

Global Perspectives

Newsletter of the United Nations Association of Australia (Vic) Inc. Vol 3 Issue No 1



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT - PATRICIA COLLETT

In celebration of 2003, the United Nations International Year of Freshwater, the Association held a 2-day National Water Conference entitled: 'Towards a National Water Policy Framework - Vision to Implementation'. As well as introducing two new award categories in the national World Environment Day Awards program: 'Excellence in Water Management' and 'Excellence in Land Management'.

Over the past year the Association continued its program of 'Boardroom Briefings', which offered members the rare opportunity to listen to a variety of speakers in an intimate and informal setting. Guest Speakers included Senator John Faulkner; Mr Jonathan Brown, Australian High Commissioner to Zimbabwe; Dr Gavan Griffith QC; Dr Shashi Tharoor, Under Secretary General for Public Relations United Nations New York; Dr Alexander Stubb, Advisor to the President of the European Union; and Mr John Gibson, Principal, International Refugee Consulting. We were delighted to have Mr Kevin Rudd MP address the UNAA Victoria Annual General Meeting on the topic of '*The United Nations at the Crossroads: the future of the UN*'.

In 2003, the Association celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Media Peace Awards. To highlight the anniversary, the Association introduced a special Silver Award and held a Panel Discussion, 'The Media: A 25 Year Perspective',

chaired by Mr Kerry O'Brien, ABC 7.30 Report. Panel Participants included: Jeff McMullen, Jonathan Holmes, Stephen Mayne, Peter Cole-Adams and the Hon. Dr Barry Jones.

Following on from the first Model UN Conference for university students at the University of Melbourne Law School in 2003, the Association has now established this program across five major Victorian universities in 2004.

This is just one example of the Association's commitment to public education. The high profile of the Association in the Victorian community was demonstrated by the record number of calls received regarding issues such as the war in Iraq, Australia's treatment of asylum seekers, Australian intervention in the Solomon Islands, discrimination against Arab and Muslim Australians, and the United Nations and its many agencies.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those that have donated their time and expertise to assist with the running of the UNAA (Vic) office and its many events. Staff members Anna Stone, Catherine Sutherland, Julie Sonnemann, intern Michael Shannon and volunteers Michael, Max, Kasia, Angela, Fariha and Alex, have worked as a great team achieving wonderful results.

The Association is looking forward to what is already proving to be a busy and exciting 2004 period.

The UNAA Victoria would like to extend a warm welcome to all of our new members and a thank you, to all of our existing members for continuing to support the Association.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming events.

NATIONAL WATER CONFERENCE 2003



The Hon. Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage and Patricia Collett, Conference Convenor & UNAA Executive Director

The Conference brought together leading experts in the field of water management and focussed on the need to develop an integrated national strategy which took account of the existing COAG reform strategy, related sectors and policies, institutional strengthening, sharing of resources, stakeholder consultation and integrated resource management.

Dr David James, Director, Ecoservices, concluded that the major theme to emerge from the Conference was "the very clear message that water resource management should be aimed at achieving better 'triple bottom line' outcomes... National water policy can be successfully implemented only if all three aspects are addressed simultaneously, with 'smart' management of available water resources."

The conference also addressed the need "to formulate and implement policy in terms of total water cycle management", and to achieve a more efficient use of water as a scarce resource. Dr James stated that "the conference unanimously agreed that the provisions of the latest COAG water agreement,

leading to the National Water Initiative, provide a sound basis for developing a framework for implementing national water policy". However, the Conference considered the difficulty in translating the agreement into practical action and highlighted several gaps/deficiencies to be addressed by policy makers.



Dr David James, Director, Ecoservices; Patricia Collett, UNAA Executive Director; Professor Mike Young, CSIRO Land and Water; Professor Wayne Meyer, CSIRO Land and Water.

For a complete transcript of the closing remarks, recommendations and proceedings please visit: www.unaavictoria.com.au.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW:

REPORT STOP THE TRAFFIC II CONFERENCE

In October 2003, Project Respect, RMIT University and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission held a two-day conference *Stop the Traffic II* which addressed the issue of slavery and sexual servitude in Australia. Over the past year the issue has attracted widespread media coverage and gained prominence on the national agenda.

The Conference focussed on the implementation of the Australian government's planned legislation and key issues concerning the trafficking and sexual servitude of women, from the perspective of the experiences of trafficked women. Themes addressed included: the impact of violence against women; prostitution and the demand for trafficking; media reporting of trafficking; lobbying to effect change; and practical ways of creating campaigns.

According to Nicola Roxon, Labour's spokesperson for Population and Immigration, as a signatory to the UN Convention and protocol relating to trafficking in

people, the Australian Government is under strong international obligations to stop the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children.

For more information regarding the Conference please visit the Project Respect website: www.projectrespect.org.au.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Concern has been levelled at the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement's, environmental, cultural and economic impact. The Senate has agreed to support the Greens motion to protect Australia's cultural industries. However Global Trade Watch has stated that the FTA would provide "new rights for corporations to sue the Australian Government over environmental and health laws which reduce corporate profits (known as 'Investor-state provisions)". The FTA is also expected to increase pharmaceutical costs, have serious environmental impacts, reduce the Australian content on TV and radio, and adversely affect small farmers.

Issues of particular concern to the Australian Conservation Foundation include rules liberalising *Trade in Services* giving the US the right to challenge Australian Government Laws designed to protect the environment and other matters of public interest, the weakening of Australia's quarantine laws, the removal of laws requiring details of food products which contain GMOs, and Australia's unpreparedness, and lack of legislature to identify and scrutinize the environmental impacts of the FTA.

For more information please visit: Global Trade Watch website: www.tradewatchoz.org/AUSFTA or Australian Conservation Foundation website: www.acfonline.org.au.

ASIO BILL

Amendments to the ASIO Act 1979 which, according to Attorney-General Philip Ruddock, address "urgent practical issues that have been identified in implementing ASIO's new powers relating to terrorism offences" are cause for concern.

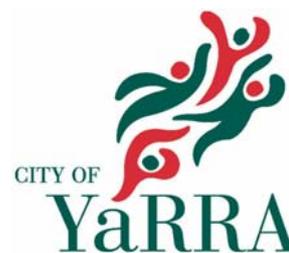
The changes will make it an offence to discuss ASIO's questioning

of people, regardless of their innocence, until two years after the interrogation has occurred. Politicians, academics and lawyers now face a jail term even if only revealing that ASIO has issued a warrant. As Senator Bob Brown highlights "if ASIO engages in human rights abuses or unlawful conduct journalists will not be allowed to report on it for at least two years".

EXCISION OF ISLANDS

The Government excised some 3,000 islands from Australia's migration zone in an attempt to prevent 15 asylum seekers who landed on Melville Island from seeking asylum under the Migration Act.

Michel Gabaudan, Regional Representative of the UNHCR, maintained that Australia was still bound, as a signatory to the refugee convention to accept the asylum seekers.



CITY OF YARRA RECEIVES 'GOLDEN WORLD UNITED NATIONS AWARD' 2003

The UN presented the City of Yarra with the Golden World United Nations Award for their advocacy campaign for local East Timorese entitled 'Common Sense for East Timorese - Let Them Stay'.

Previously facing deportation the majority of the Yarra East Timorese community have been granted permanent residency status, as a direct result of the City of Yarra campaign. The campaign advanced the aims of the United Nations in the local context, lobbying federal government ministers on behalf of the East Timorese community.

Yarra Mayor Greg Barber welcomed the award stating that "we were able to harness the determination in our local community to champion the cause of our East Timorese neighbours".

For more information please visit the City of Yarra website: www.yarracity.vic.gov.au.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT AWARDS 2003



Dr Roger Beale, Secretary to the Department of the Environment; Ian Kiernan, Chairman and Founder of Clean Up Australia; Tony Plowman MP, Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water; Bill Hargitay, Managing Director, Signode Australasia.

In June 2003, the UNAA World Environment Day Awards acknowledged those companies, organisations, local councils and community groups and individuals, whose programs and/or initiatives served to protect, manage or restore the environment. The awards acknowledge those committed to working towards a sustainable environment and whose actions taken at the local level address global environmental issues.

Mr Ian Kiernan Founder and Chairman of *Clean Up Australia*, hosted the Awards Presentation Dinner, with guest speakers the Hon. Dr Sharman Stone MP, representing the Prime Minister and John Thwaites MP, Victorian Minister for the Environment.

Award winners had demonstrated best practice approach or environmental leadership across categories of *Local Government, Media, Business Enterprise, Education, Community/Individual, Land and Water Management, and Triple Bottom Line*.



African Royal Drummers
World Environment Day Awards 2003

Toyota Australia won the inaugural *Excellence in Water Management Award*, introduced in 2003 in support of the International Year of Freshwater, for halving water use during vehicle construction.

Eurobodella Shire Council won the *Triple Bottom Line Award* for achieving environmental, social and commercial best practice, for programs the judges concluded should be extended to corporations.

The *Print Award* went to The Sunday Times in Perth for exposing a government cover-up of toxic leaks in the Perth suburb of Brookdale. ABC Radio National won the *Radio* category for a multi-media program that involved listeners in decisions about growing a cotton crop.

Mr Simon Molesworth QC, was presented with an *Award for Outstanding Service to the Environment* for more than 30 years of dedicated efforts towards protecting Australia's natural and cultural heritage.

There were a record number of entries in the four-year-old Awards which adopt the 'Think Global, Act Local' theme as the underlying principle for ensuring a sustainable future for the world environment.

25TH ANNIVERSARY MEDIA PEACE AWARDS 2003



Rod Davis and band, winner of the Port Fairy Folk Festival Song for Peace and Tolerance

The Media Peace Awards 25th Anniversary Presentation Dinner, hosted by the ABC's Kerry O'Brien at the Victorian Arts Centre, was a highlight of 2003. In a year dominated by issues of major conflict and pre-occupied with terrorism and global instability, the National Awards Program highlighted media efforts to promote tolerance and celebrate diversity through balanced and responsible reporting. As well as rewarding those journalists who

focussed on social justice and humanitarian issues.

Calls for tolerance and the celebration of diversity were the most common themes in this year's nominations, reflecting concerns that dominated political and social debate in Australia over the past twelve months. In particular, refugee issues and the US led 'war against terror' and war in Iraq.

Chairman of the Judging Panel, Michael Smith, commended the many "examples of simply outstanding journalism showing independence and courage as well as great skill". Stating that "entries from the Iraq war coverage showed a determination to explain, balance, and go beyond the headlines to give Australia an understanding of the war from the historical and cultural perspectives of both sides". Furthermore, that the "continuing controversy over Australia's treatment of asylum seekers featured strongly with some penetrating fact-gathering despite official denial of access to the centres".



The most outstanding single entrant was Bronwyn Adcock, whose investigative reports for SBS Television's 'Dateline' won her two major awards and a special commendation. ABC radio and television were also winners along with The Australian, The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald.

The new Photo-Journalism category produced two exceptional entries resulting in both Jason South and John Feder winning the Award for their work on Iraq.



Peter Cole-Adams, Sunday Age columnist and former foreign correspondent; The Hon. Barry Jones, political commentator; Kerry O'Brien, ABC 7.30 Report; Jeff McMullen, author and former 60 Minutes reporter

The Panel Discussion reflected on the failings and successes

of the media over the past 25 years and explored possible pathways for the future. The Panel discussed the media of the past 25 years. In particular, it focussed on issues relating to the role, standards, delivery systems and accountability of journalist practices concerning foreign affairs, social justice and humanitarian issues.

Summaries of the Panel Participants can be found on the UNAA Victoria website.

International Peace Award



The 2003 International Peace Award honoured, posthumously,

Sergio Vieira de Mello, for his strength, bravery and dedication in establishing order in some of the world's most troubled areas. His many roles with the United Nations included, working for the UNHCR in Geneva, Bangladesh, Sudan, Cyprus, Mozambique, Peru and Cambodia, Chief UN Official in Kosovo 1999, led the UN operation in East Timor overseeing the territory's difficult transition to full independence in 2000, and finally as UN High Commissioner for UNHCR heading the UN delegation in post-war Iraq.

Michel Gabaudan, Regional Representative of the UNHCR, paid tribute to Sergio Vieira de Mello, stating "we were impressed by your sense of diplomacy, your technical competence, political acumen, working capacity and general knowledge, all of which led to your stunning career...the confidence you displayed in the rightfulness of your purpose, your tremendous accessibility, your never-ending willingness to share your quiet friendship. You led by example, not by counsel - by action, not by words... that explains the profound effect and influence you had on all those who crossed your path...and led to the loyalty you so constantly generated".



Founders Award 2003

The 2003 'Founders Award' honoured Reverend Tim Costello for his outstanding contribution and commitment to the advancement of social justice and human rights in the Australian community. In his role as Director of Urban Seed, Reverend Costello worked with marginalised Australians, providing lunch programs, emergency assistance, referral and relationship work, and local advocacy support. He has lobbied passionately for issues including urban poverty, homelessness, gambling, corporate social responsibility, reconciliation and substance abuse.

25th Anniversary Silver Award 2003



Jonathan Holmes, 4 Corners reporter and winner of the 25th Anniversary Silver Award

The inaugural Silver Award celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Awards honoured Mr Jonathan Holmes, ABC Television's *Four Corners*, for his remarkable and fearless career, which demonstrated a fairness and equality to issues pertaining to human rights, social justice and conflict resolution. His work as both reporter and producer over the past 35 years, exemplified the spirit of the Media Peace Awards. He set the standard for current affairs through ABC Television and his establishment of *Foreign Correspondent*, and thus is to be commended for producing a better informed Australian public.

MODEL UN CONFERENCE

This year the Victorian Division ran its first Model UN Conference for university students. The Conference, titled 'Refugees, Global Security and Human Rights',

held at the University of Melbourne Law School, was a huge success. Over 130 university students from all faculties and departments attended the Conference and after fierce debate the Resolution was passed with few amendments at the conclusion of the Conference.

The acting 'Secretary-General' Dr Gavan Griffith was immensely impressed with the standard of the delegates' submitted position papers, as well as their verbal addresses to the mock 'General Assembly'. All students displayed a well informed and critical knowledge of the issues facing their respective countries.

Keynote speakers, Julian Burnside QC, Tony Jarvis (La Trobe University - Politics Department), and Grant Mitchell (Hotham Mission - Asylum Seeker Project) were the highlight of the event, as they introduced and stimulated debate on the topic at hand.

The Conference set a high precedent for the Conferences to be run throughout five major Melbourne universities in 2004.

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF CHINA, VISIT BY BEIJING DELEGATION 2004



Catherine Sutherland, UNAA Victoria; Patricia Collett, UNAA Victoria Executive Director; Zhang Yunfei, UNAC Director; Zhou Yuxiao, UNAC Vice-President & Director-General.

The UNA-China delegation from Beijing, visited Australia as part of the Human Rights Technical Cooperation (HTRC) Program, a cooperative venture between HREOC and different Chinese organisations. The venture is designed to strengthen the administration, promotion and protection of human rights in China. HTRC activities focus on the themes of: legal reform; women's and children's rights; and ethnic and minority rights.

The delegation met with the UNAA Victorian Division to discuss the running of Model UN Conferences in preparation for their international conference to be held in August 2004. Members of the delegation included: Ms Zhang Yunfei, Director of the Secretariat, UNA-China, and Mr Zhou Yuxiao, Vice President and Director General, UNA-China.

The visit intended to enable the UNAC delegation to examine the structure, experience, expertise and program activities of various Australian NGOs concerned with the promotion of human rights objectives in the UN. UNAA Victoria facilitated detailed discussions with the delegation regarding the promotion of the aims and ideals of the UN, and assistance of UN member states to comply with their responsibilities and the conduct of activities focused on the human rights objectives of the UN.



HUMAN RIGHTS DAY CHRISTMAS DRINKS

Guest Speaker: Mr John Gibson, Principal, International Refugee Consulting, addressed the "important, necessary and indispensable role" that is played by the United Nations. He illustrated the significance of this role, in particular with regard to nation-and-capacity-building work, Peace-keeping and the protection of refugees.

Mr Gibson spoke of the Government's approach to asylum issues and the 'false dichotomy' that has been created between "security and asylum". Concluding that it is "time to de-link security and asylum" as there is no evidence that terrorists have used asylum channels to breach the country's borders. John Gibson also condemned the Government's conscious policy of demonizing asylum seekers and its 'manufactured crisis of border control' which he declared were "frankly un-Australian".

Mr Gibson expressed the urgent need for a more humane and

fair policy towards asylum seekers, given that Government figures show that 90% of boat arrivals as 'genuine' refugees. He claimed that the current policy which "punishes the victims rather than the perpetrators" displayed a "complete moral bankruptcy".

In conclusion, Mr Gibson stated that it is a human attribute that characterises the work of the UN and the people who serve it. For a full transcript of John Gibson's speech please visit the UNAA Victoria website.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING GUEST SPEAKER: KEVIN RUDD MP, SHADOW MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Guest Speaker, Kevin Rudd MP addressed the topic 'The United Nations at the Cross-Roads' at the Annual General Meeting October 2003. Kevin Rudd explored the key issues of the impact of the Iraq War on the credibility of the United Nations, Australia's involvement in the Iraq war, and the alternative International Order now on offer.

Kevin Rudd highlighted Australia's special relationship with the UN, due to its citizens occupying senior positions in the UNO and the definitive role played by Australian's in the drafting of the UN Charter.

Kevin Rudd denied that a "failure to back collective military action in Iraq equals a failure of the UN system", as the UN provisions for humanitarian intervention or concerted military action, including Article 42, Article 51 and Article 26, were not met.

According to Kevin Rudd, the "alternative system which now presents itself is a system based on global military pre-emption, the unilateral definition of threat and articulated through rolling coalitions of the willing". He further stated that "if you are serious about the proposition that the old order is broken, and if you are serious about the proposition that you have just embraced a new order. Then it is encumbered upon you... to define what the replacement order might be, and what its rules of operation will be".

For a full transcript of Kevin Rudd's speech please visit the UNAA Victoria website.

BOARDROOM BRIEFINGS 2003

Throughout 2003, the Association held a number of Boardroom Briefings for members and interested members of the public.

In January 2003, **Dr Shashi Tharoor, United Nations Under Secretary General for Public Relations, New York**, addressed the need for greater public understanding and knowledge regarding the role of the United Nations, particularly considering current challenges to the United Nations Organisation.

In March 2003, **Dr Alexander Stubb, Advisor to the President of the European Union**, presented a frank discussion about the process of reviewing and attempting to rewrite the European Union constitution. As well as addressing the short-term effects and long-term ramifications thought to result from Britain's unpopular decision to support the US-led Iraq war, and predominantly French opposition to the war in the EU. Reflecting the EU's shifting balance of power and changing political alliances throughout the lead up to the Iraq War.

STATUS OF WOMEN COMMITTEE REPORT

In 2003, SOWC Representatives attended the Australian Women's Conference, and other relevant forums including the WASH group International Women's Day seminar. Diane Alley, Convenor of the UNAA National Status of Women Network, also represented the Network on the CAPOW Board, on Pamela's List. The national UNAA SOW Network also participated in the 'womenspeak coalition' discussions of women's organisations led by YWCA. SOWC also reviewed the Australian draft 4th and 5th CEDAW report and participated in the shadow report process.

The SOW committee organised a 'Conversation with UNAA National President Margaret Reynolds', held at the Queen Victoria

Women's Centre in December 2002, which enabled young women representing newly emerging campaigns focussing on women's human rights issues to discuss strategies with Margaret Reynolds; a very successful exercise for all who took part.

Members of the Committee continued to work and report on a range of topics including: Project Respect anti-trafficking campaign; women in the prison system, the conditions in which they are held plainly in breach of the UN Convention on Human Rights (as well as conditions of detention and under the Temporary Protection Visa system); ageing population issues; implementation of conventions and of SC Resolution 1325, particularly in the Asia-Pacific.

Several members of the SOWC were actively involved in organizing another forum 'Citizenship, Civics, Constitution' held, June 30. Speakers included Dr Judith Brett, La Trobe University, and Ms Kim Rubenstein, Specialist in Constitutional and Migration Law, University of Melbourne.

AusAID graduate student, Jennifer Mondia, also reported on SOW issues in the Highlands Province of the PNG.



UNYA REPORT

In 2003, the United Nations Youth Association ran two regional Model United Nations Conferences for high school students. The new more central location of the State Conference proved to be highly successful.

The Thant Trophy was once again held in 2003 and is estimated to continue to grow into one of Victoria's elite debating competitions for high school students. UNYA Victoria also introduced a series of education days across Victorian high schools, which are to become a permanent feature of UNYA's program of activities.



UNYA Victoria Delegates arrive at UNYC 2003

Delegates from the Victorian Division also attended the United Nations Youth Association National Youth Conference 2003, 'Keeping the Peace', held in Perth, Western Australia.

UPCOMING EVENTS 2004

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RICE

World Environment Day Awards 2004

THEME: 'SEAS AND OCEANS'

Nominations Close: 12 May

Presentation Dinner: 4 June

Model UN Conferences 2004

La Trobe University: 1 May

University of Melbourne: 8 May

RMIT University: 28 August

Deakin University: 4 September

Monash University: 11

September

Media Peace Awards 2004

Nominations Close: 7 September

Presentation Dinner: 22 October

rice is life



INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF RICE
2004

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INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RICE 2004

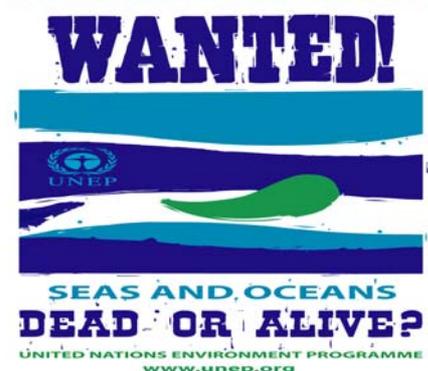
On 31 October, 2003, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) declared 2004 the International Year of Rice.

The issue of rice is intimately linked to issues of sustainable land and water management, as well as gender, as women play an important role in both rice production and post-harvest activities. Rice is also a symbol of cultural identity and global unity.

Dr Jacques Diouf, FAO Director-General, states that "the aim is to engage the entire community of stakeholders... in the mission to increase rice production in a manner that promotes sustainability and equity. The need for a sustainable increase in rice production affects everyone. This Year is our chance to improve food security, alleviate poverty and preserve the environment for the billions of people for whom Rice is Life".

For more information regarding IYR please visit the FAO website: www.fao.org/rice_2004. Issues covered include: rice production; nutrition; agro-biodiversity; water and land management; employment and income; gender; science; economic policy issues.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY - 5 JUNE 2004



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY THEME 2004 'SEAS AND OCEANS'

In 2004, the UNAA has introduced an inaugural *Excellence in Marine and Coastal Management Award* in support of this year's World Environment Day theme 'Seas and Oceans'.

