



WITH YOUR SUPPORT

We will work to end violent conflicts

FACULTY OF ARTS:
THE PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVE
THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE



BELIEVE
THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE



OVERVIEW

We are living in insecure and uncertain times.

The causes are varied: a global pandemic; economic contraction leading to exploding poverty yet multiplying wealth inequality; a climate change emergency; intensifying geo-political tensions; and an accelerating arms race, with more wars active than at any time since 1945.

Despite these imperatives, little attention is given to the most effective means for reducing and transforming the drivers of inequity and violent conflict. Diplomatic and dialogue-based conflict resolution approaches are imperative to address the drivers of conflict and inequity, while promoting sustainable peace.

Australia needs a non-government institution whose central purpose is to prevent or mitigate violent international or intra-national conflict and to promote peacebuilding initiatives. A peacebuilding initiative would enhance a tradition of promoting peace and uphold Australia's responsibilities as a Member State of the United Nations.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Department of Defence and the Australian Federal Police have undertaken valuable peacebuilding exercises in such places as Cambodia, East Timor, Bougainville and Solomon Islands. However, a striking gap in Australian peacebuilding capacity is the lack of a high quality, well-funded professional non-government peace initiative. At present, when DFAT wants the organised assistance of professional peace consultants, it often contracts to NGOs in London, Geneva and Washington.

With the lack of an initiative of this kind in Australia, this is a priority project that will enable Australia to embrace its place in the world.



Photo Credit: Ian 'Fred' Smith, DFAT

AN AUSTRALIAN PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVE

The Peacebuilding Initiative will provide Australia with a nationally based, regionally grounded, high quality, professional non-government peace initiative.

Its mission is to promote multidisciplinary research, teaching, and policy development that supports effective engagement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Peacebuilding Initiative will offer rigorous research into the causes of conflict, providing the capacity to strengthen dialogue-based conflict transformation. It will provide a means to think imaginatively about prevention of violent conflict and for strengthening peacebuilding, by substantially enhancing the availability of expert scholarship and experienced peacebuilding practitioners from within the region.

Crucially, the Initiative will build important relationships with local actors who are leading efforts in Asian and Pacific countries, while enabling repeated consultation about complex regional issues. This approach will influence pathways to support conflict transformation.

All projects undertaken through the Peacebuilding Initiative will be multidisciplinary, and focused on developing knowledge, understanding and analyses of conflicts. These projects will recommend actions that seek to support and strengthen peacebuilding approaches in the region.

The three arms of the Peacebuilding Initiative – research, engagement and education – aim to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the region with the overall goal of enhancing the disciplinary knowledge base for more sustainable peace work.

OUR PRIORITIES



RESEARCH

- Targeted research into causes of conflict, approaches to conflict transformation from the region and exploration of preventive possibilities
- Publishing research that increases understanding of conflicts, and public and policy perceptions of possible mechanisms for conflict transformation



ENGAGEMENT

- Bringing together the interdisciplinary expertise and resources of the University's outstanding researchers in conflict and peacebuilding
- Targeted and strategic networking, engaging Australian, Asian and Pacific practitioners, conflict actors and scholars, in order to facilitate an Australian conflict resolution network
- Influencing policy and practice through research, publications and targeted forums



EDUCATION

- Supervising and supporting cross-disciplinary PhD students
- Developing new undergraduate and postgraduate offerings in this field
- Delivering bespoke executive education



A university-based, impartial, experienced Peacebuilding Initiative will create an opportunity for Australia to convene expertise, develop multidisciplinary partnerships, and be a regional leader in research and knowledge translation on preventing and resolving conflicts.

The Initiative will generate an evidence base for understanding the value and efficacy of diplomatic and development capacity. Crucially, it will enhance the effectiveness of Australian diplomatic and development capacity at a time when the attributes of a trusted development partner in conflict settings are critical to supporting efforts to build sustainable and just conditions and solutions.

The University of Melbourne is an ideal location for an Australian-based Peacebuilding Initiative. The University is a leading convener of outstanding scholarship across many complementary fields. This diverse range includes: human rights, constitutional and migration law; political and economic analysis and policy; psychological, sociological and anthropological analysis; environmental and geographic planning; and public health, with a dynamic range of specialist peace and conflict studies scholars.

A new strategy – *Advancing Melbourne 2030* – outlines the institution’s mission to make a pronounced difference to significant global and national challenges. This combination of world-class academic depth and institutional ambition ensures that the University can lead initiatives that tackle deep regional challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, including Southeast Asia. These challenges range from political instability and violence, through to the lived experience of climate change and worsening rates of disease and mortality. Together, our experts will provide solutions that help to resolve disadvantage.

These are ambitious goals and your support is critical to the establishment and staffing of the Australian Peacebuilding Initiative.

It will be essential to recruit well qualified and experienced peacebuilders possessing demonstrated capability across a range of fields, such as international governance, diplomacy, peacebuilding, economics, population health, land management, human rights law and political science. These practitioners will also be widely experienced in helping to resolve major national and international crises.

Seven initial staff – comprising six scholars and experienced peace-making practitioners, plus an administrative secretary – will implement the Australian Peacebuilding Initiative’s initial program. Appointment of people with an interdisciplinary variety of either peace research and/or practitioner experience will enable the Initiative to offer a range of capabilities and skills. Required capabilities will include peacebuilding, teaching and research scholarship.

The Australian Peacebuilding Initiative will be headed by an Executive Director with an outstanding reputation as a scholar-practitioner in conflict resolution. They will possess considerable expertise in the studies of conflict prevention and peacebuilding combined with extensive applied knowledge.

The Executive Director will be aided by an Assistant Director with excellent managerial and organisational skills, as well as a researcher or practitioner (as required) to complement existing Initiative skill sets.

Four experts (working as operational interdisciplinary staff) will be necessary to begin engagement with priority conflicts and issues on a range of bases. Appointment of an efficient administrator will be essential to assist with many aspects of organisation, and with arrangements for an annual national conference on peace issues.

The establishment of a wider national network of scholars will complement the work done by the Australian Peacebuilding Initiative and make a significant contribution to strengthening national capacity. With Australia requiring considerable increase in graduates with skills in peacebuilding, the Initiative will also be essential to enabling doctoral students to undertake supervised post graduate research degrees, and for interns to expand their knowledge and exposure to conflict resolution practices.

The Australian Peacebuilding Initiative is an ambitious project supported by the University of Melbourne’s senior leadership. Join us as we build an organisation that will ensure that all potential means of avoiding and transforming violent conflict are identified and tried, making a material difference to peace and wellbeing in communities across the Indo-Pacific region and further afield.

Image Opposite: Mark Prasopa-Plaizier





ABOUT US

The Faculty of Arts

The Faculty of Arts is one of the oldest and largest faculties at the University of Melbourne. It is home to the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, which offers 18 professionally oriented masters programs and research degrees, plus a renowned research program. In 2020, the Faculty was recognised as one of the top 20 faculties in the world for Arts and Humanities and for Social Sciences and Management (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2020).

Established in 1853, the University of Melbourne is a public-spirited institution that makes distinctive contributions to society in research, learning and teaching, and engagement. It is consistently ranked among the leading universities in the world, with international rankings of world universities placing it as number 1 in Australia and number 32 in the world (Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2020).

The planning of the Peacebuilding Initiative's establishment is directed by a steering committee, which will be replaced by a Board of Directors upon establishment. The committee includes some leading advocates and experts in peacebuilding and complementary disciplines.

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