



Charting our responsibilities and rights

A year after Kevin Rudd spoke at the Caux Forum for Human Security in Switzerland, 14 Australians wrote to the Prime Minister from an IofC conference at Caux last month on “Healing history: overcoming racism, seeking equity, building community”, raising issues of concern which reflect moral challenges they see for Australians today.

The letter was drafted initially by Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver, chair of the Indigenous Health at the University of New South Wales; and by Dea Delaney-Thiele of the Aboriginal Medical Service in western Sydney. Both Indigenous women were nominated to attend the conference in Caux by Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, whose department covered their costs.

Professor Jackson Pulver spoke at the opening session of the conference, outlining the stark challenges of Aboriginal health for people from 62 countries. Wiradjuri man Paul Gray, a Charles Perkins Scholar at Oxford University, and his wife, Kirsten, were also signatories.

Noting that Kevin Rudd’s apology to Australia’s Stolen Generations was remembered in Caux as a significant step towards “healing history”, the Australians wrote they had been discussing “how our country can now take further steps”. Their letter spells out several proposals distilled during their time at Caux. In part:

Constitutional Change

“The present Constitution of Australia was formulated at a time when Australia had a vastly different demographic. The current debate provides the opportunity for Australia to create a wholly new constitution



Professor Jackson Pulver (right) with Tanya & Paul Gray (with Chloe), Mike & Jean Brown, Liz Brumer (front), Andrew Lancaster, Dea Delaney-Thiele, Rosemary Thwaites and John Bond. Other signatories not shown: Shoshana Faire, Margaret Lancaster, Mohan and Daya Bhagwandas

– not one full of amendments and retrofits – inclusive of all her citizens and charting our responsibilities and rights, within and beyond our borders, in the light of current challenges. We expect this constitution will include an Australian Bill of Rights.

UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples

“We ask you to develop an implementation strategy of the UNDRIP, which views the Declaration holistically, to ensure that the social, cultural, economic and political development of Aboriginal Peoples is achievable, through policy and legislation that is consistent with the intent of the Declaration.

Aboriginal health a priority

“We appreciate the effort you have put into the Closing the Gap. We agree this is a priority. As Aboriginal health improves, Aboriginal Australia will increasingly make its contribution to our national life, and all Australians will benefit. We urge you to increase the extent to which Aboriginal health is entrusted to Aboriginal

organisations, as they are best able to develop and deliver effective and culturally appropriate services...

Asylum seekers

“Australia receives just 0.7% of the world’s refugees, and we are better able than most countries to cope with this global humanitarian crisis, which promises to keep growing. We need leaders who will make us proud that Australia unequivocally attempts to fulfil this crucial obligation of international citizenship. As citizens, we commit ourselves to stand against xenophobic attitudes, to create a more compassionate Australia.

New models for mining

“Our mining companies, within Australia and elsewhere, display little commitment to the communities among which they are mining. Too often their operations increase ill health and environmental destruction. We need to ensure that mining operations heighten the health and prosperity of these communities and their environment.”

Restoring lives, land and peace

As happens, year after year, an extraordinary mix of people encounter each other at Caux – and with them, the issues and experiences they bring.

The six 2013 conferences, running from 29 June to 12 August, range from hard-edged “Just governance” to energetic “Children as actors in transforming

society”; from the financial realism of “Trust and integrity in the global economy” to the reflective “Seeds of inspiration”.

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Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who admitted he was “fascinated by the energy and capacity of young people”, dialogued for 45 minutes on the leadership they should take. Three groups of children from World Vision offices presented their different endeavours from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon and Nicaragua. An American dedicated to “Future Brilliance” described how digital tablets are being used in Afghanistan to raise local artisan skills to increase their income from mining precious stones. Gail Christopher from the W K Kellogg Foundation spoke passionately promoting a “a global fund for the healing of racism”, which was supported by the multi-racial group of 70 Americans present for the “Healing history” session.

Breaking new ground was the “Dialogue on land and security”, which brought experts and activists together to consider the methods and motivations for “restoring lives and restoring lands” in areas of environmental degradation. Australian participants, Tony and Lisa Rinaudo from Melbourne, wrote from Tanzania after participating in this session. Tony currently works as a World Vision Australia advisor on Food Security and Climate Change:

Growing an underground forest

My wife and I worked in Niger from 1981 to 1999. As young and in-experienced agriculturalists, the conditions that confronted us were overwhelming: massive deforestation, desertification, changing climate contributing to crop failure, poverty



Tony and Lisa on the ground in Africa

and increasingly, severe famine. Many despaired of ever providing for their families and conflict over dwindling resources increased, particularly between farmers and herders.

We tried best practices – central nurseries, village nurseries, individual nurseries; planting before the rains, exotic and indigenous species, watering, guarding, fencing, offering incentives, even threats... Nothing worked.

One day, while delivering seedlings, I looked around at the barren landscape. I realized that even if I had millions of dollars and hundreds of staff, we could not make an impact. I was wasting my time. It was too hard. I wanted to give up.

For me, the solution came as an answer to prayer: *“Forgive us for destroying your beautiful creation. People are suffering. But you still love us. Show us what to do. Open our eyes.”*

I saw what I now call “the underground forest”. I’d travelled these tracks weekly for three years, eyes open but blind to the potential. What I’d dismissed as insignificant desert shrubs were in fact re-sprouting tree stumps – and there were millions of them.

Everything changed! It was no longer a technical issue of tree species and timing but a social issue of why trees had disappeared in the first place and how to bring people on side. We were not fighting the desert, we were fighting for hearts and minds – fighting false beliefs and attitudes about land clearing, trees competition with crops, and well-intentioned government policies which, perversely, were accelerating deforestation.

Over the next 20 years, this simple, no-cost method was spread by farmers and five million hectares of previously barren farmland were revegetated with 200 million trees. In one study, conflict had reduced by 80 percent through implementing a number of measures, including this land restoration method.

Having lived and struggled in a country where the impacts on people of massive land degradation were daily “in your face” it was very refreshing to attend the Caux Dialogue on Land and Security. An authority on soil stewardship, Professor Rattan Lal emphasised that soil security is the basis for food security; our collective way of life is eating away at the building blocks of our system. By 2020, it is forecast that 16 million people will migrate from dry areas due to land degradation. We mixed with people from all walks of life who could see the clear links between land degradation and security, learned from them and shared our Niger experiences. Many had never dreamed that such a simple process could have such a large scale impact.

Creators of Peace elects a new team

Five Australians are taking leadership in the new international Creators of Peace (CoP) governance team, elected through secret and emailed ballots at the AGM in Caux during July.

This team will guide the CoP movement through the next three years, culminating in the 25th anniversary conference of CoP, originally launched in Caux in 1991.

The five: Tanya Fox (Fundraising), Pari Sanyu (Secretary), Trish McDonald Harrison (People Care),

Shoshana Faire (Training) and Jean Brown (joint National Teams Liaison). The new team includes international coordinators from Syria, the UK, Burundi and South Africa. Each coordinator has a portfolio group working with them and these groups involve women from different parts of the world. The new President of Creators of Peace, Daphrose Ntarataze from Burundi and Switzerland, is taking some months off her work in order to spread the Peace Circles and

give facilitation training in Burundi, Rwanda and Cameroon.

So these are exciting days. Creators of Peace Circles are now available in 40 countries and the manual is now in seven languages. Plans for developing further training modules, as well as better follow up are on the drawing board.

Seeking life's meaning in Vietnam

Eight Australians, including an indigenous student fully sponsored by Monash University, took part in the second East Asia Life Matters course in South-East Asia. Rob Wood reports:



Rebuilding relationships across eight countries

Dalat, a township of colourful gardens high up in one of the beautiful mountainous areas of Vietnam was the venue for the course, held from 28 June – 7 July.

It brought together 29 participants from eight countries and an equally diverse group of helpers from around the Asia-Pacific region. One of the Indonesians is currently chairperson of her country's largest Islamic Female Students Association, with three million members.

Originally developed by IofC in Australia, the Life Matters course takes participants through issues of identity and personal transformation to a look at how to attain meaning and inner direction for their lives. Along the way it touches on the importance of relationship building, community service and conflict resolution while developing creativity through music, dance and workshops.

Our Vietnamese hosts provided excellent hospitality throughout, including a wonderful community night of singing and dancing from a local tribal group.

In the final presentation, held in Ho Chi Minh City, the participants' sharing showed that the course had touched lives and relationships in a profound way. A Filipino nurse spoke of the cruel treatment she had experienced from family members and said she had decided to let go of her deep anger and to fully forgive them.

A young Malaysian spoke frankly about the negative treatment guest workers from Indonesia often had to put up with at the hands of their Malaysian employers. Her heartfelt apology was accepted by one of the Indonesians who admitted he had never wanted to visit Malaysia because of these injustices.

"There's a canal in Bangkok that was created by Laotian slave labour," said a Thai. "I am sorry for such negative parts in Thailand's history. I want to bring Thais and Laotians closer together."

"Whatever happens between our governments, I will not be in conflict with you," said one participant, addressing those of a neighbouring country.

Last year's Life Matters program had been held in Cambodia with eight Vietnamese participating or assisting. This group returned home, equipped with the practice of listening for inner direction and a strong spirit of teamwork. These two factors combined to convince them to host this Life Matters Course in Vietnam. It has strengthened the network of young change-makers which IofC has been developing in that region.

Melbourne IofC volunteer, Aris Huang, gives his impressions:



One of the best aspects of the Life Matters course was that everybody had a chance to express themselves in a safe, honest and creative environment, to share

our life journeys, reflections and ideas – sometimes in conversations that lasted late into the nights ("compulsory" breakfast at 6.15am became "optional")!

These personal connections really cemented the aim of the course – which was to examine how the inner journeys influence our relationship with the wider community and vice versa. A vivid example was when my Laotian and Cambodian roommates shared about their culture and history, marred by years of conflict and hatred towards each other. After such sharing, we felt encouraged that we are now together on a journey towards reconciliation and healing. Honest friendships were developed. Some made commitments to work with their communities on environmental issues. Others asked for forgiveness for the hurt their people had caused.

Connecting like this has given me fresh clarity on my own future direction – to work closer with South East Asian communities. Where this journey will take me is a mystery, but I know that I will not be alone.

APYC South Korea's DMZ

The Asia Pacific Youth Conference (APYC) 2013 is being held 17 – 24 August in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) "Peace Life Valley" near the border with North Korea. The team headed by Yeon Yuk Jeong, Jisun Jung and Jayang Dorjee is in full swing preparing for people from 15 countries.

Australians can still apply at www.iofc.org/asia-pacific-youth-conference

And any fundraising support can be sent by contacting apyc2013@kr.iofc.org

'Huge role' for Sri Lankan diaspora

IofC Australia has been invited into partnership with Global Reconciliation, "an Australian-initiated network of people and organizations around the world seeking to promote communication and dialogue across national, cultural, religious and racial differences". It is led by Professor Paul Komesaroff of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and the Health Sciences, Monash University.

A joint project has been developed to overcome old enmities and rebuild trust in both Australia and Sri Lanka, after the civil war. It was launched in June, at Parliament House in Melbourne. See www.globalreconciliation.org/projects/

Speakers included Craig Ondarchie, an MLC of Sri Lankan background and the Sri Lankan Consul-General in Melbourne.

The significant role that the

diaspora in Australia, the UK and Canada played during the war was described by one speaker. While that role was often damaging for Sri Lanka, their post-war role is huge, he said, in giving "all the energy they can to working for peace and reconciliation". He told of the visit to Sri Lanka in August last year with 10 Australians from Singhalese, Muslim, Tamil and Burgher backgrounds, "most of us with stories that were not good ones, of the pain our country has been through. Telling these stories on our pilgrimage, we cried with each other. We told each other where our fathers were killed or where we had lost loved ones.

"We have to start telling new stories," he concluded. "We came back enlivened with hope – and it came from the young people. We spoke with a group called *Sri Lanka*

Unites – Youth for Reconciliation where Singhalese and Tamils were telling each other's stories, forgiving each other and helping to build a future together."

At the Melbourne meeting, the next generation of Sri Lankan diaspora demonstrated the same approach, seeking to move forward through these projects.



The Spiritual Vision of Frank Buchman

Philip Boobbyer

Just-released, this book is an in-depth look at the life, spirituality, and ideology of one of the most original figures in twentieth-century religion: Frank Buchman (1878–1961), the Pennsylvania-born initiator of the movement known as the Oxford Group and Moral Re-Armament. Philip Boobbyer's book is the first scholarly overview of Buchman's ideas.

Penn State University Press;

232 pages,

ISBN: 978-0-271-05980-8

Paperback edition is available in Australia for \$55 including postage.

Orders through 'Grosvenor Books' grosvenor.books@au.iofc.org Or the address below.

Demonstrating unity for South Sudan

Returning from four months' involvement in helping launch national reconciliation in South Sudan, Nyok and Kathryn Gor called together a meeting in the IofC centre, Armagh, in Melbourne, to hear from Angelina Teny, the wife of [then] Vice President Riek Machar Teny. She had been invited to Melbourne by a South Sudanese community group to celebrate the country's 2nd Independence but was unable to get a visa in time.

She spoke by Skype, however, for some 50 people, including representatives of all major South Sudanese communities, who assembled at the Armagh centre in Melbourne, on 16 July. During the 45 minute dialogue, direct questions were put about the conflicts in Jonglei state and the progress of national reconciliation in the war-scarred country.

Madame Angelina is a member of the newly constituted Committee for National Healing and Reconciliation.

She called on the diaspora in Australia to be an example of reconciliation, to address their issues collectively and to speak with one voice for peace in South Sudan. Past ethnic divisions have often fuelled the conflicts on the ground. The diaspora, she said, would have huge influence if they can give a leadership for unity.

On 9 July, Nyok and Kathryn will be in Adelaide reporting on the reconciliation campaign, with Mike and Jean Brown, to some of those who raised over \$55,000 to send them and other Australians to South Sudan from February.

Supporting South Sudan in its journey for national reconciliation is one of the "Common Actions" adopted by IofC International at its 2012 global assembly. Nyok Gor has written a paper on how the diaspora may be engaged in this process. It is available at nyokachuoth@gmail.com

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