

Speech at Anzac Day Reflection
Richardson's Lookout – Marrickville Peace Park
25th April 2024
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We, who concern ourselves with such matters, have a common cause and a common foe. The common cause, ultimately, as Jennifer reminded us, is Earth, the health of our planet and all the life forms on it. And the foe is war, itself, which is unhealthy in the extreme not just for us humans but for our planet, at large.

On this ANZAC Day, Raising Peace, one of the groups with which Marrickville Peace Group has a close association, has issued a statement urging all Australians to remember the victims of war and work for a peaceful future for all the peoples of the world. Copies of RP's statement are available, and I have drawn from it for my remarks.

I believe we should honour all who have experienced and been affected by war, all of whom are, one way or another, war's victims - and that the very best way to that is by calling for an end to war and promoting the overwhelmingly positive attributes of living in peace.

I find it both remarkable and distressing that Australians are repeatedly told that the lesson of ANZAC Day, built on a calamitous campaign at Gallipoli, is not that war is a disaster, but rather that it is some sort of noble endeavour. Through such telling, the trauma and moral injury of war remain unrecognised and unacknowledged.

Humanity needs to outgrow war, to recognise the fact that it has been a failure and is now redundant - especially since the arrival of nuclear weapons and MAD- Mutually Assured Destruction.

Today, as well as all the so-called sophisticated means of destroying lives and infrastructure, we possess incredible technological tools of communication and thus diplomacy, that should enable us to resolve disputes without resorting to violence.

After WW2 Australia helped to write the UN Charter, but our leaders were soon willing to take us into more wars and destroy more young Australian lives. In Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq we fought in wars that were in no way 'defensive', had little justification and produced disastrous outcomes.

Currently, talk of the possibility of Australia finding itself involved in a war against China has become commonplace. But our fear of China is altogether misguided. It is bolstered by the poorly conceived and costly AUKUS project, which is entirely predicated on this idea that war between the USA and China is coming.

In a situation that is reminiscent of World War 1, the world's great powers seem incapable of changing course away from conflict. A conventional war between the USA and China would be massively destructive to Australia, its people, its economy and its environment. The possibility of a nuclear exchange and the annihilation that that it could bring, makes it unthinkable.

Committing itself to peace would be the best way for Australia to honour all those soldiers, family and community members killed, injured, and traumatised in war. In

every international engagement Australia should first ask: What is the way to resolve this peacefully?

Australia could end the intrusion of the armaments industry into our schools and universities, replacing it with investment in peace-focused education. It can and should become a champion of scholarship and the practices of peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building.

Furthermore, if Australia would only listen to and learn from its Indigenous population, it is uniquely placed to become the world's leading proponent of peace-building and peaceful co-existence. Rather than seeking recognition for its military prowess, Australia should strive towards being a champion of peace.