



WILPF (Australian Section) Annual Report 2007

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This report covers the WILPF year from January to December 2007.

We have had another very good and productive year. WILPF (Australian Section) continues to be an organisation of energy, dedicated good work and commitment due to the efforts of many, many WILPF women around Australia who still hold to the vision of our founding foremothers for a world where human conflicts are not “resolved” by military means and violence, but by negotiation and mediation. Another strength of our organisation is our capacity to work cohesively together across a huge continent - this “wide, brown land”.

At present, five branches comprise the Australian Section of WILPF: ACT, NSW, South Australian, Tasmanian and Queensland branches. In Western Australia and Victoria, WILPF members are endeavouring to rebuild branches. The NSW branch also has a sub-branch in the Blue Mountains.

For this period, the national office continued in Adelaide. Because members of our Section Executive Committee (SEC) live in cities around the country, electronic means of communication have become vital; thus far, teleconference meetings and email are the main forms of communication. The SEC held teleconference meetings at three monthly intervals throughout the year. The AGM was held by telephone in June.

The members of the SEC are Cathy Picone and Ruth Russell (Joint National Coordinators), Margaret Wood (Treasurer), Mary Ziesak (International Executive Committee Delegate), Chris Henderson (Editor of “Peace and Freedom”), Stella Boyages (Assistant Coordinator), Lyn Lane (ACT branch delegate), Stefania Siedlecky (NSW branch delegate who replaced Spiderlily Redgold), Kate Parsons (South Australian branch delegate), Margot Roe (Tasmanian branch delegate), and Dragana Zivancevic (Queensland branch delegate). Thanks to all for your dedicated hard work – your contributions to our combined effort are greatly appreciated!

We continue to maintain the WILPF Section members' email list and the Section Executive Committee email list at the Australian Virtual Centre for Women and the Law website. In addition, we continue to maintain Pamela's List, an email list for representatives of national women's organisations.

Our communications have been greatly enhanced during this year thanks to the expert work of our webkeeper, Spiderlily Redgold who maintains our website with up-to-date WILPF publications, letters and submissions. Spider has also set up email addresses for the national office and the branches at the website. Many thanks to Spider for her generosity! Many thanks also to Del Cuddihy for her excellent work as Section archivist.

Over the past year, we wrote letters to the Federal Government on a variety of matters: cluster munitions; the Howard Government's intervention in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory; the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the "comfort women"; the deportation of Robert Jovicic to Serbia; Minister for Immigration, Kevin Andrews' statements about Sudanese refugees supposedly not settling into Australia as well as other migrant groups; Australian uranium sales to India; the situation in Burma; and a UNSCR 1325 national action plan. We also wrote to Malcolm Turnbull about the Howard Government's plans for nuclear power for civilian use in Australia. We wrote to various ALP members about their "No New Uranium Mines" policy. We wrote to the Saudi Ambassador about the harsh sentence against a rape victim in Saudi Arabia; to the Japanese Ambassador about some Japanese politicians' misleading comments about the "comfort women" not having been forced into sexual servitude; and, just as we did last year, we wrote once again to the US Ambassador to mark "Keep Space for Peace" by calling for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space and an end to the US Missile Defence Program.

Thanks to the NSW branch's Blue Mountains group, we produced and very widely distributed a set of informative leaflets about the dangers the nuclear power industry.

We also wrote a number of submissions to parliamentary enquiries: one about the Lombok Treaty; another about the anti-terrorism legislation; and one to the Uranium Mining and Nuclear Energy Review Secretariat about uranium mining and use of nuclear energy in Australia. We also drafted a statement concerning the Review Theme for CSW 2008 for the WomenSpeak consortium. The WILPF statement was adopted by WomenSpeak in its entirety as WomenSpeak's input to government on the Review Theme.

Two issues of "Peace and Freedom" were prepared by our new editorial team, Chris Henderson, Ruth Russell and Maureen Arnott. They are a great team and their excellent good work on the journal has been greatly appreciated. In addition, Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia continued to publish branch bulletins. (Last year's: In Victoria, WILPF Pen, an email newsletter is distributed.) Sincere appreciations and thanks to all our newsletter editors.

Largely through the work of Chris Henderson and WILPF Queensland members, a display of "Children of the Gulf War" photographic exhibition was held at the Peace Convergence at Rockhampton. The exhibition was opened by the Mayor of Rockhampton, Margaret Strelow, who also received a WILPF delegation with a proposal for Rockhampton to hold peace games in the future. Other speakers included Iraqi doctor Dr Batool Nadeem, Dr Llewellyn Davies (MAPW) and local Elder Aunty Janette.

The exhibition was later displayed in the Brisbane Square for International Day of Peace, 21 September 2007, and has been similarly booked for this year's celebrations.

Efforts are now underway for the display to be shown soon in Byron Bay.

To further our ongoing work on UNSCR 1325, WILPF women have continued to promote and run information sessions on this Resolution wherever possible. We have set up a National WILPF Task Force (with a representative from each of our branches) to promote and prepare for the development of an Australian National Action Plan where WILPF would be one of the NGOs consulted by the Australian Government in the drafting of this national action plan.

In July–August, our Australian delegation travelled to WILPF International Congress in Bolivia. Thanks to generous donations from Queensland and SA branches, we were able to fund our IEC delegate to travel to Bolivia. Our five-member delegation comprised Mary Ziesak, Ruth Russell, Felicia Boyages, Sue Gilbey and Stella Boyages. An issue of "Peace and Freedom" later reported on the Congress and a written report was also circulated by Mary and Ruth.

Once again this year, we sponsored the prize for the Most Outstanding Student in International Law at Flinders University, South Australia, and Mary Heath represented us at the Award Ceremony in April where she presented the prize to Poppy Rogers-Ross.

We have been represented at WomenSpeak meetings by Lyn Lane, Ruth Russell, Hellen Cooke and Clare Nugent. We are also represented on the WomenSpeak email list by Lyn Lane, Hellen Cooke, Ruth Russell and Cathy Picone.

With thanks to our Queensland branch, the WILPF (Australia) Internship program saw three interns undertake the program this year: Kathryn Allison (Kate), Sakina Ramic from Sweden and Margaret Freyne. Kate wrote a report on international WILPF's campaign on economic and social justice. Sakina compiled a questionnaire for WILPF Queensland members. Margaret made UNSCR 1325 her special focus. These students spent a period of time learning about WILPF and aspects of WILPF's work as part of their university courses. Kate has since reported on her involvement at the Canberra Youth Summit.

Once again this year in early March, WILPF branches around the country participated in the International Women's Day (IWD) events by carrying our banners in the marches, holding stalls and distributing our membership forms. Many members also attended the UNIFEM IWD Breakfasts around the country on 8th March.

A number of our branches continued to be 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 South Australia, most of the attendees are WILPFers. Also in the ACT and Victoria, WILPFers are centrally involved in WiB. Thanks to a donation from Quakers, the WiB group in Adelaide continued to distribute the WiB calendar.

In NSW and ACT, WILPF members are active in the Chorus of Women.

With assistance from Anna Yen, Kathy Teakle and Christine Grodd, the Queensland branch continued their street theatre group, Performers for Peace. Their “Yellowcake” skit (on nuclear and uranium issues) was presented at the Peace-Acting Locally Public Forum at Queensland University in March. This year, the group also developed some choir work and they sang at five events during the year, including the opening of the Children of the Gulf War Exhibition in Rockhampton in June, for International Day of Peace (see below) and for the UN Elimination of Violence Against Women in November.

Particular thanks to Margaret Bearlin and Felicity Hill who generously represented us at the NGO consultation with DFAT in the lead-up to the NPT PrepCom in Vienna in 2007.

On April 1st, we joined in the events around Australia to mark Palm Sunday under the theme of “Nuclear Fools Day” in the development of which Felicity Hill played a leading role. In Victoria, WILPF was one of a group of organisations which met to form the Palm Sunday Alliance and plan a most successful parade. In Brisbane, the “Yellowcake” skit enjoyed an encore performance at the Palm Sunday Rally. In South Australia, the branch held a stall at the SA event in the centre of the city in Victoria Square.

In June, branches participated in the Reconciliation Week events around the country.

Also in June, we participated in the PeaceConvergence in Rockhampton and Yeppoon. Although this was undertaken largely by members of the Queensland branch, WILPF members travelled from as far as Victoria (thanks to the magnificent efforts Hellen Cooke!) to participate in the Convergence.

In August, branches once more marked Hiroshima Day. We also participated in Labor Day marches and rallies, and some of our branches also mark Anzac Day in various ways; the ACT branch hosted a gathering at the Peace Memorial near the National Library – 20 people attended a time of reflection; in Victoria, WILPF members stood with Women for Peace holding banners for three hours after listening to the dawn service; and in the NSW branch, four women met in Martin Place and handed out “Wear a Dove for Peace” stickers. These stickers are available to other branches who may wish to distribute them.

On September 21st, we marked International Day of Peace. In Brisbane, Performers for Peace performed their anti-nuclear version of “The Sound of Music” for International Day of Peace. In addition, an information table was held at the event in Brisbane, and in

South Australia, the branch held a vigil on the steps of Parliament House along with Women in Black.

The Tasmanian branch marked Human Rights Week in a number of ways.

Once more this year, we continued our work with the Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan (SAWA). Through our South Australian branch, WILPF was one of the sponsors of the Adelaide leg of the speaking tour of Sohaila, from the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan.

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: WomenSpeak, International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Japanese for Peace, PANAC, the Global Human Rights Torch Relay, Queensland Nuclear Free Alliance, Alliance Against Uranium Mining in Alice Springs, Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition, Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan, UNAA and UNAA Status of Women Committees, NoWar (SA), Palm Sunday Peace rallies and marches, Graham F. Smith Peace Trust, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament, Australian Peace Committee, Australian Federation of University Women, Medical Association for the Prevention of War, Just Peace, Rally for Peace, Multi Faith Centre, Unitarian Church, Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (UQ), Soroptimists International, Amnesty International, Quakers and Believing Women for a Culture of Peace.

In most branches, regular general meetings are held at the branch level, usually on a monthly basis.

Congratulations go to the ACT branch for their magnificent *Continuing the Festival of Peace* project, for which funding of \$3,000 was received from the 2005/06 ACT Women's Grants Program. The project culminated with the launch on March 1st 2007 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.

We warmly congratulate NSW WILPF member, Lorna Gilmore and Tasmanian WILPF member, Eve Masterman who during this year both mark their 100th birthdays. WILPF members and others gathered to celebrate these excellent good women whose contributions towards building a better world have been huge.

The Eve Masterman peace poetry competition, initiated by Margot Roe, will culminate with a special presentation on 31st May 2008 (to coincide with Eve's 101st Birthday) at the Hobart Bookshop.

In March, NSW WILPF members attended an event to honour Margaret Holmes, the founder and for many years President of both the Branch and the Australian Section who this year celebrates her 99th birthday. The speaker was Michelle Cavanagh, author of

“Margaret Holmes: The Life and Times of an Australian Peace Campaigner”. (We have copies of Michelle's biography of Margaret Holmes for sale at \$30.) Michelle also spoke about Margaret's life at a public meeting in Adelaide organised by the SA branch.

With each issue of “Peace and Freedom”, a donation form “Make Your Money Work for World Peace!” is distributed to members. Other fundraising activities continue at the branch level. In Tasmania, Margaret Wood, Audrey Moore and Peg Walter continue to make the Charities Card Shop a great success. Most branches hold stalls at various public events. In South Australia, stalls were held at the World Music Festival, at the Palm Sunday event and at the St Peters fair. In Queensland, information tables were held at the Multicultural Fete at Richlands, the Peace Fair at Stones Corner, Redlands Spring Festival, Redlands Women's Expo at Cleveland, Australia at the Crossroads Forum in Brisbane City Hall, and at the WELLSRING: *Peace Acting Locally* evening at Queensland University in March. The Tasmanian branch also ran many stalls at a number of public events “to spread the good word on WILPF”. WILPF in Victoria continues to sell the Onya carry-bags to raise funds for reprinting Eleanor Moore's book, “The Quest for Peace”. Other branches have supported Victoria's initiative by selling the bags on their trading tables, and are encouraged to buy more as more bags yet remain to be sold just to pay back the capital cost of buying the bags. The Queensland branch has also held a number of successful raffles.

Congratulations to Tasmanian WILPF member, Linley Grant, who was recognised for her outstanding service to the Community over many years and was included on the Tasmanian Roll of Honour for Women 2007.

Sadly this year we lost two very dear WILPF members. On Sunday 29th April, our dear Rita Shortland died. We remember Rita for her gentle speaking, her smiles, her kindnesses, her warmth and her vision for peace for all. On Wednesday 19th September, our beloved Fleur Finnie died. At 88 years of age, Fleur passed away peacefully in her sleep at the nursing home where she had been living. Fleur had dedicated her life to nursing, the peace movement, social justice, children and the environment. We remember her for her stalwart dedication to these causes and campaigns as well as her great sense of fun and good humour. We will miss them both.

*Cathy Picone and Ruth Russell
Joint National Coordinators
June 2008*