

Gallipoli Centenary Peace Campaign

Peace & Reconciliation Park Proposal

Introduction

In recent times, many criticisms have been made of the Anzac Centenary Program (2014-2018). These criticisms relate to (a) the mode of commemoration (b) the expense involved compared with what other countries are spending and (c) whether or not the program will be educative in the sense of enhancing Australians' understanding of the Great War, its causes and outcomes, and how we can prevent war and conflict in the future.

Commemoration

James Brown, former Australian army officer and author of *Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession*, notes that the War Memorial in Sydney's Hyde Park contains the following words: 'Let silent contemplation be your offering'. Compared with this mode of commemoration, Brown asserts that Australians "are embarking on a discordant, lengthy and exorbitant four-year festival for the dead."¹

Expense

Brown estimates that the taxpayer is dishing out \$325 million for a bevy of "festivals" which will be bolstered by an additional \$300 million from corporate and private donors. Brown warns that such lavish funding of the Anzac centenary risks fetishising war. Australia's expenditure is more than what France is spending and is double what the British are spending on the centenary.

Jeffery Grey, one of Australia's leading WW1 experts, regards this level of spending to be disproportionate. He points out that while Australia tragically lost around 60,000 during WW1, this represents a small figure compared to the 600,000 British deaths, more than one million Austro-Hungarian fatalities and close to 1.4 million French lives lost. Added to this is the fact that unlike these European countries, Australia was never under serious threat from invasion.²

Mythology versus education

Another criticism of the Anzac Centenary Program relates to the likelihood that it will perpetuate a distorted view of Australia's history. This is one of the main criticisms levelled against the Anzac legend and the Centenary Program seems destined to add to the militarisation of our history by governments and government agencies in recent times.³

Jeffrey Grey summarises his reservations in the following manner: "If Australia's centenary observance is little more than a four-year long Dawn Service, replete with all the hackneyed clichés and self-serving a-historical mythology trotted out each Anzac Day, it will be a monumental waste of time and money."⁴

¹ James Brown, *Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession*, Redback, Feb 2014, p. 24.

² Jeffrey Grey, quoted in Chris Sheedy and Steve Offner, 'Busting the Anzac Myth', *Uniken*, Winter 2014, p. 14.

³ Refer to Marilyn Lake, 'Militarising Australian History', Paper 1 in Medical Association for the Prevention of War's series on war and militarism in Australia, Feb 2012.

⁴ Jeffrey Grey, 'THE BIG IDEA: we are making a mess of commemorating WW1', *The Australian*, 24 Apr 2013.

Being resolute about peace

An alternative to this 'Anzackery' has been well expressed by Peter Underwood, Governor of Tasmania. In keeping with the inscription on the War Memorial in Sydney's Hyde Park cited above, Peter Underwood defines the purpose of Anzac Day commemorations in the following way:

- To remember those who died or were wounded when serving their country during wars, conflicts and peace missions;
- For each of us to reflect upon their service and to solemnly honour and pay respect to their bravery and courage;
- To reflect also on their mental and physical suffering caused by their service together with the loss and suffering it caused their families and loved ones;
- Importantly, for each of us to resolve that, in the future, we will "ask those hard questions about the meaning of wars, their causes and outcomes, in order to become resolute about peace, as well as resolute about fighting when fighting is a genuinely necessary and unavoidable act of self-protection".⁵

In this speech, Peter Underwood emphasised that all "our remembrances and honours are meaningless, unless we also vow to become resolute about peace because that is what those whom we remember and honour on (Anzac Day) thought they were dying for".⁶

The Gallipoli Centenary Peace Campaign (GCPC) endorses this sentiment. Our proposal for a Peace and Reconciliation Park would complement the true purpose of all war commemorations, especially the Anzac Centenary, and it would also be a lasting reminder to community members to become more resolute about peace now and in the future.

Why Richardson's Lookout

GCPC is currently collecting signatures for a petition that calls for a Peace and Reconciliation Park to be established at Richardson's Lookout in Marrickville. The historical reasons for nominating Richardson's Lookout for a Peace Park were outlined in notes accompanying the petition. In particular:

- This site is well known for its Aboriginal, military and local heritage, being part of the land inhabited by the Cadigal people for many thousands of years. This elevated precinct is said to have been a significant vantage point for the local Aboriginal people providing views to Botany Bay and of the Cooks River catchment area.
- Following European settlement, Richardson's Lookout was part of a parcel of land first granted in 1799 to Thomas Moore who used local timber to build boats for the colony. Later, in 1830, the estate was purchased by Dr Robert Wardell, a barrister, who expanded his landholding to 2000 acres which included most of today's Petersham, Dulwich Hill and Marrickville, from Parramatta Road to the Cooks River.
- In 1859, after the sub-division of Wardell's estate, a wealthy businessman, Thomas Holt, purchased a parcel of land comprising 130 acres which he subsequently called 'The Warren'. Holt's home, a 'Victorian Gothic' mansion, was built around 1866.

⁵ Peter Underwood, 'Anzac Day Speech 2013', Governor of Tasmania's official website.

⁶ Ibid.

- Holt returned to England in 1883 and died in 1888. Following his death, the estate was gradually sub-divided but the mansion remained part of a 12 acre block and was acquired by the Catholic Church. Between 1886 and 1903, The Warren accommodated a French order of Carmelite nuns.
- The site's military history is linked to The Warren. During WW1, The Warren was used by the army as an artillery encampment. In 1919 The Warren's mansion was demolished and the land sub-divided for a housing estate for returned soldiers. It is this precinct's military history that makes it a fitting location for a memorial to Marrickville's connection with WW1.
- In recent times, Richardson's Lookout has also been the setting for Sorry Day events, organised by Marrickville Residents for Reconciliation, and it is a site for the Aboriginal Interpretative signage and Story Poles project developed jointly by Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee and Marrickville Council in 2013. It is called 'Looking Out' and features the 'Sea of Hands' imagery initiated by ANTAR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation) as a symbol of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians joining hands and working together towards reconciliation.

These notes show that Richardson's Lookout encompasses both Indigenous and military histories and has been an important location for Sorry Day commemorations in recent times. For these reasons we believe that it is appropriate for Richardson's Lookout to be nominated as Marrickville Council's first Peace Park.

Design Possibilities

The neighbouring Peace Park in Ashbury is located on the highest point in the Canterbury Local Government Area. .

Peace Park features a ceremonial paved area that pays tribute to the site's previous history of brick manufacture. Trees, symbolic of peace in both Eastern and Western cultures, were planted by students of Canterbury Girls High School during 1992.

Peace Park was officially opened during 1993 and was so named in recognition of the International Year of Peace in 1986. The next International Day of Peace will be celebrated on Sunday 21 September 2014.



Peace Park

Welcome to Peace Park, the highest point in the Canterbury Local Government area.

From 1910 until as late as 1985, this hillside was a brickyard and shale quarry first known as the South Ashfield Brickworks and later as Ashbury Brickyard.

Today the park's ceremonial paved area pays tribute to its brick-making past.

Peace Park was named to mark the International Year of Peace and was opened in 1993.

The trees, symbolic of Eastern and Western cultures, were planted by students from Canterbury Girls High School.

Signage within Ashbury's Peace Park refers to its colonial and industrial heritage as well as its creation marking the International Year of Peace.

To coincide with the Anzac Centenary, signage for the Peace Park at Richardson's Lookout could honour the bravery and courage of all who died or were wounded on the killing fields of Flanders, the Western Front and Gallipoli and, as a supreme tribute to our troops, call upon all community members to become steadfast about peace in the future.



Additional signage could also refer to the precinct's Indigenous and military heritage together with a brief history of Richardson's Lookout including the two stone pillars which is all that remains of Thomas Holt's estate, The Warren, which was formerly on this site.

Given the association that Richardson's Lookout has with both Marrickville's Indigenous Interpretive Trail and with Sorry Day commemorations, it would also be appropriate for signage e.g a mosaic designed by Aboriginal artists, to be erected in recognition of the frontier wars and the impact these domestic wars had on the subsequent dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples.

Co-naming of Richardson's Lookout

Correspondence received from the Marrickville Heritage Society (MHS) contains reservations about changing the names of parks and reserves. We would welcome the opportunity to explore this issue. For example, co-naming is one option that would protect the original name of the park. GCPC has arranged to meet with MHS on Monday 7th July 2014 to discuss our proposal.

Community Support

Support for a Peace Park has been growing within the community. GCPC - comprising Marrickville Residents for Reconciliation, Pax Christi, Marrickville Peace Group and the Marrickville Greens - endorsed the proposal on 3rd March 2014. Both the Cooks River Valley Association and the Marrickville Cooks River Committee have also expressed their support for the proposal. As well, John Butcher spoke in favour of establishing a Peace Park at a meeting of Marrickville Council's Community Panel earlier this year.

Peace Park Petition

As previously mentioned, GCPC is currently circulating a petition which calls for the establishment of a Peace and Reconciliation Park at Richardson's Lookout in Marrickville. As of 23rd June 2014, we have collected a total of 73 signatures from people associated with the local government area.

Declaration Date

If Marrickville Council were to decide to establish a Peace and Reconciliation Park at Richardson's Lookout, we suggest that it become one of Council's commemorative events and be officially opened in April 2015. Note that Council could announce its plans to install signage etc. without necessarily having these in place on the day.

Conclusion

GCPC calls upon Marrickville Council to endorse the proposal for a Peace and Reconciliation Park at Richardson's Lookout. Establishing such a park would be a fitting tribute to Australia's war dead and would symbolise the ongoing endeavours of those who seek alternatives to violence as a means of resolving conflict within and between nations.



Attachments (refer to separate document attached)

1. Signage in Ashbury's Peace Park
2. Peace & Reconciliation Petition
3. Background Notes on the Proposal for a Peace Park
4. Extract on the History of Richardson's Lookout
5. 1883 Map of Marrickville

Jon Atkins
On behalf of:
Gallipoli Centenary Peace Campaign
www.gcpc2015.org.au
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