

# 2019 IPAN National Conference - Report

## 2-4 August

IPAN's 2019 National Conference held in Darwin on 2-4 August was attended by close to 100 representatives and individuals from 50 different affiliated organisations across Australia from every State and Territory. Participants included the local Larrakia First People, peace and anti-war organisations, community, faith and social justice organisations, representatives from several unions (MUA, Retail and Fast Food Workers Union, CEPU, NTEU, CFMEU and Northern Territory Trades and Labour Council). Local Darwin anti-war activists and environmentalists were involved in organising and promoting the Conference.

The successful National Conference is a sign of the growing public sentiment opposed to Australia's involvement in US wars of aggression and interoperability with US military and instead looking towards Australia's independence.

The Conference helped to build support and solidarity amongst local people in an environment generally supportive of US troop placement there, and recognised by those locals attending.

One of the many highlights of the Conference was the participation and strong contributions made by the Larrakia First People, the traditional custodians of the country around Darwin, NT. We learned about the rich culture and history of Larrakia First People's struggles for justice and sovereignty. Neither the Australian governments nor the US ever sought permission from the Larrakia people to base US marines on their country. Many Conference participants were inspired and moved by the wisdom and generosity of the Larrakia people extended to us.

The Conference re-asserted calls for removal of US military bases and troops, an end to US-Australia Alliance and an independent and peaceful Australian foreign policy. The conference called for building peace and friendship with people in Asia and India-Pacific region.

Several international guest speakers from Asia-Pacific and Oceania participated, sharing experiences of their countries hosting US bases and struggles for independence from US and other big powers. They included peace activists from West Papua, Guahan, and Aotea (New Zealand).

The Conference heard from many outstanding speakers on the impact of the Alliance on Australian people and our successive governments' subservience to US global foreign policies. It included the Australian government's refusal to commit to international efforts for military denuclearisation; billions of dollars of public funds taken away from people's social and community needs and services and instead spent on US wars of aggression and integration into US military-industrial complex.

The Conference discussed Australian Government's compliance to be a major exporter of armaments, the link between militarism, wars and climate emergency and its interrelationship with the need for the recognition of the rights for the First People still subjected to colonialism.

The Conference passed several resolutions, including a solidarity message to Maritime Union of Australia DP World wharfies fighting to protect their wages, conditions and job security; solidarity with the people of West Papua fighting for justice and independence from Indonesia; against involvement with US war plans against Iran; in defence of Julian Assange; and against the export of arms (Resolutions at the end of the report)

On Saturday afternoon the Conference held a lively protest outside Robertson Barracks where 2,500 US marines are housed, calling on US marines to go back home to America. In the months before the conference, organisers made attempts to arrange a meeting with the US base commander outside Robertson Barracks to present him/her with an old boot mounted on a plaque - to "give 'em the boot". Unsurprisingly the request fell on deaf ears.

While anti-war and peace activists in Australia were meeting in Darwin calling for the removal of US marines and bases and the two major parliamentary parties' subservience to the US and calling for an independent foreign policy, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was in Sydney at the high level annual AUSMIN (Australian-US Ministerial) meeting demanding that Australia not only back the US "battle with China", but also sends warships to assist the US threatening Iran in the Strait of Hormuz.

Pompeo went even further and floated more US plans for Australia to host intermediate-range missiles in the Northern Territory, close to Darwin. Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Paine rushed in quickly to put the US cat back in the bag by denying any knowledge of such "request" from the US. The Australian government is either kept in the dark by its US masters, or is trying to cover up its complete subservience to US demands in the expectation of strong public opposition.

However, Dr Vince Scappatura, member of IPAN and one of the speakers at IPAN conference, stated that missile launchers brought by the US from Okinawa to the Talisman Sabre military exercises held at the end of July-early August were left behind after the joint exercises ended. These missile launchers will be used by the US marines in Darwin practising and preparing for war with China.

A further escalation of US imperialist agendas is the recently announced US plan for the nearby environmentally sensitive Glyde Point near Darwin to be developed as a navy base for US warships.

## **CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS – PLENARY SESSION**

1. IPAN message of solidarity to workers at DP World containers and their union the Maritime Union of Australia.

*This 2019 National Conference of Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) held in Darwin 2-4 August extends our solidarity and support to the MUA and its members at DP World containers terminal ports in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Fremantle.*

*IPAN stands in solidarity with wharfies and the MUA fighting to protect the hard won wages, working conditions and secure jobs that benefit working people.*

*Over the years IPAN has been encouraged by the support from maritime workers and the MUA's long history of campaigning for a just and peaceful world for working people.*

*We wish you all the best in your just struggle.*

## **2. Free Julian Assange**

*This 2019 National Conference of Independent and Peaceful Australia Network expresses its solidarity with Julian Assange, its resolute objection to his detainment in a high security gaol in UK, and its complete opposition to his extradition to the USA, for exposing the war-crimes of that country and others to the world.*

### **3. No Australian involvement in US war on Iran**

*This IPAN conference urges the Australian government to reject pressures from the USA to send our ships to the Straits of Hormuz, adding to the pressures by the USA government to isolate IRAN and destroy its economy.*

*We reject any Australian involvement in USA war on Iran!*

*Keep our ships and Australian forces home!*

*Australia must make its own foreign affairs policies!*

### **4. Solidarity with West Papuan people's struggles**

*This 2019 IPAN Conference supports the struggles of West Papuan people for independence.*

*IPAN affiliates are encouraged to reach out to West Papuan groups to support and publicise their activities.*

### **5. Export peace not weapons**

*This 2019 IPAN Conference in Darwin urges Australia to abandon plans to be a major weapons exporter, and instead promote Australia joining with New Zealand in Disarmament and Peace-making together with all geographical regional neighbours.*

## **Resolutions from Workshops**

### **War and the Environment Working Group**

*1. That IPAN be on action-alert to strongly support a national campaign against a possible US military Port at Glyde Point (or any other place in the Northern Territory), which highlights both the war-making and environmental threats emerging from such a new base.*

*2. That IPAN investigates conformity with Australian bio-security regulations, particularly at Tindall Air-Force base, in relation to the rotation of US military units into the Northern Territory, and if not campaigns for it to be enforced.*

### **Peace and Justice Are Union Business Working Group**

*(i). Oppose imperialist wars – campaign for peace and justice*

*(ii). Building mutual support and solidarity between workers, unions and communities.*

*(iii). End US-Australia military alliance – An independent and peaceful foreign policy.*

### **IPAN alliances Working Group**

*That IPAN seeks to establish a network of organisations, in particular those in Australia, New Zealand, Pacific and South East Asian nations, aimed at sharing knowledge and standing together as advocates for agreed aims for peace, social justice and independence, opposing war and nuclear weapons, in particular:*

*Giving support for the Joint Code of Conduct for the South China Sea,*

*Upholding the UN Charter and the Treaty for Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia,*

*Supporting the people of West Papua and Guam in their struggles for independence,  
Endorsing the ICAN campaign to ban nuclear weapons,  
Acknowledging the aspiration of Indigenous peoples for sovereignty and self determination.*