



WILPF (Australian Section) Annual Report 2006

WILPF (Australia) PO Box 345, Rundle Mall SA 5000

This report covers the WILPF year from January to December 2006.

The Australian Section comprises five branches: Queensland, NSW, ACT, Tasmania and South Australia. While the branches together constitute the Section, they all continue a discrete existence. While the Section's Executive Committee (SEC) meets by telephone link-up four times each year, regular general meetings are held at the branch level. These branch meetings are usually held once a month. In addition, we have WILPF contacts in Northern Territory and Victoria where efforts are underway to form/ re-form WILPF branches.

In May 2006, we held our Triennial Section Meeting (TSM) at The Monastery at Glen Osmond, South Australia. Members came from all over Australia including Gwen Goedecke from Victoria. Edwina Hughes came from the Aotearoa/ New Zealand Section. That Triennial Section Meeting incorporated our Annual General Meeting where a new Section Executive Committee was elected as follows:

Joint National Coordinators: Cathy Picone and Ruth Russell

Assistant Coordinator: Stella Boyages

International Executive Committee Delegate: Mary Ziesak

Editor of "Peace and Freedom": Chris Henderson

Treasurer: Margaret Wood

Branch delegates were advised following the Triennial Section Meeting as follows:

NSW: Stella Boyages (later Spiderlily Redgold)

Queensland: Dragana Zivancevic

South Australia: Sue Gilbey (later Kate Parsons)

ACT: Lyn Lane

Tasmania: Margot Roe

Spiderlily Redgold was appointed Section webkeeper and Del Cuddihy Section archivist.

While members of the SEC are located in all states and territories represented in our Section, the national office is presently located in Adelaide, South Australia. Because of the geographical spread of our SEC's members, electronic means of communication have become vital within our organisation: telephone meetings and email are the main forms at this stage.

Membership is engaged at the branch level and while some branches lost members, others had overall gains. Queensland branch's numbers in particular are growing. The

NSW branch has a sub-branch in the Blue Mountains, which had the first of their bi-monthly meetings in August where it was decided they were going to focus their energies on the nuclear debate and the movement for a Charter of Rights for NSW.

Our keynote speaker at the Triennial Section Meeting was Rhonda Sharp, who truly inspired us on the topic of government economic policy. Thanks to all who made this three-day meeting go so well. Special thanks for their efforts to the organising group: Chris Henderson, Ruth Russell and Cathy Picone.

Members organised displays of “Children of the Gulf War” photographic exhibition at the Brisbane Social Forum, at the Woodford Folk Festival, and at the WILPF Triennial in Adelaide in May. Chris Henderson also assisted the “Children” to continue their national tour by working with the NSW branch and local groups to display the exhibition at Waverley City Council (where it was shown for a second time), at Kempsey Library, Mosman Library and Macquarie University Library. The Waverley City Council made a substantial donation to the project which enabled us to purchase and mount a further 19 photographs taken by Takashi in Iraq during 2003-04. This brings the full exhibition to 77 photos. Many thanks to Dorothy Buckland-Fuller and Stefania Siedlecky for all their work in organising the exhibitions in Mosman and at Macquarie University.

Members from most branches were involved in the Section’s “Task Force” on Resolution 1325. Many thanks to Margaret Bearlin, Barb O’Dwyer, Meg Clark and Ruth Russell for their dedicated work on this initiative. In May as part of a major WILPF initiative, the ACT branch hosted a workshop “*Developing a lobby strategy for 1325*”. This event was well attended. The Working Group met following the workshop to develop ways to take the work further, and recommended the launch of an Australia-wide 1325 campaign, that would work to update the website and publish the educational materials agreed to as part of our grant through WomenSpeak. A national task group with representatives from each state has been formed to carry this forward. 13 national women's organisations have signed on as part of WomenSpeak. In August the NSW branch hosted a workshop on Res 1325. This workshop was chaired by Margaret Bearlin.

Over the past year, we have sent a number of letters to the Federal Government and/or to embassies. These letters covered such topics as: “Keep Space for Peace” - about the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and National Missile Defence; the Israel/Lebanon war; the status of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia; a UN-led mission rather than an Australian-led mission for East Timor; the execution of Atefah Sahaaleh, a girl child in Iran; the return of David Hicks to Australia; and the United States’ transfer of civilian nuclear technology to India and its impact on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

We also wrote a large number of submissions to parliamentary enquiries including one about uranium and nuclear energy; another about uranium sales to China; one about the Australian Participants in British Nuclear Tests (Treatment) Bill 2006 and another about the Upgrade to the Shoalwater Bay Training Area, Rockhampton, Queensland.

Two issues of “Peace and Freedom” were prepared by Editor, Chris Henderson whose work on the journal has been greatly appreciated. In addition, a number of our branches also publish branch newsletters or bulletins. In Victoria, WILPF Pen, an email newsletter is distributed. Sincere appreciations and thanks to all our newsletter editors.

In mid-year, Ruth Russell visited Tasmania. Ruth’s visit was jointly sponsored by the Tasmanian Division of the United Nations Association of Australia and the Tasmanian branch of WILPF. Ruth was also the keynote speaker at the United Nation’s Day luncheon at Parliament House. She also addressed an event at Women Tasmania for WILPF members as well as a public meeting at the Law School of the university.

At the Brisbane Social Forum, Mary Ziesak conducted a workshop where Ruth was also guest speaker. A number of Queensland members met with Ruth for dinner following the workshop.

In June, Cathy Picone participated in the World Peace Forum in Vancouver, Canada and reported back both orally and through “Peace and Freedom” on her return.

Once again this year, we sponsored the prize at Flinders University for the Most Outstanding Student in International Law. We were represented at the Award Ceremony by WILPF member and Flinders University Law Lecturer, Mary Heath. We congratulate this year’s prize winner, Rebecca Dowd. Rebecca Dowd subsequently wrote an article for “Peace and Freedom” about her award.

An exciting initiative of the Queensland branch was the formation of their street theatre group “Performers for Peace”. With the help of artistic director, Anna Yen, the branch has written scripts for skits about 1900’s happenings related to gaining the vote for white women in Queensland, saying NO to war and conscription in 1915, and an anti-Vietnam War vigil. The theatre troupe’s two skits “Fiery Debate” and “A Modern Fairy Tale” have been presented at a number of events throughout the year.

Another exciting initiative for the year was the ACT branch’s “Continuing the Festival of Peace” project, which culminated with the launch in March by Minister Katy Gallagher of a booklet recording the Festival of Peace - a celebration of 90 Years of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom held in October 2005. The ACT Government provided \$3,000 funding from the 2005/06 ACT Women’s Grants Program for this WILPF project.

International Women’s Day (IWD) was marked around the country. “Performers for Peace” performed their skits on IWD in Brisbane’s King George Square, the School of Arts Building and ANZAC Square. At the Queensland Government Office for Women IWD event on 8 March in Brisbane, WILPF members Chris Henderson, Joan Shears and Zohl de Ishtar were honoured as Women of Peace. In NSW, Jane Corpus-Brock was awarded an Edna Ryan Award for her tireless work in protecting and promoting women’s rights. Tasmanian WILPFers made up a table at the IWD Breakfast attended by over a thousand women where Indira Naidoo was the speaker. On March 8th at Women Tasmania, there was a morning of singing and creative writing performance. As another celebration of IWD, Tasmanian WILPF member, Yabbo Thompson organised the visit to

the state of Rohini Weerasinghe from the Sri Lankan NGO that gives micro-credit loans to, and trains women to start small businesses. On March 4th in the lead-up to IWD, the SA branch held a women's workshop as part of the IWD program for the SA State Government's Office for Women. The workshop entitled "Men as Allies to Women's Liberation" was well attended and was aimed at improving the chances of bringing men on board as allies to the movement for women's liberation.

As usual, around the country WILPFers participated in the IWD marches and rallies where we carried our banners, held stalls and distributed our membership forms.

In May, to mark International Women's Day for Disarmament and Peace, the ACT branch held a workshop entitled "How to be Disarming in a Culture of Violence?" This was a very successful event and a lot of fun for participants.

A number of our branches are centrally involved in Women in Black (WiB). In Tasmania, WiB meets twice a month and the very regular attendees are all members of WILPF. In SA, most of the attendees are WILPFers. Also in the ACT and Victoria, WILPFers are involved in WiB. In SA, WiB received a donation of \$500 from Quakers, the Religious Society of Friends to support the WiB vigils.

In August, a number of branches marked Hiroshima Day. In Queensland, Hiroshima Day Commemorations were chaired by Chris Henderson. In SA, the anniversary was marked with a commemorative vigil in Peace Park. In the ACT, the branch gathered at Nara Peace Park.

Also in August, the SA branch organised a public meeting at the Migrant Resource Centre on the topic of human rights abuses in West Papua.

In addition to International Women's Day, Hiroshima Day and WiB vigils, WILPFers participated in a large number of other marches, protests, rallies, carnivals, public meetings and other events organised by or in conjunction with groups such as: the Queensland Anti-war Rally and March, the Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan, NoWar (SA), ACPACS Non-violence Forum, Palm Sunday Peace rallies and marches, Labor Day Rally and March, Brisbane Social Forum, Romero Group, Graham F. Smith Peace Trust, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, Just Peace's Forum on Nuclear Issues, Students of Sustainability Conference, Australia West Papua Association, International Day of Peace on 21 September, the Sydney Peace Festival, Australian Peace Committee, MAPW, Protest against Land Warfare Conference at Brisbane Conference and Exhibition Centre and the QNFA (the Nuclear Strategy Weekend).

As our proxy IEC delegate, Ruth Russell attended the International Executive Committee Meeting which was held in England from September 4-8. Ruth reported back extensively on her return. Ruth also circulated a written report.

We are represented on the WomenSpeak list and were represented at half yearly WomenSpeak conferences. Thanks to by Lyn Lane, Hellen Cooke, Clare Nugent and

Margaret Bearlin. In a number of states, we are represented in the UNAA Status of Women Committee and in UNAA also.

Our NSW and SA branches are involved in campaigns in those states for States' Bill of Rights. The NSW branch is on the steering committee for the NSW Charter Group working towards a Charter of Rights for NSW and the SA branch is part of the Human Rights Coalition in that state.

In South Australia, the branch participated in the "Peace of the Action" radio program on Radio Adelaide 101.5FM 12.30 pm Sundays.

Work continued throughout this year on the production of WILPF national information leaflet and membership brochure. This new membership brochure is the end result of years of thorough consultation and hard work on the part of a number of our members but particularly of Chris Henderson who sorted through many drafts and undertook many, many hours of consultation to get the words and the design just right. Thanks also to Zelda Trione for the contribution of her time and talents.

Thanks to Queensland branch, the WILPF Internship leaflet was also updated.

During this year and into the following year, a number of our branches (and Victoria as an incipient branch) hosted events around the country to launch the published biographies of two renowned WILPF members, Margaret Holmes and Irene Greenwood. We were very lucky to have had the respective authors, Michelle Cavanagh (NSW) and Dr. Kay Murray (Western Australia) in attendance at some of these launches. In addition, Queensland WILPF member Hilary Summy's book "Peace Angel of World War 1: Dissent of Margaret Thorp" was launched at the University of Queensland;

In October, the ACT branch were caretakers of a peace pole at the SievX National Memorial.

In November, the Section was pleased to assist NSW branch member Himali Wettasinghe to attend the International WILPF Study Tour in Cuba where she was an invited speaker, speaking about women and domestic violence.

Also in November to mark the International Day Against Violence Against Women, the SA branch hosted a public workshop entitled "Women's unfinished agenda: the particular contribution of a *women's* peace group". This workshop dealt with women's groups, their achievements, their history and future.

We maintained a number of email lists: the WILPF Section members' email list (thanks to Jillinda Thomson) and the Section Executive Committee email list. In addition, Cathy Picone is listkeeper for Pamela's List, an email list for representatives of national women's organisations.

Members continue to donate generously through the tax deductibility status afforded us through the National Foundation of Australian Women. The donation form is included in each issue of "Peace and Freedom". More active fundraising activities also continue –

mostly at the branch level. WILPFers often hold stalls at various peace events and we continue to build good relations with other peace groups and initiatives by allocating some of these funds. In Queensland for instance funds were allocated to the Brisbane Social Forum, members' travel, Performers for Peace costs, Cindy Sheehan visit, Community Learning Circles (following Cyclone Larry) and book launch provisions. In the ACT, a fundraising stall was held at the Oxfam Christmas Bazaar. In South Australia, stalls were held at the International Women's Day Festival and the World Music Festival (WOMAD), the Youth Hostels of Australia event on International Day for Peace in September and at the St Peters fair in April. Thanks in particular to Cynthia James for this work. In Victoria, Hellen Cooke, Clare Nugent and others have organised the sale of very attractive, compact and colourful Onya carry-bags to raise funds for reprinting Eleanor Moore's book "The Quest for Peace". Thanks to cooperation, these bags have been sold around the country.

We warmly congratulate Tasmanian WILPF member, Eve Masterman and NSW WILPF member, Lorna Gilmore who during this year both celebrated their 99th birthdays. Because of Eve's centenary impending, the Tasmanian branch will inaugurate a poetry prize in her honour.

*Cathy Picone and Ruth Russell
Joint National Coordinators
June 2007*