

## **IPAN Coordinating Committee Report 2014-2015**

The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network has formed out of a widely shared concern about the subservient role that successive Australian governments have played in the growing United States militarism around the Asia Pacific region. More than 50 organisations signed up to the initial IPAN statement, and the growing unity amongst these very diverse parts of our movement is an important step forward. It echoes the broad movement which has grown in Australia around climate change and environmental destruction.

Following the Canberra inaugural IPAN national conference in 2014 an interim steering committee was formed from the 40 delegates in attendance. The steering committee has met each month to support the actions of member groups around the country.

Over the past 12 months the wars in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Ukraine and North Africa have led to the greatest humanitarian disaster for many years with millions of people displaced from their homes and threatening escalating war with the risk of nuclear war.

Concurrently there is also a war going on in our country a war to deprive us of civil rights on the home on the back of fearmongering that the 'terrorists 'are coming to get us.

The Canberra conference concluding statement affirms the need for a strong national voice for peace and independence as our government leads us deeper into wars.

Some of the concrete outcomes of IPAN national campaigning include:

- We submitted two petitions to the Senate (one about the F35 purchase, the second about military spending) with many thousands of signatures.
- The current white poppy campaign has been taken up widely, and grew out of conversations held at the Canberra conference
- Through networking, IPAN has increased the number of "Global Day of Action on Military Spending" events and activities around Australia.
- Also through IPAN networking, Anzac eve peace events were held in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Lismore and Brisbane
- Media releases, interviews and published articles on peace and independence and have led to references to IPAN and our aims in various newspapers.
- Member groups have built good links around the IPAN aims with a range of trade unions, including the Trades Hall councils in Victoria and Qld., the Electrical Trades union and the Communication Workers Unions.
- We published an open letter to the PM, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister requesting the findings of DOD investigation into the actions of members of the ADF at Swan Is be made public.

- We have set up the IPAN Facebook page and website, stating aims and listing affiliates, links to other like-minded groups and informative articles. We have started to see the value of this social media campaigning as some of the attendees at our current activities have heard about them by these means. WE have also produced an introductory leaflet about IPAN
- Within the Interim Steering Committee we have built substantial trust and a good working relationship that is essential if we are to build further national campaigns - as tensions in our region (and the world at large) appear to be rising dramatically. One of the significant results of that ongoing work has been a draft set of guidelines for IPAN that will enable us to reach out to much wider sections of the Australian people.
- Dozens of people around Australia have been active in organising the inaugural IPAN national gathering in Canberra, April, 2014, which was part of a week-long Peace Convergence, organising a stall at the National folk Festival in 2014, and the current national forum and conference in association with the 2015 Peace Convergence.
- IPAN has also spoken out against the renewed military involvement in the Middle East; supported the activists demonstrating against Talisman Sabre 2015; responded to the death of Malcolm Fraser through his list of colleagues, recognising the significant contribution he has made to a vision of peace and independence for Australia; created two more petitions that are current:- #3 "US Marines Out of Darwin!" and #4 "Close Kojarena Spy Base"; and through our affiliates, made submissions to the 2015 Defence White Paper.

Building a national network to achieve a louder vision and voice for peace and independence is not an easy task. There are many organisations in varied parts of the Australian community who could potentially support the IPAN aims, including trade unions, environmental groups, as well as other community organisations. The task we face is to demonstrate that while these varied organisations have their own focus and area of work, a nationally united voice around IPAN aims will have much greater strength. Just to recap, these aims are

1. Promote an independent Australian foreign policy that builds peace and nonviolent resolutions of conflict in our region;
2. Oppose the establishment of foreign military bases and the deployment of foreign troops and military in Australia and the Asia-Pacific;
3. Provide information, analysis and opportunities for NGOs, unions, churches and community groups to participate in decision-making on Australia's peace and security options;
4. Build links with peoples and organisations in the Asia-Pacific campaigning for peace and against military bases and troops in the region.