

SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

A CHRISTMAS DECLARATION

Since the end of World War Two there has not been a time when the world has been free of war. Indeed, the century 1914–2014 has been described as the bloodiest one hundred years in our history.

Figures on the Iraq and Afghan wars vary depending on who is reporting them, but at least a million people have died either directly or indirectly as a result of these wars and, of course, the financial cost is astronomical, impacting on the ability of governments to maintain social programs at home.

Mark Thomson, a former Defence Department official and now an analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, is an expert on the defence budget.

Drawing on budget figures, he calculates Australia has spent an extra \$21.3 billion on defence and security since 2001 on top of what the government would normally have spent. The largest share has gone on the military commitments to the Iraq war (\$2.4 billion) and Afghanistan (\$7 billion and counting). As well, \$1.5 billion has been spent on aid to Iraq and Afghanistan.

A further \$10.4 billion has been spent on extra security at home, mainly on the federal police and ASIO, the domestic spy agency in a 'whole-of-government' response.

The nominal increase in ASIO's budget over the past nine years is 471 per cent, according to Mr Thomson's calculations. Its budget allocation in 2001 was \$69 million. This year it is close to \$400 million.

His calculations do not include spending by state and local governments, nor the cost of additional security introduced by business and other non-government organisations.

Athol Yates, executive director of the think tank Australian Security Research Centre, has calculated that Canberra has spent about \$10.5 billion on homeland security, while state and local governments plus private industry have forked out another \$5.5 billion, taking the total domestic security bill to about \$16 billion.

Now we are involved in a war by creep, which is war that governments fear will be opposed by their people so they become involved by stealth, hoping that people can be diverted from what is occurring in their name. It becomes

easy for such wars to be waged as they geographically impact very little on the nations waging them.

Apart from the arms manufacturers and their cohorts who are doing very nicely from these wars, and the governments who cravenly do their bidding, nothing of value emerges from these wars, certainly not for the majority of people who produce the wealth of the nation and who are denied social justice because money that should be spent on social programs is diverted towards these wars of aggression.

Churches and the community generally therefore have an even greater responsibility to challenge the whole rationale of war and to propose a charter of peace with truth and justice.

This was done in the US in 2006 against their government's involvement in the Iraq war and was very successful. They prepared a charter called 'moving toward peace' and it set out a range of proposals to meet this aim.

The Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church believes it is time for Australian churches to develop an Australian peace charter and to get all churches and community organisations to support it. It should contain arguments against war spending and highlight alternatives to war.

We are constantly bombarded with arguments to cut social spending because our budget is in trouble. So cuts are introduced that impact on the most vulnerable in our community, yet money for weapons of mass destruction and new wars is always available. It is time for all those committed to peace to take positive action. ■

EDITORIAL





Reminiscences of a Tasmanian draft dodger

BY **STEVEN KATSINERIS**

In 1972 the Vietnam War was still raging and Australian military forces were still fighting there. Some of these troops were 20-year-old conscripts who were called up after registering for national service (their birth dates had been put on a marble and pulled out of a barrel). Other young men, including myself, believed the Vietnam War to be unjust and refused to be conscripted and didn't register for National Service or comply with call up notices and became draft resisters. The National Service Act imposed a two-year jail term for draft resisters or others trying to avoid the draft. I was liable to register for National Service in 1972, but I wrote a letter to the department on May 1 informing them that I did not register in the last call up period, explained my reasons for this stand and said I would continue to refuse to cooperate with the National Service system. I wrote several further letters to the NS Department and refused to attend court cases I was later summoned to.

I had already been very involved in the anti-war movement in Hobart and Melbourne for several years while at high school and helped form the local Draft Resisters Union in Tasmania which actively urged young men not to register and sought to make the system unworkable. It was an incredibly distressing, busy and fulfilling period for me. I wrote articles and letters for publications, printed leaflets, went to and spoke at meetings, distributed leaflets and attended numerous rallies and marches.

The DRU published leaflets and booklets on the Vietnam War, the Draft and the various ways to oppose it or avoid it. The DRU also wrote letters, ran information stalls, held meetings, teach-ins, sit-ins and other demonstrations. We also challenged the draft by having campaigns to fill out false registration forms. We held so many sit-ins at the National Service Department in Hobart that the government would shut the office when they found that a protest was planned for that afternoon or morning. This showed how effective our actions were and, of course, was exactly what we wanted. After that, whenever we

wanted to occupy the building, we planned our actions by word of mouth. The NS Department also stationed guards outside the building with two-way radios so they could quickly lock up the place and thwart our surprise sit-ins. We started assembling away from the building in different spots and sent a few people ahead to block the gate at the entrance and doorways inside. This also proved a very successful tactic. Eventually the police would arrive and carry and drag us from the building to the footpath outside. Occasionally things could get a bit rough and police would throw protestors down the stairs. Sometimes they would put us into police trucks and vans and take us to the police station. Usually we were all released without charges being laid. This was probably because there were generally 50–60 people or more at these sit-ins.

My family lived in Warrane, a working class neighbourhood on Hobart's eastern shore. One evening, in 1972, while I was at home with my family watching TV, our dog started to bark. Through the window we could see a car parked outside the front gate and two men approaching the house. I thought they were plainclothes police and as they knocked at the front door I quickly left the house by the back door and stood in the dark alcove under the back steps where we stored the firewood. The police informed my parents that they had a warrant for my arrest and searched the house for a few minutes looking for me. After they left my oldest sister Julie came to tell me they had gone. Now that I knew a warrant had been issued for my arrest, I wanted to make it as difficult for them to find me as I could. It was my intention to try to avoid arrest until a time of my choosing, when it would get the most exposure for the issues and cause the most trouble for the government. So I decided it was time to disappear by going underground. I had already discussed this option with several friends and had a network of supporters to rely on. Most of these people were not well-known anti-war activists and contacts and therefore it was less likely for the police to identify them and find me.

Early the next morning I packed a bag, discreetly left by the back door, walked through the bush to the local shopping centre and caught a bus to town. I moved into a three-storey group house in South Hobart with three old friends from my Matriculation College days. They all worked or were at university, so I had the house to myself during the day to read and write. Up to this time I had been very politically active, but now I stayed out of most of the more public involvement, writing articles and letters for publication. While I still went out, I was careful about where I went and when. For

instance, I visited my parents at night by catching a bus and getting off at the top of the hill a few stops before their house. From there, I walked across the golf course and through the bush. I then knocked at the back door and entered the house while plainclothes police sat in a car in the street outside the front of the house. The police also kept a close watch on my father's shop and occasionally searched these premises and questioned my family.

One day, in South Hobart, while sitting reading in the sun in my upstairs bedroom, I saw two overweight men in suits open the back gate and look around the yard. I immediately thought they looked like plainclothes policemen. I remembered I had left the back door of the house open to let in some fresh air and sunshine. I quickly left the room and started down the stairs but by the time I got halfway there they were at the back door. So I stopped and asked them who they were and what they wanted. One of them said they were police and they were investigating the report of an unidentified car that might be stolen that was allegedly parked in the laneway outside our yard. I told them I knew nothing about any strange cars and had not seen any cars parked there except for that belonging to the man in the downstairs part of the house. I stayed in my position on the stairs and spoke to them from there.

While I was talking and listening to them, thoughts ran through my head that if they tried to rush at me, I could run into the bedroom, close the door and then get out the front window onto the roof, climb down to the street from there and get away.

They said they would check with the neighbour downstairs and when they left I locked the door. A few minutes later they left the yard. I was convinced they were looking for me and reasoned that they were checking the house to confirm if it was in fact me living there.

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... I got a phone call the next morning to say that the Commonwealth police had raided the South Hobart house during the night.

I packed all my possessions in a backpack and rang a friend, Harry, to see if I could stay the night at his place. He said that was fine and would arrange for me to stay at another place in the country for a while. I waited until one of my friends, Max, returned from work and told him what had happened. He thought I was being paranoid and that I should forget about it. But my mind was made up so I left by the back gate and walked through a number of back streets and lanes to Harry's flat in Sandy Bay. I got a phone call the next morning to say that the Commonwealth police

had raided the South Hobart house during the night. My friends had denied knowing me, but the police found a card with my name on it and my friends were questioned for a while before the police left.

That morning I bought a bus ticket and left Hobart for a farm on the east coast of Tasmania. After that, I divided my time between this place and various safe houses in Hobart. I also visited Melbourne and attended several demonstrations there. In the period of the lead-up to the federal election of 1972, I came out of hiding and moved back home to campaign for the Labor Party in the election. I thought that if I were arrested during the election period it would be a great benefit towards the anti-war effort. It seemed though that the police were inclined to wait for the electoral outcome before bothering with us as none of the draft resisters were bothered in Tasmania during this time.

On December 2, Gough Whitlam and the Australian Labor Party were elected to government and conscription was ended on December 5. Draft resisters were released from gaol and pending prosecutions for draft resistance were dropped. I received a letter from the Australian Government telling me there was no longer a warrant for my arrest and that my court convictions and fines had been quashed. Sometime later the last Australian troops were withdrawn from southern Vietnam.

It was an amazing day and I was overjoyed, as it was the end of a long and hard campaign to defeat an unjust system. I also felt our actions were contributing in a small way towards ending this immoral war and the foreign intervention in Vietnam. I hoped it meant a further step on the way to peace and much better days for the struggling and long-suffering Vietnamese people. It was, however, another three years before the last forces of the US Army were driven out and the war finally ended. Thanks and farewell, Gough. ■

Unitarian E-Newsletter

The Melbourne Unitarian Church has decided to move into the digital world by launching an E-Newsletter every two to three months that will bring you up-to-date information and comment from home and around the world. If you would like to be part of our exciting E-Newsletter, please send an email to us at admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au and we will add you to our growing database. If, on receipt or at any point you decide you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, you can easily unsubscribe.

BY **PROFESSOR TIM ANDERSON**, Global Research, 3 November 2014



CUBA, THE EMPIRE AND EBOLA

‘The Ebola epidemic constitutes an enormous risk ... we have to struggle so it does not become one of the greatest pandemics ... by planning and working together ... and this in turn requires political will, rigorous organisational discipline and efficiency.’ – **JOSÉ ÁNGEL PORTAL MIRANDA, CUBAN VICE MINISTER OF HEALTH**

In early October, as a first group of 165 Cuban doctors arrived in Sierra Leone, the *Wall Street Journal* recognised that Cuba was ‘at the forefront’ of the battle against Ebola in Africa. This was unusual North American praise for Cuba.

The reluctant admission shows some of the reasoning behind a semi-covert relationship that has developed between Cuba and Washington over the Ebola crisis. Nevertheless, stark differences in approach signal the deep ideological divide between the would-be global empire and the small socialist island.

The imperial approach has been to present a militarised and self-referential response to Ebola, as a security threat to ‘Americans’. Focus quickly moved to ill-conceived quarantine measures. In contrast, Cuba’s international solidarity approach was to send trained health workers and help build a coordinated social medicine response, which includes specialist training for local health workers.

Ebola haemorrhagic fever is transmitted by the bodily fluids of an infected person and has a fatality rate of from 25% to 90%. According to the WHO, 70% of affected people die because of the lack of proper treatment and facilities.

The Ebola outbreak in the West African countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone was declared in March 2014 and, by late October, almost 5,000 people had

died, 10% of them health workers. The WHO calls it an international public health emergency.

Local health workers die due to lack of training and lack of protective equipment and facilities. One member of the Cuban team in Guinea, Jorge Juan Guerra Rodriguez, has already died, but from another deadly disease, cerebral malaria.

Margaret Chan, Director of the WHO, said: ‘What we need most are people, medical people ... the most important thing to prevent the transmission of disease is to have the right people, appropriately trained specialists.’

Washington sent troops. US President Barack Obama said: ‘We have to keep leading the global response, because the best way to stop this disease, the best way to keep Americans safe, is to stop it at its source – in West Africa.’ The US troops were directed to secure facilities and build treatment centres.

With more than 4,000 health workers already in Africa, Cuba by late October had sent another 350, most of them doctors and all with specialist training. Mexico, Venezuela and even Timor Leste are logistically and financially supporting the Cuban effort. After Cuba, the international organisation Médecins Sans Frontières also has 270 international health workers in the affected countries, while employing many locals.

By the end of October, dozens of the almost nine hundred US troops in 'Operation Unified Assistance' in Liberia and Senegal were being withdrawn from West Africa, to face a quarantine regime in Italy and leaving behind USAID branded tent-style treatment centres. Photos from Liberia show that Cuban doctors are now using those facilities.

That link is not an accident. A report in the *New York Times* observes that 'a mid-level official' from the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention attended a regional ALBA meeting on Ebola in Havana, and that Secretary of State John Kerry recently (and unusually) invited Cuba's top diplomat in Washington (there is no ambassador, as the US and Cuba do not have diplomatic relations) to his speech on Ebola. The NYT writer aptly observes that the Ebola crisis 'seems to be injecting a dose of pragmatism to Washington's poisonous relationship with Havana'.

However we should not exaggerate the significance of this cooperation. The US and European relationship with West Africa has a dreadful history. Freed slaves from Britain and the US played a major role in the creation of both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the latter a British colony until 1961. Liberia became the focus of a 'return to Africa' movement in North America, after it became clear that the abolition of slavery in the US did not mean acceptance of African-Americans as equal citizens.

In more recent times Western-controlled multilateral banks and aid agencies have made sure that these poorest of poor countries have not developed strong public education and health systems. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) says the Ebola epidemic exposes 'the chronic and deep wounds in the African Continent [from] colonialism, by the continuous plundering of the wealth-producing resources and by the high public debts that keep African states and their economies enslaved to the IMF, the World Bank and monopolies cartels'.

The WFTU observes that Ebola is facilitated by 'the poverty, the malnutrition, the lack of basic healthcare infrastructure and social welfare', the absence of strong public and free education systems, and the prevalence of slum housing along with militarised and violent states, panicking in face of desperation. All this is in place of what they could have: strong 'human development enabling' states (see Anderson 2014).

On top of this, West African countries have become the preferred site for Western countries to dump chemical, electronic and apparently even nuclear waste. This was 'market forces' at work, as a 1988 report in the *New York Times* observed: 'As safety laws in Europe and the United States push toxic disposal costs up to \$2,500 a ton, waste brokers are turning their attention to the closest, poorest and most unprotected shores – West Africa'. Toxic waste dumping, although to a large degree outlawed by international conventions, has become as lucrative a business as trafficking in drugs and human beings (Brooke 1988, Selva 2006 and Koné 2010).

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Cuba, which has a very different history in Africa, decided to supplement its emergency brigades with four doctors for each of a range of African countries (not just the affected countries), for specialist Ebola training. This is consistent with its social medicine approach which emphasises promotion and prevention, as well as genuine capacity building through local empowerment.

Havana has a range of partners, most of who, at this stage, seem to be financing the costs of its medical teams, particularly in transport and equipment. These teams include specialists in infectious disease, epidemiology and specialist nursing.

Plans for the Americas were high on the agenda of the eight-country ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) special summit in Havana on 20 October. This group, affirming its basic principles of solidarity, cooperation and complementarity, agreed to support the western African missions while they developed their own regional protection plan. That plan includes taking coordination efforts to the wider 33-member CELAC group (Community of Caribbean and Latin American States). Venezuela committed several million dollars to Cuba's West African mission.

The Government of Mexico also says it will 'join forces' with Cuba in the campaign against the epidemic, at first by WHO-channelled finance for 'specialised equipment' for the Cuban brigades. Doctors have to burn gloves, masks and other protective equipment after treating each patient.

Timor Leste, now benefiting from more than 800 Cuban-trained Timorese doctors, has decided to join in, by financing the costs of 35 of the Cuban doctors in West Africa.

A Cuban offer to cooperate directly with Washington seems to have been deflected in favour of low-profile discussions and cooperation through third parties, such as the WHO, the UN Ebola Mission (UNMEER) and the respective governments of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Cuban doctor Ronald Hernández Torres, now in Liberia, says the Cuba brigade is working well with professionals from other countries and that Cuban medical training, along with specialist Ebola training is going on in Liberia. Another group of Cubans is working in Guinea.

Cuban Ambassador in Liberia, Jorge Fernando Lefebre Nicolás, said the emergency brigade represented a strong sense of solidarity his government had for Liberia, and that it would help 'improve the existing links between both countries ... [and] mark the beginning of [further] health cooperation between Cuba and Liberia'.

Liberia's foreign minister Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan thanked the Cuban Government for its 'solid friendship and solidarity with needy people', adding that he believed the epidemic would soon be eradicated in his country. ■

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US GOVERNMENT **SANITISES** VIETNAM WAR HISTORY

BY **MARJORIE COHN**

Global Research, 30 October 2014

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-government-sanitizes-vietnam-war-history/5410891>

For many years after the Vietnam War, we enjoyed the 'Vietnam syndrome,' in which US presidents hesitated to launch substantial military attacks on other countries. They feared intense opposition akin to the powerful movement that helped bring an end to the war in Vietnam. But in 1991, at the end of the Gulf War, George HW Bush declared, 'By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all!'

With George W Bush's wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, and Barack Obama's drone wars in seven Muslim-majority countries and his escalating wars in Iraq and Syria, we have apparently moved beyond the Vietnam syndrome. By planting disinformation in the public realm, the government has built support for its recent wars, as it did with Vietnam.

Now the Pentagon is planning to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War by launching a \$30 million program to rewrite and sanitise its history. Replete with a fancy interactive website, the effort is aimed at teaching schoolchildren a revisionist history of the war. The program is focused on honouring our service members who fought in Vietnam. But conspicuously absent from the website is a description of the antiwar movement, at the heart of which was the GI movement.

Thousands of GIs participated in the antiwar movement. Many felt betrayed by their government. They established coffee houses and underground newspapers where they shared information about resistance. During the course of the war, more than 500,000 soldiers deserted. The strength of the rebellion of ground troops caused the military to shift to an air war. Ultimately, the war claimed the lives of 58,000 Americans. Untold numbers were wounded and returned with post-traumatic stress disorder. In an astounding statistic, more Vietnam veterans have committed suicide than were killed in the war.

Millions of Americans, many of us students on college campuses, marched, demonstrated, spoke out, sang and protested against the war. Thousands were arrested and some, at Kent State and Jackson State, were killed. The military draft and images of dead Vietnamese galvanised the movement. On 15 November 1969, in what was the

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BY **KENNETH DAVIDSON**

An address delivered at the Melbourne Unitarian Church on 19 October 2014



THE BUDGET LIE

The 2014 budget was built on the big lie that the Australian economy was facing a 'debt and deficit' crisis that had to be reduced. This was the excuse not to meet the government's commitment, made before the 2013 election, that there would be no surprises, no cuts to health, education or public broadcasting and no tax increases.

The truth is the Commonwealth doesn't have a debt problem according to the budget papers. The facts are: estimated debt in 2013–14 was forecast to be just under \$200 billion or 12 per cent of GDP, generating an annual interest expense of 0.7 per cent. Even with an additional \$30 billion added to the debt due to Senate opposition, the debt would rise to 16 per cent and the interest expense to about one per cent – still one of the lowest of the mature industrial countries in the OECD.

If Australia were a corporation, the directors (cabinet ministers) would be likely to be accused of running a 'lazy balance sheet' and be booted out by their shareholders (voters).

Now is the best time to borrow. The cost of borrowing for triple A rated governments is at historically low levels and there are plenty of human and physical infrastructure projects offering social and economic returns two, three or even four times the cost of capital.

The budget is highly deflationary in a situation where most of the domestic and global economic uncertainties

point towards deflation rather than inflation and where unemployment is expected to rise.

The government spin, magnified by their right wing megaphones in business associations, think tanks and most of the media, is that business and consumer uncertainty leading to a reluctance to spend by the private sector is due to the failure of the government to get all its measures to cut the deficit passed by the Senate.

The obvious point is that if families have to spend more to see the doctor or if the unemployed under the age of 30 have no dole payments for six months of the year, that is less money that families and the unemployed have to spend on goods and services produced by the private sector.

Unemployment is at a 12-year high and rising. There is plenty of room for the federal government to increase spending, financed by an increase in the budget deficit, without creating inflation.

Treasurer Joe Hockey attempted to politicise the bipartisan support of the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, for



The Abbott government does not understand that the function of macro-economic policy is to balance the economy, not balance the budget at the lowest level of spending and taxation consistent with political survival.

the deployment of Australian forces in the Middle East by claiming that if the opposition was serious in its support it would pass the \$30 billion of budget measures blocked in the Senate. This was outrageous. Hockey didn't even get support for his statement from the Prime Minister.

The truth of the situation is that Labor and cross bench Senators who have blocked a number of measures – including the Medicare co-payment and the suspension of the dole for the under 30-year-old unemployed – has done the government a favour.

It has made fiscal policy less deflationary than was planned in the budget. In terms of the impact of the budget on growth, inflation and employment, it is not the size of the budget surplus/deficit, but the change in the budget surplus/deficit compared to the previous year which measures the inflationary/deflationary impact on the rest of the economy.

According to these criteria, the planned budget deficit is one of the most deflationary on record. It is designed to withdraw \$20 billion from the income expenditure stream due to the reduction in the deficit, compared to an injection of \$31 billion into the income-expenditure stream in 2013–14.

This is a massive deflationary turnaround of \$51 billion in the impact of the budget on the economy (equal to a reduction of 3.2 per cent of GDP). If the Senate opposition holds its nerve, the deflationary impact of the budget will be reduced from \$51 billion to \$21 billion or 1.8 per cent of GDP.

This deflationary budget should be seen against the collapse in the mining investment boom; the closure of the car industry in 2017; the withering of the renewable energy industry, as a result of the government's determination to protect thermal electricity generators by reducing the renewable energy target; cutting education funding and making it easier for employers to import workers by liberalising 457 temporary work visas, not because of a shortage of skilled workers, but to reduce the need for employers to train workers.

The Abbott government does not understand that the function of macro-economic policy is to balance the economy, not balance the budget at the lowest level of spending and taxation consistent with political survival.

Keynesian economics doesn't fit with either their political narrative or their neoliberal ideology of minimalist government.

Even worse is the tendency of those on the right of the political spectrum to deny the evidence of anthropogenic

climate change, particularly neoliberals such as Abbott and his most influential advisors.

The root cause of this hostility to both Keynesian economics and the scientific consensus that global warming is a fact caused by greenhouse gas emissions is cognitive dissonance.

The economic policies that are derived from a Keynesian analysis of a demand constrained economy and anthropogenic induced global warming climate change fit comfortably within a social democratic ideological framework.

The neoliberal world view sees government intervention to boost economic growth by increased spending – either to reduce unemployment or promote structural change to minimise the carbon footprint – as completely opposed to their world view of small government and deregulation of markets, particularly labour markets.

The insistence on austerity policies to offset rising unemployment has failed in Western Europe and North America. For the neoliberals the price in terms of the risk to full employment and a more egalitarian society may be a price worth paying in order to buttress their commitment to their ideology rather than allow a bigger role for government.

But to deny the scientific evidence of anthropogenic climate change threatens the whole biota.

The threat of climate change and what cities could do about it was the subject of a UN heads of state meeting in New York last month. The Australian PM couldn't attend even though he attended a UN meeting on the following day on the much smaller threat of global terrorism.

He also told a meeting of the World Economic Forum that climate change wouldn't be on the G20 agenda in November because it would 'clutter up' the growth agenda.

In the run-up to the New York meeting there were demonstrations and marches around the world demanding government action on climate change and the OECD jointly prepared with Bloomberg Philanthropies a document, 'Cities and Climate Change', for the participants.

The global demonstrations attracted massive crowds, including 400,000 in New York and 30,000 in Melbourne. The OECD Bloomberg document contained a figure which showed that Australia's CO2 emissions from ground transport in large metro areas (Melbourne and Sydney) was second to Canada and the US and almost twice the levels per capita as large metro areas in France,



The problem is the Labor members of parliament owe their loyalty to factional chiefs.

Italy, Germany and Portugal with similar urban densities.

Most of the measures to deal with climate change can be fully justified quite independently in terms of improvements in liveability, human health, safety and air quality.

According to the IMF, a price on carbon of \$57 a tonne would be justified on health grounds, even if the global benefits in terms of moderating climate change were ignored. The GDP cost of mortality from outdoor pollution ranged from just under 4 per cent in the US and 2 per cent in Canada in 2010 (a recent report of the high level Global Commission on the Economy and Climate).

The argument that population densities and commuter preferences make investment in public transport at the expense of more roads unaffordable won't wash.

The infrastructure we have can be used more intensely. Melbourne city planner, Rob Adams, argues that even though Melbourne is projected to grow from 4 million to 8 million, this population growth could be contained within 7.5 per cent of the existing boundaries – with one million concentrated around railway stations, 2.4 million on bus and tram routes where the infrastructure is underutilised and on brown-field sites such as Docklands and Fisherman's Bend.

Climate scientists point out the biggest obstacles preventing rapid implementation of large-scale, de-carbonisation strategies are political and social rather than technological.

But in Melbourne at least, the problem doesn't stem from ill-informed public opinion. Opinion polls show that Victorians regarded public transport improvements as the highest priority transport issues and a recent poll showed support for the East West Link was only 28 per cent.

Arguably, the Brumby government lost the 2010 election because it failed to meet the growth in demand for urban public transport, particularly along the Frankston rail corridor. The Liberals appealed to voters with its promise to upgrade public transport.

More than any other factor, it is the nature of the infrastructure built over the next 15 years that will determine the chances of avoiding catastrophic climate change according to the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate. The Commission argues that shifting the pattern of investment and innovation in the right direction could achieve at least half the reduction in emissions needed by 2030 and add very little to economic costs.

So, where is the problem? In general, it is the cognitive dissonance of governments of the right that can only

be resolved by denying the scientific consensus that anthropogenic climate change is a fact without denying the neoliberal ideological agenda.

This agenda is based on the belief that governments are not to be trusted, that in an ideal world economic development can be left to the operations of the market and government spending and regulation should be cut to the bone to 'make way' for tax cuts to promote progress based on entrepreneurial 'animal spirits'.

Dealing with global warming will involve increases in public spending on human as well as physical capital, financed by higher levels of taxation and public borrowing, managed by open and ethical government backed up by a professional, permanent public service. This is more consistent with Labor's social democratic ideology.

The problem is the Labor members of parliament owe their loyalty to factional chiefs. It has been at least two decades and possibly three since there has been a genuine pre-selection battle for a winnable seat. The party has become a self-perpetuating oligarchy with its fundamental loyalty to the corporate and union interests that fund elections.

The key issue in the Victorian election is whether the EWL goes ahead or not. We cannot have the EWL and the necessary investment in a carbon constrained public transport system, and without a first-rate public transport system, we can't have the liveable, compact city envisaged by Adams.

Labor is likely to win the Victorian election providing it can convince voters in Melbourne that it is more likely to do something about public transport than the Coalition and less likely to be in thrall to developers in respect of urban planning.

But it will all come to nought unless Labor promises that it will cancel the EWL contract. It has not done this. It has said that the contract 'will not go ahead'. When some of the details of the contract were announced last month, Labor leader Daniel Andrews said the contract is not a legally binding document and he maintained his pledge to 'snub' it if elected.

This provides a lot of wriggle room to allow the contract to go ahead if the Supreme Court finds the contract legal. Unless the new government is prepared to follow the NSW example and ban developer donations to state politicians and create a corruption commission with teeth, I'm afraid Victoria is on track to move from a corporate state to a full blown keptocracy. ■

LIBYA:

From Africa's richest state under Gaddafi, to failed state after NATO intervention

This week marks the three-year anniversary of the Western-backed assassination of Libya's former president, Muammar Gaddafi, and the fall of one of Africa's greatest nations.

In 1967 Colonel Gaddafi inherited one of the poorest nations in Africa; however, by the time he was assassinated, Gaddafi had turned Libya into Africa's wealthiest nation. Libya had the highest GDP per capita and life expectancy on the continent. Less people lived below the poverty line than in the Netherlands.

After NATO's intervention in 2011, Libya is now a failed state and its economy is in shambles. As the government's control slips through their fingers and into the militia fighters' hands, oil production has all but stopped.

The militias, variously local, tribal, regional, Islamist or criminal that have plagued Libya since NATO's intervention, have recently lined up into two warring factions. Libya now has two governments, both with their own prime minister, parliament and army.

On one side, in the west of the country, Islamist-allied militias took over control of the capital Tripoli and other cities and set up their own government, chasing away a parliament that was elected over the summer.

On the other side, in the east of the country, the 'legitimate' government dominated by anti-Islamist politicians, exiled 1,200 kilometres away in Tobruk, no longer governs anything.

The fall of Gaddafi's administration has created all of the country's worst-case scenarios: Western embassies have all left, the south of the country has become a haven for terrorists, and the northern coast a centre of migrant trafficking. Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia have all closed their borders with Libya. This all occurs amidst a backdrop of widespread rape, assassinations and torture that complete the picture of a state that is failed to the bone.

America is clearly fed up with the two inept governments in Libya and is now backing a third force: long-time CIA

asset, General Khalifa Hifter, who aims to set himself up as Libya's new dictator. Hifter, who broke with Gaddafi in the 1980s and lived for years in Langley, Virginia, close to the CIA's headquarters, where he was trained by the CIA, has taken part in numerous American regime change efforts, including the aborted attempt to overthrow Gaddafi in 1996.

In 1991, the *New York Times* reported that Hifter may have been one of '600 Libyan soldiers trained by American intelligence officials in sabotage and other guerrilla skills ... to fit in neatly into the Reagan Administration's eagerness to topple Colonel Qaddafi'.

Hifter's forces are currently vying with the Al Qaeda group Ansar al-Sharia for control of Libya's second largest city, Benghazi. Ansar al-Sharia was armed by America during the NATO campaign against Colonel Gaddafi. In yet another example of the US backing terrorists backfiring, Ansar al-Sharia has recently been blamed by America for the brutal assassination of US Ambassador Stevens.

Hifter is currently receiving logistical and air support from the US because his faction envisions a mostly secular Libya open to Western financiers, speculators and capital.

Perhaps Gaddafi's greatest crime, in the eyes of NATO, was his desire to put the interests of local labour above foreign capital and his quest for a strong and truly United States of Africa. In fact, in August 2011, President Obama confiscated \$30 billion from Libya's Central Bank, which Gaddafi had earmarked for the establishment of the African IMF and African Central Bank.

In 2011, the West's objective was clearly not to help the Libyan people, who already had the highest standard of living in Africa, but to oust Gaddafi, install a puppet regime, and gain control of Libya's natural resources.

For over 40 years, Gaddafi promoted economic democracy and used the nationalised oil wealth to sustain progressive social welfare programs for all Libyans. Under Gaddafi's rule, Libyans enjoyed not only free healthcare and free education, but also free electricity and interest-free loans. Now, thanks to NATO's intervention, the healthcare sector is on the verge of collapse as thousands of Filipino health workers flee the country, institutions of higher education across the east of the country are shut down, and blackouts are a common occurrence in once-thriving Tripoli.

One group that has suffered immensely from NATO's bombing campaign is the nation's women. Unlike many other Arab nations, women in Gaddafi's Libya had the right to education, hold jobs, divorce, hold property and have an income. The United Nations Human Rights Council praised Gaddafi for his promotion of women's rights.

When the colonel seized power in 1969, few women went to university. Today, more than half of Libya's university students are women. One of the first laws Gaddafi passed in 1970 was an equal pay for equal work law.

Nowadays, the new 'democratic' Libyan regime is clamping down on women's rights. The new ruling tribes are tied to traditions that are strongly patriarchal. Also, the chaotic nature of post-intervention Libyan politics has allowed free reign to extremist Islamic forces that see gender equality as a Western perversion.

Three years ago, NATO declared that the mission in Libya had been 'one of the most successful in NATO history.' Truth is, Western interventions have produced nothing but colossal failures in Libya, Iraq and Syria. Lest we forget, prior to Western military involvement in these three nations, they were the most modern and secular states in the Middle East and North Africa with the highest regional women's rights and standards of living.

A decade of failed military expeditions in the Middle East has left the American people in trillions of dollars of debt. However, one group has benefited immensely from the costly and deadly wars: America's military-industrial-complex.

Building new military bases means billions of dollars for America's military elite. As Will Blum has pointed out, following the bombing of Iraq, the United States built new bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

Following the bombing of Afghanistan, the United States is now building military bases in Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Following the recent bombing of Libya, the United States has built new military bases in the Seychelles, Kenya, South Sudan, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Given that Libya sits atop the strategic intersection of the African, Middle Eastern and European worlds, Western control of the nation has always been a remarkably effective way to project power into these three regions and beyond.

NATO's military intervention may have been a resounding success for America's military elite and oil companies but for the ordinary Libyan, the military campaign may indeed go down in history as one of the greatest failures of the 21st century.

Garikai Chengu is a research scholar at Harvard University.

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<http://www.globalresearch.ca/libya-from-africas-richest-state-under-gaddafi-to-failed-state-after-nato-intervention/5408740>

CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT?

Recently a *Beacon* reader challenged the view that we have corrupt government. This reader, in the opinion of those on the *Beacon* Board, too narrowly defined corruption as meaning 'receiving illegal remuneration.' It is our view that we do indeed have a corrupt federal government and that corruption has a range of interpretations. Such corruption, as we will demonstrate is not unique or exceptional, but is the hallmark of government in today's global economy.

As a result of this challenge, and noting that a number of respected people in the community, including asylum seeker advocate Julian Burnside QC, also called this government corrupt, we decided to analyse the policies and practice of government with a view to demonstrating that, indeed, corruption not only exists but is rampant.

Finally, we need to decide what we mean by corruption and what constitutes corruption? We believe it is evidenced by unnecessary secrecy, by use of a manipulative media, by broken promises, rorts,

cronyism, collaboration and compliance with powerful lobby groups, participation in unjustifiable invasions of sovereign countries, by bribery and outright deception. Added to these are introducing a despicable budget attacking the most vulnerable based on a lie, unjustified attacks on the democratic rights of unions, destruction of civil and political rights of asylum seekers, continued denigration of the first Australians, use of 'terrorism' to introduce repressive legislation, and the deliberate suppression of information that allows corruption to flourish.

So we plan to do a series of small articles for *Beacon* to demonstrate under each of these categories where government has corrupted genuine democratic processes, where we believe corruption exists and where governments have denigrated or subverted their role leading to the corruption of our political processes.

Is this important? We will ask for feedback from you, our readers, at the conclusion of these articles.

From page 6 – US Government Sanitises Vietnam War History

largest protest demonstration in Washington DC, at that time, 250,000 people marched on the nation's capital, demanding an end to the war. Yet the Pentagon's website merely refers to it as a 'massive protest.'

But Americans weren't the only ones dying. Between 2 and 3 million Indochinese – in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – were killed. War crimes – such as the My Lai massacre – were common. In 1968, US soldiers slaughtered 500 unarmed old men, women and children in the Vietnamese village of My Lai. Yet the Pentagon website refers only to the 'My Lai Incident,' despite the fact that it is customarily referred to as a massacre.

One of the most shameful legacies of the Vietnam War is the US military's use of the deadly defoliant Agent Orange, dioxin. The military sprayed it unsparingly over much of Vietnam's land. An estimated 3 million Vietnamese still suffer the effects of those deadly chemical defoliants. Tens of thousands of US soldiers were also affected. It has caused birth defects in hundreds of thousands of children, both in Vietnam and the United States. It is currently affecting the second and third generations of people directly exposed to Agent Orange decades ago. Certain cancers, diabetes, and spina bifida and other serious birth defects can be traced to Agent Orange exposure. In addition, the chemicals destroyed much of the natural environment of Vietnam; the soil in many 'hot spots' near former US army bases remains contaminated.

In the Paris Peace Accords signed in 1973, the Nixon administration pledged to contribute \$3 billion toward healing the wounds of war and the post-war reconstruction of Vietnam. That promise remains unfulfilled.

Despite the continuing damage and injury wrought by Agent Orange, the Pentagon website makes scant mention of 'Operation Ranch Hand.' It says that from 1961 to 1971, the US sprayed 18 million gallons of chemicals over 20 per cent of South Vietnam's jungles and 36 per cent of its mangrove forests. But the website does not cite the devastating effects of that spraying.

The incomplete history contained on the Pentagon website stirred more than 500 veterans of the US peace movement during the Vietnam era to sign a petition to Lt Gen. Claude M 'Mick' Kicklighter. It asks that the official program 'include viewpoints, speakers and educational materials that represent a full and fair reflection of the issues which divided our country during the war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.' The petition cites the

'many thousands of veterans' who opposed the war, the 'draft refusals of many thousands of young Americans,' the 'millions who exercised their rights as American citizens by marching, praying, organising moratoriums, writing letters to Congress,' and 'those who were tried by our government for civil disobedience or who died in protests.' And, the petition says, 'very importantly, we cannot forget the millions of victims of the war, both military and civilian, who died in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, nor those who perished or were hurt in its aftermath by land mines, unexploded ordnance, Agent Orange and refugee flight.'

Antiwar activists who signed the petition include Tom Hayden and Pentagon Papers whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg. 'All of us remember that the Pentagon got us into this war in Vietnam with its version of the truth,' Hayden said in an interview with *The New York Times*. 'If you conduct a war, you shouldn't be in charge of narrating it,' he added.

Veterans for Peace (VFP) is organising an alternative commemoration of the Vietnam War. 'One of the biggest concerns for us,' VFP executive director Michael McPhearson told the *Times*, 'is that if a full narrative is not remembered, the government will use the narrative it creates to continue to conduct wars around the world – as a propaganda tool.'

Indeed, just as Lyndon B Johnson used the manufactured Tonkin Gulf incident as a pretext to escalate the Vietnam War, George W Bush relied on mythical weapons of mass destruction to justify his war on Iraq, and the 'war on terror' to justify his invasion of Afghanistan. And Obama justifies his drone wars by citing national security considerations, even though he creates more enemies of the United States as he kills thousands of civilians. ISIS and Khorasan (which no one in Syria heard of until about three weeks ago) are the new enemies Obama is using to justify his wars in Iraq and Syria, although he admits they pose no imminent threat to the United States. The Vietnam syndrome has been replaced by the 'Permanent War.'

It is no cliché that those who ignore history are bound to repeat it. Unless we are provided an honest accounting of the disgraceful history of the US war on Vietnam, we will be ill equipped to protest the current and future wars conducted in our name. ■

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from our readers



Thank you for your excellent publication.

J Coman, NSW

Dear Mr Abrehart

I must apologise for the long time I have passed before settling the subscription to the *Beacon*.

A well-meaning friend enrolled me a couple of years ago.

I am quite old, bad vision, etc., but very impressed by your journal. However, I should be grateful if you would cancel the subscription with my thanks for the effort in sending.

Enclosed is \$30 to cover the \$10 fee. (I am a pensioner but having to cut down many expenses.)

Best wishes to your journal and your politics.

Yours sincerely

N Robins, NSW

Hello all

I have enclosed \$20 for the *Beacon* and, as always, very informative. Donna, can you send me an email with regard to the price of the membership. We are not always able to attend the church and that is why we welcome the *Beacon*.

Regards

L Zanrosso, Vic

Dear Donna

It was nice speaking to you on the phone.

Thank you for the September incisive and penetrating edition on Palestine. Until there is peace and justice for the Palestinian people, there can never be peace in the Middle East.

Would you renew my subscription to the *Beacon* and send a year's subscription to Ms Odeh, starting with the September issue.

I would also be grateful if you would send me four extra issues of the September *Beacon*.

I enclose a cheque for \$100.

Please thank those responsible for your very important journal.

Yours sincerely

M Morrison, NSW

Dear Editor

I enclose my subscription renewal (\$20) due August. I also enclose \$20 for a gift for a new member. I would be grateful if you could send the new member the September copy (special Palestinian edition), as she is a strong supporter of Palestine.

Many thanks

Sincerely

J Michie, NSW

Dear Donna

Would you please pass on my congratulations to Kaye Lee for her article 'Nothing is free? Depends who you are'.

I am fortunate to live in my own home, but for the past few years I have been supporting up to 1000 residents of the Ivanhoe Estate, a very settled public housing estate near Macquarie University, to oppose the NSW state government and its backers, namely the avaricious developer lobby to evict residents from their homes for grandiose but kitsch high rise development.

The residents have been bullied by state bureaucrats and politicians, intimidated and vilified by conservative media commentators eager to stereotype the marginalised and generally treated in a disgraceful way.

I particularly, therefore, liked the statement by Kaye Lee in her article, 'It should be remembered that Abbott is living in public housing'.

The incredible cheek of Abbott and his Team Australia Cabinet cronies in taking so much from the public coffers for housing, travel, expenses, chauffeur-driven Comcars, etc.

It is all wasteful expenditure by men, exception being Julie Bishop, whose leadership of our country is a demonstration of arrogance and ignorance the like of which I have never witnessed before in our country.

Sincerely

Lyn Maciver, NSW

Dear Editor

Thank you for the special Palestinian edition of the *Beacon* this month; it was very welcome. How heartening to see Australian Jews, Palestinians and parliamentarians uniting to write and present what has always been a compelling, alternative view to the unthinking and seemingly entrenched support for the Israeli state. It was a relief, too, to hear from the international standard bearers and realise that there may well be a global groundswell of support for the Palestinians that is not always readily apparent in Australia. I would be grateful if you would send me a copy of the *New Matilda* article with signatures.

I would also appreciate two additional copies of this edition of the *Beacon* so that I can spread the word. If you would send these, please, I'll be happy to pay whatever cost you nominate.

Many thanks – and also for so faithfully and regularly helping your readers to understand 'the other side of the coin'.

R Pratt, NSW

Dear Editor

Despite the ongoing conflict in Kobane in northern Syria where Kurdish groups and other fighters, etc., are now battling 'Islamic State' forces, the rest of the world community is mostly standing back and watching. The city would have fallen long ago if it were not for the determined resistance organised by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (YPD) and its military forces, Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). Yet the USA and its Western

from our readers



allies are very reluctant to help any real progressive and independent parties that are fighting IS. The USA and allies are only really interested in supporting forces that will toe the US line, various conservative groups and corrupt and ineffective governments. And Turkey once again plays immoral political games with the lives of thousands of Kurds and other people. It is the Kurdish fighters and other local armed groups in the region that are the most well-organised, motivated, skilled forces and most capable of defeating IS, but they are receiving little or no help from other countries.

Oppressive terror groups like IS will never be defeated by airstrikes alone or foreign troops. In fact, they will probably add fuel to the fire and attract more fighters to their cause with appeals to oppose foreign intervention. IS and Al-Qaeda will only be beaten by the active participation of the peoples and communities (Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrian Christians, Armenians, Arabs and others) that live in these countries. If IS is to be crushed then the international community must grasp this, show real solidarity and provide the necessary material aid and support to empower and help these peoples and their authentic resistance organisations. Otherwise, the world will witness continued humanitarian suffering, many more civilians being massacred and more ethnic cleansing. Will the rest of the world community allow the Kurds and other brave fighters who have risen up against tyranny and are standing up against the evil of IS to be abandoned in this bitter struggle?

Steven Katsineris, Vic

Dear Friends

Thank you so much for your articles and newsletters. They really do hit the nail on the head.

If any of you were watching *Four Corners* last night, you would know how difficult they are making it for any of us to learn the truth, and as many of us know, I wonder if we are going to be clamped down ... *Media Watch* after it summed it up brilliantly. Already reporters here have their hands tied and now they are making it worse.

A Jurrjens, Qld

Dear Donna

Please find enclosed cheque for \$20 to cover my *Beacon* subscription and associate membership fees. Also, some words to the tune of *Botany Bay* to cover the present situation.

Please use these as you see fit – perhaps in the *Beacon* and send or give out copies to anyone who might use them.

Yours faithfully

M Forsyth, Vic

PS: Please thank everyone running church affairs for their services. As I do not own a computer, please continue sending the *Beacon* by post.

The Abbott 'Team' to the tune of Botany Bay

'Team captain' Abbott shouts crisis,
But people clearly can see
Australia's debt is much lower
Than most of the OECD

Chorus:

Singing Too-ra li-ooral distraction
Sing Too-ra li Abbott what's more
Now creating a huge budget crisis,
Blindly following the US to war.

'Vice' captain is Joseph Hockey
A progressive policy void
Plans robbing our students and pensioners
And starving the young unemployed.

Chorus:

Singing Too-ra li-ooral distraction
Sing Too-ra li Abbott what's more
Now creating a huge budget crisis,
Blindly following the US to war.

The Team sadist Scotty Morrison
Is having far too much fund
Increasing the trauma of refugees
So killing them off one by one.

Chorus:

Singing Too-ra li-ooral distraction
Sing Too-ra li Abbott what's more
Now creating a huge budget crisis,
Blindly following the US to war.

Then there is Minister Christopher Pyne
Who was educated for free
Wanting even higher fees for all
And this includes you and me.

Chorus:

Singing Too-ra li-ooral distraction
Sing Too-ra li Abbott what's more
Now creating a huge budget crisis,
Blindly following the US to war.

The government's now in trouble
Let's create a terrorist scare
We'll widen the powers of ASIO
And have spies and police everywhere.

Chorus:

Singing Too-ra li-ooral distraction
Sing Too-ra li Abbott what's more
Now creating a huge budget crisis,
Blindly following the US to war.

from our readers



Friends

I wish to inform you of my change of address and pay my subs. I have tried many times to pay over the phone but to no avail so decided to write.

I am a pensioner at 77. I think the last time I paid was 2012. I am now living at my daughter's house at the above address.

I am not going to ramble on but will give you a very quick picture of my last 2 years that have been a whirlwind.

My son-in-law started a charity in Kenya to house kids who live on the garbage tips. He was a nurse as 3 of my 4 children are and the four married nurses. That was a hectic time recruiting nurses and anyone else that would volunteer. In the middle of all that the doctors found out that he (Lyle was his name) had prostate cancer. He passed away fairly quickly which was a blessing to my daughter Jenny and their children. Then we found out Jenny had breast cancer – so lots of treatments most of which was at Lismore 2 hours away. I had to have a pacemaker 'installed' and try to get rid of infections in liver, kidneys & bladder. In all of this, I could hear my mum (she died in 1956) saying 'Don't take any pills – drink water and work hard'. I was sloshing from the water and worked 12 hours a day and 16 hours one day a fortnight. The *Beacon* is excellent and I really enjoy it. I came across November 2012 issue this morning and it's still relevant.

Lyle was a midwife and when he was at work at the Murwillumbah Hospital he would be carrying a baby around and so often in the neighbourhood which is a 'suburb' of Murwillumbah mums would come to get Lyle to put their bub to sleep. A memorial tree for Lyle was planted late last week – organised by the nursing staff at the hospital. Lyle also loved his garden.

Anyway, I'd better stop rambling and go to town.

Sincerely

M Head, NSW

To the Editors of the Beacon

Thank you all for the work you do to bring out the *Beacon*. The October 2014 edition was excellent; one of the best I've read; lots of interesting articles.

The *Beacon* can be overwhelmingly negative. Not everything is that awful. What about including one positive article per issue? There are a lot of people within Australia and overseas doing good and interesting work; you can include yourselves in your work for the *Beacon*, for instance.

This is just an idea for your consideration.

Included with this letter is a cheque for a subscription renewal to the *Beacon* and a donation.

Keep up the good work.

Regards

P Haslem, Tasmania

Dear Editor

Thank you for the *Beacon*.

With the world in so much pain, I would like to read anything about peace. Why do people want to kill each other? There must be better ways for human beings to solve our problems and to live cooperatively and in harmony with each other.

I remarked to my mowing man how sad I felt about how violent our culture is today and his response, 'What culture?'

We need to clean up our own backyard and influence others to do the same, don't you think?

Let your *Beacon* shine its light.

Sincerely

S Angus, Vic

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110 Grey Street, East Melbourne 3002

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Website: www.melbourneunitarian.org.au

Monthly journal of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church
Est. 1852

Registered by Australia Post

Post Print Approved
100003043

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