

The principle of peace and non-violence, 'lest we forget' to our peril

Jon Atkins and John Butcher
Marrickville Greens

Among longer serving members of the Australian Greens, it is reasonably well known that the formation of our party in 1992 brought together over a dozen green groups from state and local organisations. Some of these, like the Tasmanian, NSW and WA groups, had already existed for many years.

Petra Kelly and her influence down under

One significant impetus for this formation was the visit in May 1984 by the German Green Party activist and parliamentarian, Petra Kelly (1947 – 1992), who urged these green groups to coalesce into a national body. Inspired in part by Petra Kelly's urgings, around 50 greens activists convened a national conference in Tasmania in December that year.

It was also in 1984 that Petra Kelly's *Fighting for Hope, the Non-violent Way to a Green Future* was published. This was a clarion call for the transformation of the world to make it free from violence between North and South, men and women, humanity and the environment.

It was Petra Kelly who helped popularise the four key principles or pillars of the Greens, namely ecological sustainability, social justice, grassroots democracy and peace and non-violence. While championing all four principles, Petra's legacy is perhaps most closely associated with peace and non-violence, having campaigned so effectively from the 1970s

against the civil and military use of nuclear power and for the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

As well it was Petra Kelly who defined the Greens as an 'anti-party party' and who argued against a party which seeks only to gain power. Such



Image of Petra Kelly thanks to
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a fate, she warned, would prevent the Greens from making utopian proposals. It would cripple our willingness to always ask the fundamental questions and ultimately undermine our striving for a world free from "egoism and profit, war and disease."

Tony Harris, trenchant critic of Australia's war culture

The formation of the Greens in NSW shared a lot in common with Petra Kelly's vision. This was particularly true of Tony Harris (1948 – 2013), who urged the Greens to follow the example of the German Green Party, which was launched in 1980. Following Petra Kelly's visit in May 1984,

Tony called a public meeting in August that year in order to form and register the Sydney Greens. This was eventually achieved in early 1985. It was largely due to Tony's initiative that the new party endorsed the four founding pillars of the German Greens.

Of the four pillars, peace and nonviolence was never overshadowed by the other three pillars in Tony's thinking and activism. The blog he established in his later years, *Watermelon*, predominantly deals with Australia's war culture. Tony was particularly critical of the way in which the pro-war leaderships of the Coalition and Labor parties not only promoted the US-Australia Alliance but also exploited commemorations such as Anzac Day to reinforce a positive view of Australia's war culture, while hypocritically offering expressions of sorrow for the lives that were lost.

Writing in June 2011, Tony had some advice for the Greens during the Afghan war debate. The Greens, he said, needed to overcome their timidity during this debate in which "no criticism was made of the Australia-US alliance, a crucial part of the war culture, and in which some Green MPs, in spite of their criticisms of the war, felt the need to fall in and march to an unqualified 'we support our troops' cadence."

Gallipoli Centenary Peace Campaign

The ongoing failure of the Greens in general to openly challenge Australia's war culture, especially during preparations for the Gallipoli centenary commemorations, was a key motivation in forming the Gallipoli Centenary Peace Campaign (GCPC) in March 2014. GCPC originally comprised a coalition of representatives from four local groups: Marrickville Greens, Marrickville Peace Group, Pax Christi and Marrickville

Residents for Reconciliation (now Inner West ANTaR).

While joining with other Australians in paying tribute to the fallen during the Gallipoli centenary, GCPC also insisted on recognising other casualties of the war: those that returned with debilitating physical injuries and/or psychological trauma. We also emphasised that the war inflicted immense suffering on the home front, especially among the relatives of those killed, maimed and traumatised by the war.

As well, we recognised all those who campaigned against the war together with those who opposed conscription. Many of these people were vilified or persecuted by the State for the principled stand that they took even after the war had ended. And last but not least, we called for the Frontier Wars and the role these wars played in the dispossession of the indigenous peoples to be officially recognised.

Lest we forget, 18 million people perished in the Great War.

Halting the expansion of our war culture

The Charter of the Australian Greens lists eleven general principles. The one on peace is elaborated in the following terms:

- To adopt and promote the non-violent resolution of conflict;
- To develop an independent, nonaligned foreign policy and a non-nuclear, defensive, self-reliant defence policy.

These important goals, however, are rarely mentioned by the Greens' leadership in public debates. Given the global threat posed by nuclear weapons and the degree to which Australia has become integrated into the US military behemoth, the founding principle of peace and non-violence needs to be promoted by the Greens as never before.

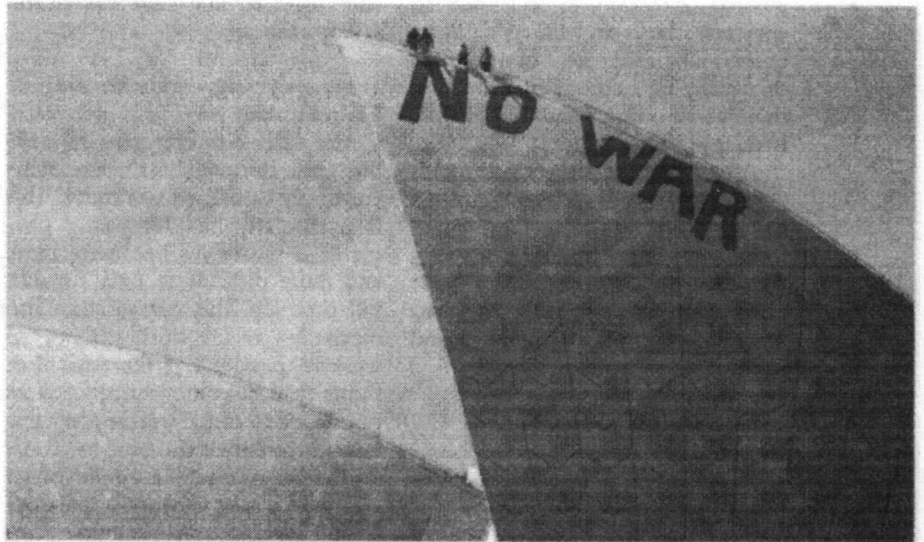
It is a telling state of affairs that the best known advocate of an independent foreign policy in recent times was Malcolm Fraser. His claim that American military facilities in

Australia, such as the air-ground taskforce in Darwin and the offensive capabilities of Pine Gap, are an essential part of America's rearming in the Western Pacific, is indisputable. It is painfully obvious that such facilities are incompatible with Australian sovereignty and integrity as an independent nation.

In our opinion Fraser is also correct to claim that in the Western Pacific there is every sign that America is preparing for armed conflict to continue its hegemony over China

al arms race and risks putting itself in the middle of a proxy war between the United States and China. In addition he correctly claimed that by consistently backing Washington, "Australia is complicit in the terrible consequences US foreign policy has wrought".

This rare criticism of the regional arms race and the US alliance is most welcome and is starkly at odds with the duplicitous stance of the major parties and defence lobby on these vital foreign policy issues.



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and other nations. As Fraser has said, "To be virtually captive of such a power represents the utmost strategic folly for Australia." It is our view that Australia is at a strategic cross-roads. Either we succumb to the American embrace or we rage against our loss of sovereignty and security in a true anti-party party fashion.

The way forward

The latter is the only way forward for our nation and the Greens should be its most vocal and uncompromising advocates, both during the federal election campaign and afterwards.

In his first major foreign policy speech at the Lowy Institute on 17 May 2016, Richard Di Natale said that Australia is engaged in a region-

Nevertheless we believe it is appropriate to give Tony Harris the final say: "[I]f the Greens are to give leadership in confronting the war machine and war culture, then that leadership should be primarily focussed on building a strong antiwar social movement and culture, not just focus on achievable outcomes inside the parliament."

Tony Harris's Watermelon blog
watermelonharris.blogspot.com.au

Gallipoli Centenary Peace Campaign's website
www.gcpc2015.org.au