

WILPF Australia Centenary

In late May, WILPF Australia held their Centenary Celebrations, beginning with the inaugural National Peacewomen Awards on the evening of 28 May followed by the Centenary Conference on 29 May.

The Peacewomen Awards were the first national Australia Awards following five years of Queensland State Awards. The event celebrated the achievements of recipients Ms Kirstie Parker, Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First People and Director of Reconciliation Australia; Dr Helen Caldicott, physician and anti-nuclear advocate; Dr Anne Gallagher AO, global expert on international law in human trafficking; and Dr Helen Durham, expert in International Humanitarian Law and first woman Director of Law at the International Committee of the Red Cross in its 150 year history. It was a highly inspirational event including a beautiful performance by an excerpt from their Community Oratorio *A Passion for Peace* (see their performance at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab7jC8gNTFk)

The conference, the aim of which was to look to the future and elicit ideas for future peacebuilding and conflict prevention actions, included three keynote speakers: WILPF Secretary General Madeleine Rees; Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, Natasha Stott Despoja; and Mrs Shukriya Barakzai, a member of the Afghanistan Parliament. There were two panels: *A Feminist Perspective on women's Power to Stop war* and *Women Working Globally*. There was also a lighthearted debate after lunch, but nevertheless on a serious topic, on whether Government diplomacy or NGO advocacy were more effective in peacebuilding.;

The conference had a strong YWILPF presence. It was MC'd by two YWILPFers and two other YWILPFers delivered the closing keynote address, on the next hundred years of feminism and WILPF action for peace.

Probably the most significant points arising from the various keynote addresses and panel discussions were the need to address the root causes of war and the consequences of those root causes, that we need to work together, allay our fears and increase our connections with each other, that we need to reclaim the multilateral system so that it works for us not those perpetuating conflict and violence; that peace does not just happen, it is a process and that while that between war and peace is a long journey, through our common language and common understanding, we can make it a short one. In particular we must reclaim the transformational promise of UNSCR 1325 and its real impact, i.e. to validate what women are already doing and have always done, to build peace.