

Julie Hart

IPAN SW Regional Victoria

To give an overview of how, when, where and why our IPAN South West regional Victorian group began.

Be the voice for Peace.

It was an advert in my favourite national newspaper that drew me in...

'The Saturday Paper' featured a full page advertisement for a weekend Peace Conference to be held in Melbourne in 2017. It was being organised by the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network. (IPAN). I cut out the page, laminated it and stuck it near the front door.

Closer to the event I contacted a like minded friend, Gillian Blair who lived in Panmure and we decided to attend the Peace Conference together.

Inspired by the two day Conference featuring international and local speakers, we decided to invite IPAN Vic. Coordinator, Shirley Winton to speak at a couple of meetings in Portland at the South West Trades & Labour Council office, with the intention to start an IPAN regional group.

Those meetings happened in May 2018.

The Warrnambool and Portland newspapers were interested and arranged reporters and photographers. We supplied the Peace banner and 4 lucky door prizes; Books.

New Vintage Classics—'On The Beach' by Neville Shute.

Thus the fledgling, IPAN S.W. Victoria Regional group was formed. We held more meetings in Port Fairy, Warrnambool and Portland and on special Peace Day occasions like Hiroshima Day and the International day of Peace. Next we linked up with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons ICAN, the Melbourne based Nobel Peace Prize winners of 2017.

Peace Issues and Justice Issues are inextricably linked with Climate Change. The world is now aware of the wide range of social and environmental problems that will develop as the climate warms and food production and access to water become problematic. People see Climate Change as a threat to survival, so it is no wonder that Extinction Rebellion groups have formed around the world, including in Warrnambool.

Seventeen year old Greta Thunberg is now the world's Swedish hero, setting the pace and taking the lead in her yellow raincoat whilst initiating the international Student Strikes 4 Climate. As one young person's placard stated: "When politicians act like children, then children must act like adults".

Fired up by the Student Strikes, environmental educator, Sally Jensen told me she felt compelled to organize a similar strike in Portland. It was held on the lawns overlooking Portland Bay foreshore, and was supported by IPAN members, Gas Field Free Glenelg and Portland Knitting Nannas. It was a wonderful success and while Greta succeeding in unsettling President Donald Trump, this local event also captured the attention of our member for Wannon, Dan Tehan MP.

Fast forward to 2021 the World is struggling with a highly contagious and changing virus, which is challenging scientists and medical experts. 'Welfare not Warfare' has been IPAN's main focus for the past 18 months. The 'People's Inquiry' a major undertaking also. Unfortunately, several national Peace Rallies have been cancelled due to lockdowns and crowd safety. However, Zoom meetings, emails, community radio and social media have kept our peace people connected.

While the world is constantly changing; humans are also evolving to cope and adjust to these changes.

To conclude this little story; today on 17th August 2021 the costly 20 year Afghanistan war is over.
No one won. There were no victory speeches.
To put it more simply; There is no Climate 4 War.