democrats, including nearly all 100 members of the House Congressional Progressive Caucus, and Republicans slavishly hand the Pentagon everything it demands.

The rally on February 19 is not about eliminating Social Security and Medicare or abolishing the minimum wage, which many libertarians propose. It is not a rally to denounce the rights of the LGBTQ community, which has been attacked by at least one of the speakers. It is a rally to end permanent war. Should these right-wing participants organize around those other issues, I will be on the other side of the barricades. "I supported the Rage Against the War Machine Rally from the time of its conception and I support it today, even though I will not be one of the speakers because the organization I have been associated with for 20 years, CODEPINK, urged me not to speak," Medea Benjamin told me in an email. "The CODEPINK staff felt that my participation would hurt the group's standing with other coalitions committed to gay rights, women's rights and anti-racism. They felt that Jackson Hinkle has taken stands that are anti-gay, anti-trans, anti-feminist and Islamophobic, and they were concerned about the sponsorship of the Libertarian Party's Mises Caucus which, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, has ties to white nationalists."

"So why do I support the rally?" she asked. "Because I am heartbroken by a war that is causing such death and destruction in Ukraine. Because I have real fears that this war could lead us into World War III or a nuclear confrontation. Because both political parties are complicit in giving over \$100 billion to Ukraine to keep this war going. Because the Biden administration is pushing this war to weaken Russia instead of promoting solutions. Because we urgently need as many voices as possible, from a broad variety of perspectives, to speak out so we can be much more effective at pres-

at pressuring Congress and the White House to move this conflict from the bloody battlefield to the negotiating table. The future of our world stands in the balance.”

Benjamin said although she will not speak, she will be at the rally “cheering on the speakers” and is planning a lobby day two days later, on February 21, for those who want to take their anti-war message directly to the offices of Congress.

Ralph Nader, who has just founded the Capitol Hill Citizen, a newspaper focused on Congress, has long advocated a left-right coalition as the only effective mechanism to push back against corporate power. He argues that those on the left who refuse to join left-right alliances are engaging in “self-immolation.” This refusal, he says, fosters political paralysis, not unlike the paralysis in the face of Senator Joseph McCarthy’s witch hunts in the 1950s against supposed Communists. Although many loathed McCarthy, the Republican establishment refused to join forces with the liberals and Democrats to end the smearing, blacklisting and imprisonment of dissidents. The left-right coalition is especially important if we are to rebuild labour unions, Nader points out, the only mechanism capable of crippling the ruling oligarchy. If we cannot reach across ideological divides, we will slit our own

throats.

“A left-right alliance on issue after issue, whether it’s on a living wage, ending endless wars of aggression by the United States; whether it’s striking down hard on corporate crime, fraud and abuse; whether it’s universal health insurance is an unbeatable movement,” Nader told me when I reached him by phone. “Just think of a senator receiving ten constituents from back home and five are liberals and five are conservatives. How is a senator going to game them? How is a senator going to sugarcoat them? It’s very difficult. Any time there is a left-right alliance, as in the enactment over 30 years ago of the Federal False Claims Act to go after corporate fraud in government programs and contracts, it’s an unbeatable combination.”

Sponsored by leading Republicans and Democrats, the False Claims Act Amendments Acts of 1986 have been used by the federal government to recover more than \$62 billion of fraud and mismanagement funds stolen by corporations with government contracts.

“If you want to prevail on Congress to fulfil its duties under the Constitution and never engage in wars or become co-belligerents without a declaration of war by Congress — the last war that was declared by Congress was World War II, and

we’ve engaged in many wars since then and are continuing to do so — you must have a left-right coalition,” Nader said. Because there is no coalition in Congress, both Republicans and Democrats are war parties. They support a Pentagon budget that gives the generals more than they ask for. They have done this for almost eight years, most recently giving the Pentagon \$48 billion more than the generals and President Biden requested, instead of giving that money for public health to prevent pandemics, death, injury and disease.”

Those who will pay the steepest price for this paralysis are those killed, wounded and displaced by the war machine, including the over 900,000 civilians killed directly, and millions more indirectly, as a result in the post-9/11 U.S. wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Somalia and Pakistan. But the left, mesmerized by a self-defeating boutique activism, also pays a price. As the empire unravels, the woke left, demanding moral absolutism, marginalizes and discredits itself at a moment of crisis. This myopia is a gift to the oligarchs, militarists and Christian fascists we must defeat.

**Christopher Lynn Hedges** is an American journalist [Presbyterian](#) minister, author, and commentator. **This article first appeared in Scheerpost**

## **Book Review. SUB-IMPERIAL POWER, Clinton Fernandes** Reviewed by Harry Kerr.

**SUB-IMPERIAL POWER: Australia in the International Arena, by Clinton Fernandes, Melbourne University Press, 2022.**

Clinton Fernandes is Professor of International Law and Political Studies at the University of New South Wales.

Australia is often described as a “Middle Power,” a nation able to exercise power and influence in its region as part of an alliance with so called great and powerful friends, independence within a “Rules Based order.” Professor Fernandes debunks this myth. He describes Australia as a “Sub-imperial power,” a nation which is totally dependent on imperial powers not just for its military security, but for its economic

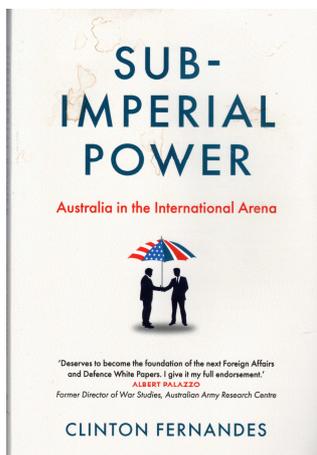
well-being and for its political self determination.

Australia since white settlement has not only been dependent on imperial powers, it has been the expression of imperial power. He explodes the myth of the Australian colonies as high security prisons. They were of course, but the primary purpose was the deployment of British imperial power in the Asia Pacific region and the containment of other imperial powers such as the Dutch and the Portuguese who had similar ambitions. When Australia became a self governing Dominion in 1901, Britain retained control over foreign policy and military matters. In 1914 Australian forces joined the fight for “King and Empire” fully integrated into the British imperial forces. Aus-

tralia did not take control of its own military security until 1942 when it feared by Japanese invasion. However this prompted integration into the imperial order of the United States of America developing ever closer interoperability of forces, and involvement in US initiated wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iran. The book goes into the AUKUS project in some detail, showing how it raises the level of interoperability but with minimal Australian control and often of knowledge of US goals and strategies. The acquisition of nuclear powered submarines is unnecessary for the defence of Australia. Their real purpose is to involve Australia in US strike capability in the Asia Pacific and in particular to counter the perceived ambitions of

China

Professor Fernandes counters the perception of Australia "getting involved in other people's wars." At one level it might seem that these wars have nothing to do with Australia. In fact these wars *were our wars*. Australia assumes that our Sub-imperial status means that their wars are our wars. It is part of our DNA as a nation to see imperial conflicts as conflicts and their ambitions as our ambitions, all in the name of "keeping us safe" while drawing us into greater danger. We are not bound by any "chains" to the US. Our sub-imperial status expresses how we perceive ourselves. Professor Fernandes contends that our sub-imperial status goes much



to provide the raw materials for the manufacturing economies of the imperial powers and their allies and to integrate with them in the same way as our military and foreign pol-

deeper than military and strategic considerations. From the beginning of white settlement, Australia's economy has been designed

icy is integrated. Many if not most of the organisations which control our mining and agricultural industries and much of our surviving manufacturing capability are ultimately controlled from the US and allies. The level of Australia's dependence on empire is much deeper than we realised. This explains why a change of government leads to minimal adjustments in foreign policy.

This is a challenging book clearly written. It suggests that the search for a "Peaceful and Independent Australia" is much more complex than previously envisaged.

*Sub-Imperial Power* retails for \$21.75 at [www.booktopia.com.au](http://www.booktopia.com.au), \$24.99 at *Readings and Dymocks*.

### **Pax Christi Australia [NSW] Inc.**

*invites members & interested people to its 2023 Annual General Meeting*

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023 at 6.00 pm via Zoom

**Speaker Professor Clinton Fernandes University of NSW**

**"NEITHER THEIR WAR NOR THEIR PEACE".**

AGM 6.00pm. Talk 7.00pm

RSVP by Thursday March 31, 2023 for Zoom link

Please contact Marita McInerney [maritaclare@gmail.com](mailto:maritaclare@gmail.com)

## **BRENDAN CAULFIELD JAMES 1943-2023**

Brendan died last week after a brief struggle with cancer

### **Rita Camilleri writes:**

Brendan Caulfield-James, was a Pax Christi original in Melbourne.

In the early 1970s, thanks to Brendan, we enjoyed having our first committee meetings at Xavier College where he taught.

As a committed peace activist he worked hard to bring church people into the peace movement, at one stage producing a list of church leaders who were willing to sign their names and declare their commitment to peace. Brendan wanted to work in the peace orbit in the 1980s during the days of MAUM and PND, but his Jesuit superiors couldn't allow that. He was given a break to follow his own path. Later the break became permanent and he attended nuclear protests in the UK, many courses the US and here. A true citizen of the world. In his later years it was the Environment which was his focus, and the interconnectedness of all life. Nearly five years ago he married Catherine Hutchison, and together they lived the message until a cancer took him from us this month. He was an inspiration to many, always humble, and with a deep insight into humanity's intimate and spiritual place in the Cosmos.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.



### **Harry Kerr writes**

I first met Brendan in 1975 when I was ecumenical chaplain at the then Swinburne College of Technology. Brendan was working as a priest in St. Ignatius Church in Hawthorn. He was appointed to work with me as catholic chaplain. It was a fruitful partnership which developed into a friendship which I valued very much. Highlights of that time were the student week-ends we organised at Mount Evelyn in a large house which belonged to one of Brendan's parishioners. An Italian lady also from the parish used to invite us to her home for an extremely substantial lunch with accompanying liqueurs which meant little work was done in the afternoon! Brendan had an understanding relationship with the students, particularly the Asian students. Brendan introduced me to Pax Christi, a place where he had clearly found a home and where I as a still new migrant, found many friends. At that time we became very focussed on the Movement Against Uranium Mining.

We rejoiced to hear that he and Catherine had got together. When they returned to Melbourne, we welcomed Brendan to the Pax Christi Committee and Brendan and Catherine to the Environmental theology group where we valued their gentle commitment and gift of bringing potentially divisive arguments into new ways forward.

# NOTICE BOARD

## PALM SUNDAY 2023

### Sydney

Palm Sunday rally for  
Peace and Refugees,  
Sunday April 2, 2pm at Belmore  
Park, near Central Station.  
The speakers confirmed for the rally  
are:

Zaki Haidari, Afghan Refugee ad-  
vocate

Two Tamil young people, Nithur-  
shi and Murugan

Bishop Vincent Long, Catholic  
Bishop of Parramatta

Dorothy Hoddinott, former High  
School Principal

Dr David Brophy, University of  
Sydney China academic

Warren Smith, Maritime Union of  
Australia

; End Offshore Detention

Permanent Visas for All Refugees

### Melbourne

Sunday 2 April 2023, 1.30pm  
State Library cnr Swanston and La  
Trobe Streets,

Justice for Refugees End Offshore  
Processing

Permanent Visas for ALL Refugees  
Fair Process, Work Rights and Income  
Support for all People Seeking Asylum

Speakers include Dr Monique Ryan MP,  
Ukrainian Bishop Mykola Bychok,  
people with lived experience of bridging  
and Temporary Protection Visas

## A CALL FOR PEACE TRUTH NOT WAR RALLY

18 March 2023 1 pm, State Library  
Melbourne

**STOP AUKUS, NO NUCLEAR SUBS,  
FREE ASSANGE, CLIMATE JUSTICE,  
NO WAR.**

Speakers include: Dr. Margie Beavis,  
Shirley Winton, Richard Tanter,  
David McBride, Dave Sweeny

## CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

### Redesigning Democracy

We are witnessing a wide-  
spread resurgence of populism and  
extremism. So, how is democracy far-  
ing in the English speaking world, and  
in particular in Australia, and what  
does the future of democracy look like  
for us?

Importantly, what can we do to foster  
a vibrant and healthy democracy?

Come and discuss these issues over a  
meal and a drink at the Provincial Ho-  
tel, **Thursday 9 March 9, 7 pm** Pro-  
vincial Hotel, 299 Brunswick Street,  
Fitzroy for the first of our 'Big Ideas  
in the Pub' series.

**Registration essential;**

[Register now](#)

## CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

**Voice, Treaty,  
Truth Telling: What? When?  
How?**

Wednesday 22 March 2023  
12:30pm - 2:00pm AEDT

(in-person and online via Zoom)  
City of Melbourne Bowls Club, Flag-  
staff Gardens

Dudley Street (Cnr William Street)  
Melbourne VIC 3003

[Register](#)

**ANZAC DAY, 25 APRIL 2023  
11am.**

### Service of Lament, Repen- tance and New Hope

St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne.

**Speaker: Revd. Dr Deborah Storey,**  
formerly a community worker  
in Afghanistan.

A service to remember and lament the  
innocent men women and children  
killed in and  
in- and  
in- jured  
in war.



**I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace Movement -  
Pax Christi Australia.**

(Membership is from January to December)

(Please tick box if you wish to receive your copy of **Disarming Times** by e-mail)

**New South Wales Members** please return your membership application/renewal to  PO Box A 681  
Sydney South 1235 NSW

**All others:** please return your membership application/ renewal to 13 Mascoma St, Strathmore, Vic 3041  
. Direct transfer to Pax Christi Victoria Inc **BSB 063-161 Account number 00900935**

**Please Advise Terry Byrne t.byrne15@optusnet.com.au**

Name..... Address.....

.....P'code.....Phone.....

Email..... Mobile.....

**ENCLOSED \$..... (Single \$35; Low income \$20; Family \$45)**