

The Sydney Peace Foundation turns 10

2007 marks the 10th anniversary of the Sydney Peace Foundation. For the past decade, the Foundation has been a significant feature in Sydney's social and cultural landscape. The Foundation's annual events, including the award of its signature Sydney Peace Prize and the City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture, draw large appreciative crowds.

The Foundation was established in 1997, partly inspired by a trip to the Hiroshima peace museum by Professor Emeritus Stuart Rees. As the founding director, Prof Rees was motivated by the need to bring peace to public attention. There was "so little interest in that precious commodity called peace," he said.

The desire to engage the corporate sector in the peace agenda was another motivation. "The social justice constituencies had spent decades talking to themselves but had not engaged with the corporate sector which controls about 51% of the world's economies, so the Foundation was to be 'in partnership with

the corporate world'," said Prof Rees.

When the idea of a peace foundation was mooted, it was met with what Prof Rees calls "enthusiastic caution". The interested were often unwilling or unable to financially support the Foundation's inaugural peace prize. Ironically, in the early days, much of the Foundation's efforts were spent on making peace among the conflicting concerns of legal and commercial concerns.

The aims and connotations of a peace prize have also been hotly debated. The choice of recipients has attracted significant international attention. For example, the awarding of the Peace Prize to Palestinian Dr Hanan Ashrawi and Indian radical author Arundhati Roy in 2003 and 2004 respectively provoked fierce debates.

Despite the brickbats, the Foundation stood its ground. For Prof Rees, the objective of the Peace Prize is clear: it is to "influence public interest in peace with justice", although the ideal is often perceived as controversial. He said: "The choice of non-

controversial candidates for a peace prize would be a safe option but unlikely to prompt debate or to increase understanding. Consensus usually encourages compliance, often anaesthetises and seldom informs."

A firm stance against intolerance and derision from sections of the media has given us a reputation for integrity and some might say courage.

~ Stuart Rees

A reflective Prof Rees feels the achievements of the Foundation in the past decade are worth any number of sleepless nights. "Clearly the prestige and leadership qualities of all the peace prize recipients speaks for itself. We have brought to Australia some of the giants of the 20th century.

Significantly, the winner of the inaugural Sydney Peace Prize in 1998, Professor Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his innovative poverty reduction programme with Grameen Bank.

Courage and support were key qualities in the first 10 years of the Foundation. In the next 10 years, practical projects - including increasing the scholarships to students from developing countries and involvement in projects that better show the tangibility of the Foundation's work - are among future priorities.

IMAGING PEACE



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A protestor at the Carberra Convergence Rally for David Hicks, 6 February 2007.

A note from the editor

WELCOME to the first edition of the *Sydney Peace Foundation Bulletin*.

Excitement is in the air as the Foundation enters its 10th year. Amid a reflective mood, we are also working hard at building the Foundation for the next 10 years.

As part of our efforts to keep our friends and supporters up-to-date with what's happening at the Foundation, we have started this monthly e-bulletin. We are also revamping our [website](#) to include a blog which will be regularly updated with the latest news of Sydney Peace Prize recipients, as well as Foundation activities.

Till the next issue of the *Bulletin*, keep your eyes peeled!