



Australia can become a global champion of peace

Raising Peace ANZAC Day statement 2024

This ANZAC Day 2024, the Raising Peace network of Australian peace organisations remembers the men and women of all nations, including First Nations, who have been killed and injured by war. We stand together to say without equivocation: the best way to honour their memory is to end war and commit to peace.

It is remarkable and distressing that Australians are being told that the lesson of ANZAC Day, built on a calamitous campaign at Gallipoli, is not that war is a disastrous endeavour, but rather that war is noble. The trauma and moral injury of war remain unrecognised and unacknowledged.

A nation that tries to found its identity on its military past risks engendering a 'war first' mentality in generations to come, rather than one that embraces peace. You cannot pick and choose which wars to honour. The relative clarity of the fight against Nazi Germany is absent from the Frontier War's campaign of conquering Australia's First Nations people, of the colonial Boer War, of the First World War's horrors, or of the wars since that have been fought in support of United States' hegemony.

Humanity needs to outgrow war, especially as nuclear weapons can destroy civilization itself. A tide of peace organisations grew out of World War 1; and in the shadow of World War 2 the United Nations Charter codified a peaceful global movement to 'promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom'. Today we possess incredible tools of diplomacy, communication and of technology that enable us to resolve disputes without resorting to violence.

Australia helped to write the UN Charter, but all too quickly our leaders were willing to destroy more young Australian lives in war. In Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan we fought in wars with little justification and with disastrous outcomes.

Australia's current fear of China, bolstered by the poorly conceived and costly AUKUS initiative, is misguided. In a situation that is reminiscent of World War 1, the world's great powers are seemingly incapable of changing course away from conflict. A conventional war between the USA and China would be massively destructive to people and to the environment. The threat of nuclear annihilation makes it totally unthinkable.

Nations are responsible for assuring the security of their people. They can defend their borders by civil or military means; they can be friends and partners with neighbours; and they can contribute to global peace through myriad channels. Australia's defence forces can defend our land without destroying someone else's. They can contribute to peace-keeping

as part of UN-sanctioned international operations. But there is no justification for military adventurism by any nation.

By committing itself to peace, Australia would honour all soldiers, family and community members killed, injured, and traumatised in war. In every international engagement it can commit to asking first: what is the way to resolve this peacefully? It can end the intrusion of the defence industry into our schools and universities, replacing it with investment in peace-focused education. Australia can become a champion of scholarship and the practice of peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building. And, if it chooses to learn from its Indigenous population, Australia is uniquely placed to become the world's leading proponent of First Nations approaches to peace-building.

On ANZAC Day 2024, Raising Peace urges all Australians to remember the fallen and work for a peaceful future for all the peoples of the world.

Issued by Raising Peace: www.raisingpeace.org.au

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About Raising Peace

Raising Peace is a network of individuals and peace organisations that works to celebrate and raise the profile of peace. We believe that the pursuit of peace and the nonviolent resolution of conflict, by individuals, communities and nations, is the path to our best shared future and that Australia, as an island continent, will be more peaceful and secure as an independent, defensive state. We support war veterans and remember those killed in wars as they remind us of the long aftermath of the horrors of warfare. We are committed to the realisation of the rights and recognition of First Nations people in Australia.

Through our annual peace festivals and other events, Raising Peace showcases and celebrates the initiatives, ongoing work and successes in promoting peace through voluntary and paid work by individuals, local, national and international organisations, educational institutions and other networks.

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