



Initiatives of Change  
Australia

# September Newsbrief

SEPTEMBER 2023 ISSUE



IGNITING CHANGE FOR A  
TRANSFORMED TOMORROW

## A Word from the Chair

**Paul Ntoumos**  
**Chair – IOFCA**

Australia stands at a crucial juncture, faced with an ethical crossroads as a nation. The upcoming referendum on the Voice to Parliament beckons us to choose a path: one of healing the historical wounds, rectifying historical injustices, and embarking on a new national future. Will we rise boldly and confidently to our nation's potential and embrace a transformative journey?

Simultaneously, at Initiatives of Change Australia, we find ourselves at a pivotal juncture of our own. While not as critical as the nation's decision, this juncture holds an undeniable significance for our own future trajectory and the realization of our potential.

I firmly believe a key underlying factor is that we haven't delved deep enough into our own transformative journey as a collective movement and as an organisation. And that we shy away from applying to ourselves and with the same rigor the technology of change so much valued by the participants of our programs. A surge of new energy is imminent. Let's channel this newfound vigor into propelling a comprehensive transformation of our work and programs, our organizational support structures, our member and our broader network and allies participation.

Empowerment lies within us. The call is clear: let's step boldly and confidently into a future where our actions and their results mirror our aspirations. Just as Australia has the chance to shape its destiny, we too have the power to forge our path and realize the transformative change we envision.

The gauntlet is being thrown. The challenge, and the opportunity, await us.

If not us, who? And if not now, when?

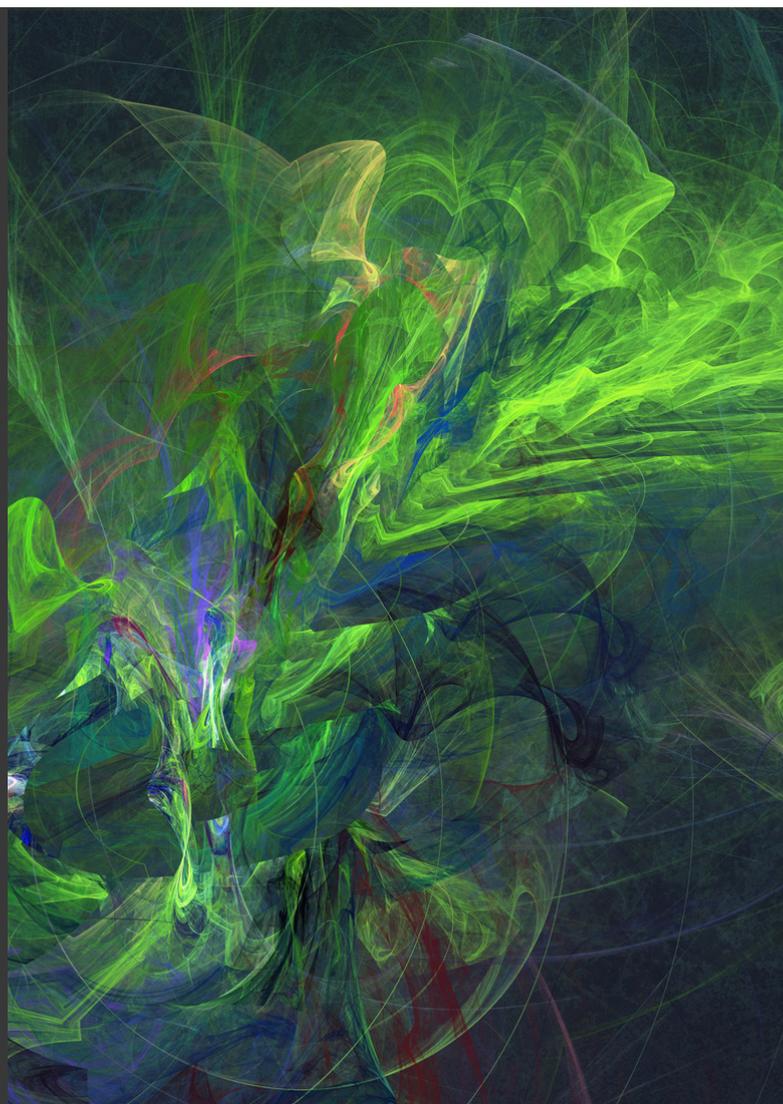
Paul Ntoumos

To put it bluntly, it has now been a decade that our movement has been grappling with bridging the gap between the vast potentiality we and others see in us and the tangible accomplishments we've achieved.

This assessment doesn't diminish the considerable milestones we've reached. Notably, our collaborative efforts with First Nations allies over the last three years have showcased the transformative impact we can and are making. Attendees of our programs like Life Matters, Turruk, and Creators of Peace attest to the profound life-altering changes they undergo.

However, I speak of the broader reach our work of change and transformation could achieve and contribute in addressing the growing and crying societal needs around us.

In my view, the reasons for this gap between potential and realization go beyond mere financial, organizational, or human resources.



## A Word from the Executive Officer

**Margaret Hepworth**  
Executive Officer – IofCA

"Community within Initiatives of Change Australia is not just a word; it's a force—a force for good, for change, and for unity. It's a space where our values come to life, where trust is built, where positive action takes shape, and where personal and societal transformation unfolds. It's where you belong, and where together, we shape a world we can all be proud of".

### Uniting for a Common Cause

In this Newsbrief we highlight stories of communities coming together to address pressing issues. From grassroots movements advocating for social justice like the Voice, Initiative Of Change communities, from all over Australia to Caux, have united to make a difference. Creators of Peace work on spreading peace in the world throughout their various activities. We showcase how collective action can make a significant impact. Through interviews and on-the-ground reporting, we delve into the motivations.

The past months have brought new faces to IofCA, through our Community Dinners and both continuing and new partnerships. Through Cornerstone we have new volunteers for the First Peoples Pathway as well as collaborating with them to create refreshing forums and workshops with young people wanting to take on the mantle for changing the world.

We delight in projects that have been inspired by IofCA activities to take on a life of their own, such as the Peace Culture Cafe, begun by dedicated women having attended Creators of Peace Circles. We look forward to more such collaborations growing together.

-Margaret Hepworth





## A DAY FOR ARMAGH AUGUST 2023

In May and August the community came together to help "give back" to Armagh, the IofCA centre in Melbourne. Participation was lively and there was more than enough to keep everybody busy. People helped repair, restore and polish furniture and silverware, cleaned walls and floors, and outdoors in the gardens raked and bagged dead leaves, cut back overgrowth and weeded garden beds.

There was a beautiful community feel to the morning as people caught up with old and new friends working alongside them and then over a simple shared lunch of soup, bread and sausages.





# ARMAGH COMMUNITY DINNER

## JULY & SEPTEMBER 2023

Armagh has a decades-long tradition of community pot-luck dinners which resumed in May for the first time since the pandemic. The idea is to build community by offering a space for people from diverse cultures and communities to bring and share food with others, to have interesting conversations around the table and to be inspired by a short talk followed by music and dancing. The evenings have proved to be very popular and each time the ballroom has been filled to capacity and beyond with people leaving with full bellies and hearts having made new friends.

Amy Churchouse, founder of the Good Karma Effect was the guest speaker at the second Community Dinner in July, drawing on her experiences around the theme 'Developing a Culture of Gratitude'. In September the theme was 'Truth-Telling & Trust-Building – Keys to Real Relationship' featuring Tui Beggs, a grandmother in her 90s with a lifetime of experience and passion for the theme, and Guyson Baker, a proud Torres Strait Islander man and AWU National Indigenous Officer whose message was "never give up" as he spoke of his courageous and costly struggle to end racial vilification at the workplace.





## APPRECIATION BY BURMA'S KAREN COMMUNITY IN VICTORIA



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It was a special joy to represent Initiatives of Change at the celebration of the 25 anniversary of the establishment of Burma's Karen community in Victoria. Awards were presented to all those who in one way or another had contributed to the well-being of their community. Awards were offered to representatives of the wider community in acknowledgement of their support. One of these was given to us for Initiatives Of Change. We were very glad to attend this significant event and to receive this token of appreciation for IofC's friendship and involvement over many years.

- Rob and Cheryl Wood

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# The Voice

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Across the continent, the grassroots movement of IofCA has stepped up to join the call for social justice, advocating for a Voice to Parliament.

At IofCA, we hold space for open, honest and inclusive dialogue. We believe that the way Australians hold this dialogue is important and that we continue to respect and dignify people of all views. Our ongoing support of the Voice is made in our continuing commitment to Trustbuilding through truth-telling by Australians of all backgrounds.

*-Margaret Hepworth*







On his return to Wagga Wagga from the Global Indigenous Dialogue (GID) held in July during the Initiatives of Change 'Healing the Wounds of History' conference in Caux, Switzerland, Uncle Hewitt Whyman of Yorta Yorta and Wemba Wemba First Nations, wasted no time in following his dream or, as he called it, his 'light bulb moment'.

This inspiration began earlier this year, in February. A visit by a Canadian First Nations party led by Lewis Cardinal resulted in Uncle Hewitt's determination to attend the Caux GID. Elijah Ingram, a young Wiradjuri business entrepreneur, accompanied Uncle Hewitt on the trip to Switzerland. They had pooled their funds and received a top up from a friend. Early each morning the entire forum was invited to participate in a special cleansing moment outside overlooking Lake Geneva. This consisted of Australian didgeridoo and smoking and the Canadian smoke-smudging ceremony. Each afternoon many delegates attended a GID workshop.

Uncle Hewitt says that the 'light bulb moment' concerning the upcoming Referendum came to him in Caux one evening. It led him to develop a statement signed by participants from 72 nations on a large, richly-decorated parchment painted by Elijah. Back in Wagga Wagga, The Daily Advertiser newspaper gave front page photo coverage and a large page two article about the Caux conference and resulting statement, and reiterated the official wording of the Referendum proposal. It urges 'all Australians to embrace this historic choice and walk beside us as we strive for peace and unity'. The newspaper also gave coverage and a photo of the parchment's unveiling in a meeting downtown. Uncle Hewitt and Elijah will present the statement to Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister, Linda Burney who is also Wiradjuri.

- Ron Lawler

## Are we hearing the voice within?

Mike Brown

It's nice to see quiet old SA in the national spotlight for once!

The PM launched the Referendum for a Voice to Parliament here – we were told – because SA has a progressive record of being the state where the 1967 Referendum was first launched, the first to give the vote to women, and the first to legislate a state-level Voice to Parliament. But I suspect that it had more to do with the fact that we are a 'swinging' state, which has to be won over for the Referendum on the Voice to succeed!

Down here where we live among mostly retirees on the South Coast – next to Victor Harbor, dubbed the 'Agapantha capital of Australia' – it doesn't feel so swingingly 'progressive'. We have a small passionate team of campaigners for YES23. But when the subject comes up with folks after church or in the shops, most tend to go quiet or look into the distance, mumbling something they've heard on the TV.

It's as if 'the Great Australian Silence' about our past still infects our freedom to look into our future!

Which makes me feel that, whichever way the referendum goes, Australia will gain if we can begin to have really honest and respectful conversations about who we are and want to be, to talk about the realities we face – domestic violence, addictions, wealth gaps, refugees as well as our 'black history' – without slotting each other into opposing camps.

Giving a lecture at the establishment St Peters College, Stan Grant opted to speak on 'what brings us Australians together' versus the language that 'pits us against each other'. He started with Einstein's observation that 'the greatest tragedy of humankind is the illusion of separation'. He went on to tell how members of his father and uncles were separated off by policies of exclusion, treated as sub-human by the system.

And more recently, how the 'vilification' heaped on him and his family through social media, forced him to quit the ABC.

But he quit also because he had come to realise he was part of the problem, that the media amplifies the point of difference and has become 'poison in the bloodstream'. The social media abuse forced him to ask, 'Where am I perpetuating the conflicts... Have I shown love and respect to those who express such hatred?'

It struck me that Stan Grant was demonstrating a core IofC principle: each of us starting with ourselves. Brought up on a Christian mission, he has turned to Christ's forgiveness and his Wiradjuri values of yindyamarra (meaning to respect the other person as being also part of who you are) as a way to 'shatter separation'.

Speaking in Adelaide a few days later, Noel Pearson said something similar: we can only win through love! Coming from that toughened, wily campaigner, it seemed almost out of character. But he said it over and over. He meant it.

He recognised that this campaign goes a lot deeper than First Nations people 'having a say' on service delivery. The challenge is not only winning the YES vote, but winning the hearts and minds of Australians on how we treat each other, removing 'the stain of racism' from our soul.

Many of us believe, deeply, that we need a First Nations Voice to break the silence and bring add momentum to that 'movement of all Australians for a better future'. But do we first need to let that other Voice, the Inner Voice, reveal where might we be 'perpetuating the conflict' in our debates with each other right now? 'The Voice may not be an answer to everything,' said Stan Grant, concluding his talk. 'But it is YES to the possibility. And it has to be YES to hope. Where are we without that? YES gives us a chance.'



DON'T KNOW?  
~~Vote NO~~  
FIND OUT!





# Caux

## Uncle Shane Charles Writes:

Dear friends,

I'd like to share with you the profound experience and impact of my recent journey to Caux for the 2023—Global Indigenous Dialogue. A transformative experience that has left a lasting impression on my heart and spirit. Caux, nestled amidst the awe-inspiring Swiss Alps, has long been a sacred space for personal and societal transformation, much like our own cultural gathering places.

The diversity of Cultural voices their backgrounds that united upon Caux it felt like our own communities. People from all walks of life, from various corners of the globe, 72 Countries gathered with a shared purpose, to explore, understand, and contribute to a world characterized by peace, trust, and reconciliation.

In Caux, I was reminded of the importance of dialogue—the Global Indigenous Dialogue provided the platform for all cultures to learn from the heart of our culture and the essence of "The Voice" referendum discussions that resonate deeply within our own communities. Dialogue in Caux is a place where hearts connect, bridges are built, and common ground is discovered—much like the aspirations of "The Voice" referendum, which seeks to empower our Indigenous voices and shape the path forward.

On the international stage of IofCA was a more rewarding space for me to see the next level of IofCA. The stage provided opportunities for building truthful and meaning full relationships this seemed to be easily achieved when everyone is on the same journey something that IofCA can learn from.

The stories I encountered at Caux were akin to the Dreaming stories that have been shared among our people for generations. These narratives demonstrated that transformation is not an abstract concept but a tangible reality being shaped by individuals and communities alike.

The similarities in our journeys and effects with a diversity of stories similar to the journeys of my peoples. The place itself, with the mountains and lakes, reminds us we're connected to country and we've got to look after it. And that goes for our mob's voice too.

In the end, Caux 2023 showed me Hope and talking from the heart, understanding each other, and working together can make big changes happen. So, let's take that spirit and use our voices to make things better for all our peoples.

Caux also provided an opportunity to support our journey here a crafted statement for the conference participants to support the Voice Treaty and Truth the signing of such an historical event.

I am truly blessed to have walked in the footprints of my ancestors and have the global support of the conference a truly inspiring gift of hope.

-Uncle Shane Charles



### ***Mohan Bhagwandas writes from Caux:***

I moderated the South Sudan workshop presented by Brig General Acuil Banggol, Prince Daniel Barugbo and His Majesty Atoroba Peni Rikito, King of the Azande people. They gave African based solutions for South Sudan and are looking at adopting aspects of the Swiss governance model.

### ***Anne Holland and Judy Greenberg write:***

It was interesting and inspiring to be with people from so many different countries, many are refugees from war zones, and although lucky to be free themselves they have deep concerns for their families and friends who still live there. Sharing the conference with Uncle Shane, Elijah and Uncle Hewitt made us feel very proud. Attending the early morning smoking ceremonies run by Lewis Cardinal and the Canadian team, and Uncle Shane and the Aussie team was very moving. Standing on the terrace and hearing the didgeridoo's haunting sound was very powerful.

### ***Barb Lawler writes:***

Caux is experiencing its own 'makarrata' - coming together after struggle through COVID etc - so much appreciate the inspired efforts by so many. Learning to give thanks for struggle, with issues, relationships, and in myself, which in the overcoming, can deepen and strengthen our joy, love and effectiveness as a team - all part of the journey.

### ***Ron Lawler writes from Caux:***

A very fine and well attended workshop led by the Canadian/Australian First Nations group in Caux this afternoon. Uncle Hewitt (Wagga Wagga) and Uncle Shane presented the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islander flags for the display area in Caux. Elena Zhemkova's talk was the highlight for me at the opening plenary. It made me think of Australia and truth and untruth in our history.

## Naome Rusera on her Caux Journey

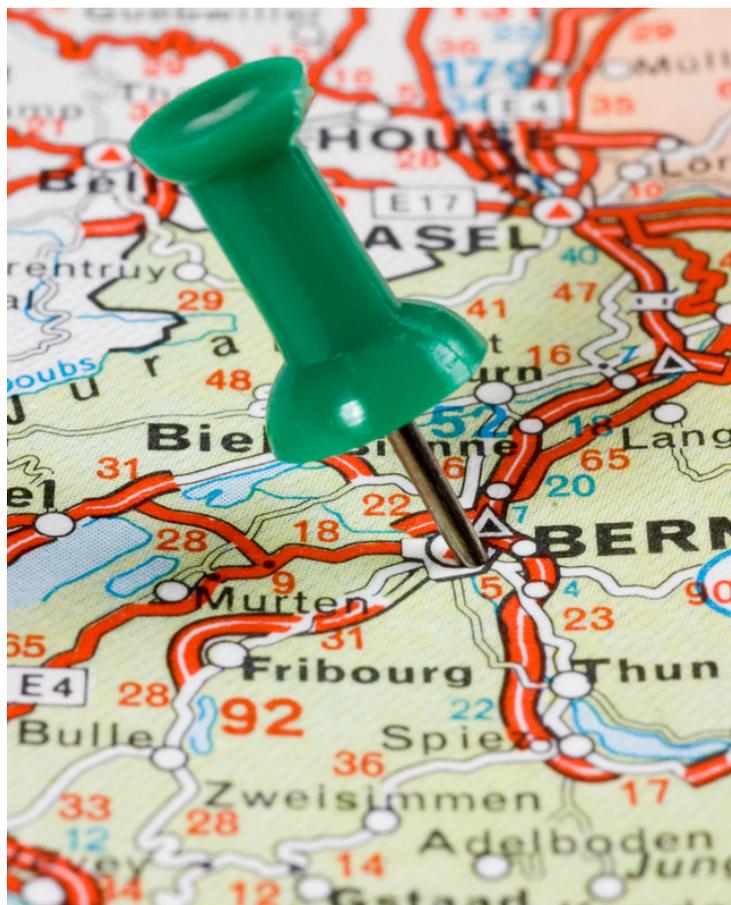
My thoughts before Caux were filled with excitement, uncertainty and perhaps some level of anxiousness. I had a send off dinner with my Caux journey cheerleaders, Mu, Barbara and Amiel the night before my trip was to begin. Our conversation focused on how I was feeling and how I was to prepare, it became more of a reflection in all our journeys with IofC and Caux (for those of us who had attended). This dinner had brought me so much ease and joy.

As I arrived in Montreux, Switzerland I was looking forward to all the people I was to meet and all I was to learn. I was lucky to be welcomed by our Caux scholars facilitators, including our professor David. Not too long after I met all my Caux scholars colleagues, and classes began. First we were introduced to narrative theory, then dived into depth dialogue around conflict analysis, trauma, strategic peacebuilding and nonviolent communication which included theatre facilitated by Dr. Ashok Gladson. I don't believe anything could have truly prepared me for the transformation, I engaged with our indigenous elders, Uncle Shane and Uncle Hewitt - we discussed the voice referendum and what part I can play. I am proud to say that in this process of listening I was able to use the skillset obtained from our daily inner listening sessions. Following Uncle Shane, Uncle Hewitt and Elijah Ingram's lead, the Australian team produced a document in support of the referendum, which was later signed by 72 countries represented caux forum participants.

Upon returning home, I still practice inner listening, self reflection and the many peacebuilding skillsets obtained.

I understand narratives in ways I hadn't before. I use this knowledge in my daily work through the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland where I am the Executive Officer, and play a role in our advocacy and policy work. I'm happy to say that the Queensland IofC team which I am a part of is planning a Life Matters Workshop for October 2024 and a taster in October 2023. In many ways I wish for other people to experience the magic of Caux, the healing, the peace and the genuine connection with people. I am grateful for all that this experience has brought in to my life journey, I hope to always carry these values with me as an ambassador of empathy, a champion of dialogue, and advocate for positive change.

However, it must be said that I am not exceptional, my work is to is not to build a shared narrative of the future, my work is to build a narrative of a shared a future. We have to build a path where everyone can survive and thrive. A shared future means we can come back and evaluate our approaches to inclusion and flourishing.





## TRUSTBUILDING AWARDS CEREMONY – CAUX 2023

At the first-ever Trustbuilding Awards ceremony at Caux 2023, the Lifetime Achiever Award was presented to Jean Brown! This award recognises an individual who has dedicated their life to building trust across the divides.

Jean Brown is the President of the International Committee of Creators of Peace, a women-led global network that builds resilient and hospitable communities. She has been involved with Creators of Peace since its earliest days and designed its primary tool, Creators of Peace Circles, which have taken place in over 50 countries on six continents over the last 25 years.

As a young woman, Jean intended to study medicine but devoted herself to Initiatives of Change instead.

She has done this work full-time for five decades, including many years in India and the US, pioneering projects such as the leadership programme Action for Life in India and working with gang members in Los Angeles. She also has made several visits to South Sudan to support reconciliation initiatives there.

In Australia, Jean has been active in many initiatives to advance reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. She is an inspiring teacher and trainer, introducing many to the joys and challenges of spiritual life.

Above all, Jean has been a treasured friend to countless people.

Caux 2023



Caux 2023



Caux 2023





# Partnerships

The scale and size of the challenges facing the world are beyond the scope of any single organisation or movement – so building partnerships and networking is a vital part of the work of IofCA. One recent partnership is with a group called Cornerstone (<https://www.cornerstonemelbourne.au>), based in Thornbury, Melbourne. They describe themselves as a community of practice ‘made up of deep thinkers, psychotherapists, creatives, and facilitators...offering pathways toward healing, learning, and change for individuals, communities & organisations.’ They have asked to partner with IofCA, having attended Turrak and the public event with Professor Gerald Pillay, President of IofC International, earlier in the year. They have responded to the vision and mission of IofC, and the presence of Elders who have decades of experience in working towards change in society alongside change within people starting with ourselves.

An initial fruit of this partnership is a series of three workshops in October – all at their base in Thornbury. The first on 4 Oct is from Difference to Harmony: Engaging Constructively in Challenging Conversations. The second, on 18 Oct is Deeper Resources for Changemaking: Practices and Insights for an expanded form of Activism. The third on 28 Oct is a full day workshop on Discovering my Deeper Purpose: A journey towards uncovering and nurturing your gifts for this world. All will be co-facilitated by people from Cornerstone and Mike Lowe from IofCA.



## Symphony 7 Hosts Initiative of Change EO Margaret Hepworth and Thought Leader Thomas Mayo: Exploring 'The Voice'

We are thrilled to report a remarkable collaboration between Initiatives of Change Australia and Symphony 7, which brought together two influential voices in the field of personal and societal transformation: Margaret Hepworth, the Executive Officer of Initiative of Change, and renowned thought leader Thomas Mayo, have engaged in a profound dialogue on the subject of "The Voice."

Margaret Hepworth, as the Executive Officer of IofC embodies our organization's unwavering commitment to ethical leadership and positive change. Her presence at this event underscores the shared values and objectives between Initiative of Change and Symphony 7, both dedicated to creating a better world.

Thomas Mayo, a distinguished thought leader, brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to this conversation. His expertise delves into the nuances of communication and expression, emphasizing the profound significance of "The Voice" in fostering empathy, understanding, and meaningful connections in our rapidly evolving society.

Symphony 7 is a global community of people and businesses pursuing profit for good and to create positive uplift of the environment. Symphony 7's hosting of this event is a testament to its dedication to facilitating meaningful conversations that transcend boundaries and inspire transformation.

By providing a platform for Margaret Hepworth and Thomas Mayo to explore "The Voice," Symphony 7 exemplifies its commitment to promoting thought leadership and knowledge dissemination on pivotal issues.

This event was more than just a meeting of minds; it represented the convergence of ideologies—where a deep understanding of communication, voice, and ethical leadership meets the innovative spirit of Symphony 7's approach. It symbolizes the power that emerges when organizations with a shared vision unite to explore, understand, and address fundamental aspects of our society.





## NELSON MANDELA YOUTH SUMMIT

The Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Centre for Optimism work together with IofCA's EO Margaret Hepworth, each year to bring together an inspiring morning for regional and city secondary students, showcasing themselves as ethical leaders.

This year, in the hallowed halls of Victorian State Parliament, students engaged with the Lord Mayor, Sally Capp, the Opposition Leader, John Pesutto, Daniela De Martino MP, representing the Premier, Nazer Nair, Afghan Australia Initiative, Mason Interlandi, DFAT, and Tane Hunter, Future Crunch.

The students raised questions of concern, one area of high interest being social inequity and advantage for people of their age. It is always a delight to hear young voices elevated and held in high regard.



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*Community happens when you find yourself. Understand who you are before you find anything else.*

-Sophia Uniake, 16 year old participant.

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# Healing and Reconciliation



## CREATORS OF PEACE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COPCOP)

Our July CoPCoP gathering was a deeply thought-provoking session on the topic of 'Unconscious Bias'. CoP member Lesley-Anne created a safe space in her home, that gently led all ten of us into a revealing introspection into the unconscious biases we each hold. It led us to some disturbing realizations of our own biases, which have created some undesirable perspectives of others and undesirable patterns of behavior.

Lesley-Anne facilitated us through awareness of how our unconscious biases have developed over time and may have been ingrained by our home environments, learned cultural beliefs, from our peers, group beliefs, societal norms, patterns of authority etc. This was a unique opportunity to learn more about ourselves, and each other. Another explanation of an unconscious bias is, "a tendency to exclude a person, a group, an idea - without even engaging with that person/group/idea." Lesley-Anne explained, 'The mind lies, but the heart/body doesn't.'

When we become aware of an unconscious bias, we feel discomfort.

Meditation or listening to the body can reveal that something is not right, and this calls us to address the discomfort.

The question is how do we break these cycles? How do we make the unconscious conscious and how do we then 'be the change we want to see in the world'? What can we do, in a practical sense, and as peace builders and peace creators?

We were challenged to look at 'breaking the cycles', patterns of negative behaviour, by making the unconscious conscious to bring about change.

- Tanya Fox



*This has been mind-expanding for me, and it has allowed me to tap into my experiences of 'male entitlement'. I experience this like a fish in water. I realize today, that just because it is/has always been like that in my family ... it doesn't mean it has to continue! And ... if I look at it from a wider perspective ... in the world ... just because things have been done in a certain way by 'most' people ... it doesn't make them right. - Participant*





## COP SOUTH AUSTRALIA RETREAT

Each year for the past three years, a group of committed Creators of Peace women in South Australia have gathered at the home of Judy Schroeder in Wellington, for a time of reflection and connection.

This year we did things a little differently and instead of meeting for the whole weekend we had a day retreat, where 11 women came together to explore 'The Art of Accompaniment.' We discussed what it means to accompany someone and how it is different to friendship or mentoring. We identified qualities of accompaniment such as compassion, empathy, being a good listener, and asking helpful questions. One exercise that Jean Brown led us in was 'Questions in the Service of the Other' in which we broke into small groups and shared a current challenge that we are facing. Each person in the group then had to think of a question to ask that was not a judgment, advice or diagnostic.

Judy got us to consider how accompaniment plays out in nature with companion planting and the way different elements of nature work together. After lunch we were encouraged to spend time in the garden and find our own examples. I enjoyed watching the closed flowers open as the sun grew warmer.

After a relaxed shared lunch, we had time to rest, journal and reflect on the morning and then came back together to share our reflections and have a quiet time to see if we could identify someone or something that we may be feeling a stirring to accompany. We also acknowledged that it may be ourselves that needs accompanying and we were encouraged to think of what a first step could be. It was a rich time of learning and sharing and each of us came away grateful for the safe space and friendships that we have created.

- Bek Brown



Photo Credit: Annie Gibbons



Caption

## CREATORS OF PEACE CIRCLE MELBOURNE

A second creators of peace circle was held in St. Albans Melbourne, Victoria on 30 June and 1 & 2 July 2023. This circle had an amazing blend of South Sudanese, Australian, Kenyan, and Cambodian women, who came together to learn, grow, and hold each other's stories with care and compassion. The circle had eight women, three facilitators and five volunteers who catered meals and babysat.

The three-day workshop ran very smoothly and contained a huge amount of learning about each other's cultures and commonalities, and most importantly the roles we could each play to improve our societies, by letting go of the things that hold us back and allowing the space for healing and transformation.

We had great feedback from our participants, some of whom had attended the previous circle and felt the need to come back for more rejuvenation.

This thirst for connection and openness to the healing journey brings great hope

- Chebet Vincent





## PEACE CULTURE CAFE (PCC)

The PCC gets together every five weeks with women from around Sydney, to engage in conscious conversations about self-discovery and relating to life in a positive manner.

At our most recent PCC on 27 August a group of eight women gathered to address the topic “Why do we connect?” Our thoughts first went to if we do it as a social need, out of convenience, or because we fear isolation. While these are valid reasons, there are more reasons and models for us to connect with society, particularly for those of us who are busy working to influence our social environment. This topic was also chosen in response to the growing expansion of artificial intelligence devices (chat-bots) being used as companions of choice, and we examined its risks and benefits.

We discussed the different levels of connecting and how culture can affect our freedom to connect.

We asked whether connectedness only referred to animate beings and not objects but realised that one can connect with inanimate things such as a colour, a piece of furniture or anything that leads to memories or sparks emotions. The afternoon together itself revealed that connecting in any form available to a person is valuable as it makes the heart smile.

In our previous sessions we had covered a series on Looking Within and reflected on the quality of our links with the world

-Tanya Fox.

# Ethical Leadership



## LIFE MATTERS NOVEMBER 3-6 2023 – MIKE LOWE

The next residential Life Matters course is coming up in Melbourne over the long weekend 3-6 November. One of the things I always look forward to is the wonderful group of people who come together to make Life Matters happen – many of them former participants. Together we create an atmosphere that is warm, welcoming and loving – that accepts diverse people however they are and supports us all to become deeper and better versions of ourselves.

Places are still available. If you or anyone you know is considering it. Here are five reasons why you should take part in a Life Matters program :

- It's fun and exciting! You will laugh, play, get creative, get real! You may find yourself washing dishes together singing joyfully! You will share deeply, listen and be heard and perhaps even be moved to tears.
- You will meet people from very different backgrounds, cultures and ages who will share their stories and become good friends. You will feel a deep sense of belonging together with this group.
- You will get clearer on who you are and what you have to contribute to the world around us. We only get one shot at this life – let's make it count!
- You will learn how to make and sustain better relationships through learning how to do honest repair when things are hard.
- You will discover and build a relationship with that vast resource of wisdom and strength that is your inner voice. Different people will use various words to describe it – the voice of truth, conscience or the divine spirit within us. It becomes an inner compass guiding us to take right action.



# First Peoples Pathway

## STEPS TO THE REFERENDUM

The Steps to the Referendum online forums were held in July, August and September, and were an opportunity to engage with like-minded people who would like to do more to support the Yes vote.

Uncle Shane Charles and Uncle Glenn Loughrey shared during the sessions, as to where the Voice to Parliament has come from, both through a historical lens and the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and together they helped dispel the myths concerning the No vote

The forums have been incredibly insightful for participants through these sharings from Uncle Glenn Loughrey, Uncle Shane Charles and Nicole Bloomfield, with their truth telling and factual informative discussions.

One of the biggest takeaways was hearing Uncle Glenn share the need for social equity and for the nation to step up and mature in this space.



Nartarsha Bamblett

## FIRST NATIONS EMERGENCE YOUTH SUMMIT

The Emergence Summit took place on Sunday 10 September with over 80 people both in person at Armagh and online.

Participants were surrounded by striking artworks of Dylan Charles and Gabby Harcourt, in an exhibition which will be held at Armagh until after the Referendum on 14 October.

First Nations Emerging Leaders Kirstine Wallis, Nartarsha Bamblett and Leigh Saunders spoke on topics that are their spirits work.

Kristine shared with us the beauty of the Birrarung River, and how we are truly interconnected, how it gives us life and how important it is to learn about it and therefore protect it.

Nartarsha took the group through a deeply integrated spiritual journey by asking how connected we are with Country, with our spirits and with each other. Her Wayapa movement practice allowed those in the room to deeply feel into Country within themselves.

Leigh shared how walking on the shoulders of giants has landed him in a place where he is so proud to be supporting the YES vote in the upcoming Referendum. Participants then reflected on their learnings and brainstormed ways of integrating this into their everyday practices.

We pay homage to Dylan who was the inspiration behind the summit but unable to join us on the day.







# Initiatives of Change Australia



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