WOMEN SHAPE THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA:

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The Australian Civil Society Coalition for WPS

The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security is a non-partisan and independent coalition of civil society organisations, networks and individuals working to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Australia, Asia and the Pacific region and globally.

Our vision is a world in which gender equality, and the contributions and rights of diverse women and girls, are at the forefront of transforming conflict to build peace.

www.wpscoalition.org

Acknowledgements

Introduction: Listening to women's voices

As Australia nears the end of its current National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2018) and look toward the development of the next iteration of the NAP, the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security ('the Coalition') is focussed on amplifying the voices of diverse women in Australia and our region to inform policy development. In September 2017, the Coalition organised a series of roundtables in each Australian capital city, with the support of the Australian Government, to provide a space for women to discuss what peace and security mean in practice. A Talanoa discussion was also held at the Triennial Conference of Pacific Women.

This report provides a summary of these roundtable discussions and will inform the discussions to be held on 30 November 2017 at the Annual Dialogue between the Australian Government and civil society. The Dialogue discussions, together with this summary, will be published in a report in early 2018.

The Global Picture

The 2017 Global Peace Index presents a mixed picture of good and bad news. While on one hand as a global community we are slightly more peaceful than in 2016; on the other hand looking over the last decade shows us that actually, the globe has become less peaceful. There is a trend in rising peace inequality – "with most countries having only small increases in peacefulness, while a handful of countries have had very large deteriorations in peace."[1] Overall 93 countries improved while in 68 countries, peace deteriorated.

Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008. It is joined at the top of the index by New Zealand, Portugal, Austria, and Denmark. There was also little change at the bottom of the index. Syria remains the least peaceful country in the world, followed by Afghanistan, Iraq, South Sudan, and Yemen. Countries at the bottom of the Global Peace Index are also at the bottom of the newly released Women, Peace and Security Index (2017) which ranks 153 countries across 3 dimensions of Inclusion, Justice and Security. Australia ranks 12th on the Global Peace Index and 17th on the Women, Peace, and Security Index.[2]

Women's leadership and substantive participation are essential for sustainable peace, yet women are still being excluded from peace talks. Post-conflict recovery processes are still failing to reflect the priorities of women and girls; police and peacekeeping forces remain male-dominated and women and girls continue to face violence on an alarming scale.

Women's participation is critical to the 'Women, Peace and Security Agenda'

From Bogotá to Baghdad, women are on the front lines of providing services, heading households, caring for the sick and the elderly, and sustaining and ensuring the survival of their families … It is often women who first give voice to civilians silenced by atrocities. Increasingly, they are claiming their place as major stakeholders and active agents in resisting war, building peace, and defining security on their terms…. There is no single ideology, approach, or even motivation that defines this growing sector, which veteran activist Cora Weiss calls "peace women." In effect, these women—be they antimilitarists, former fighters, the elite, or grassroots actors—come together through their commitment to social justice, fairness, and equality for all.

Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters by Sanam Naraghi Anderlin. 2007.

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[1] Global Peace Index 2017. http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/global-peace-index/
[2] Women, Peace, and Security Index. https://giwps.georgetown.edu

For over 100 years **women have been shaping and actively engaging in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda**. During World War 1, suffragettes convened the International Congress of Women at The Hague 'to protest against war and to suggest steps *which may lead to warfare becoming an impossibility*'.[3] It took another 85 years before the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution, on 30 October 2000, acknowledging for the first time women's pivotal role in building and maintaining peace, as well as the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls. This resolution – *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (UNSCR 1325) - forms the foundation of the framework that has become known as the **Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda**.

Since 2000, there have been seven additional resolutions from the UNSC seeking to support and expand the provisions of UNSCR 1325.[4] These resolutions build on a critical body of work that has sought to "guide work to promote gender equality and strengthen women's participation, protection, and rights in conflict prevention through post-conflict reconstruction contexts".[5]

To implement United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, and to ensure that women's participation is central to all aspects of peacebuilding, the Member States of the United Nations have been encouraged to develop National Action Plans (NAPs). To date, 71 countries, including Australia, have developed NAPs. Australia's first NAP was released in 2012.[6]

In 2017, as Australia prepares to develop its 2nd NAP what do these resolutions and the WPS agenda mean to *women from diverse backgrounds living in Australia and our region, and what do women from diverse backgrounds have to say about what peace and security mean to them?* For women and girls from diverse backgrounds in Australia and our region, this is a critical time to have our voices heard on peace and security.

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[3] The Hague, Kingdom of the Netherlands. Report of the International Congress of Women https://ia800306.us.archive.org/15/items/internatcongrewom00interich/internatcongrewom00interich.pdf.
[4] Women, Peace and Security resolutions: UNSCR 1325 (2000); UNSCR 1820 (2008); UNSCR 1888 (2009); UNSCR 1889 (2009); UNSCR 1906 (2010); UNSCR 2106 (2013); UNSCR 2122 (2013); UNSCR 2242 (2015).
[5] Peacewomen, The Resolutions http://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/solutions/resolutions
[6] http://www.peacewomen.org/member-states

The Annual Civil Society Dialogue on Women, Peace and Security

The Annual Civil Society Dialogue on Women, Peace and Security (the Dialogue)[7] was established in 2014 to promote a robust discussion on WPS in Australia and globally. Led by civil society, this platform brings together Australian civil society, government and policymakers to:[8]

- Facilitate effective dialogue between civil society and the Australian Government on women, peace and security in the context of UNSCR 1325;

- Support shadow reporting on the Australian NAP; and

- Elevate the national discussion on women, peace and security.

In 2017, the Australian Civil Society Coalition for Women, Peace and Security (the Coalition)[9] has structured the Dialogue in two complementary parts: **Civil Society Roundtables (the Roundtables)**; and **the Civil Society-Government Policy Dialogue (the Policy Dialogue)**. The Roundtables focused on expanding our understanding of **what women, peace and security mean in practice across the diversity of women's experiences in Australia and our region**. Overall the Dialogue provides a key opportunity to:

- Expand the discussion beyond UNSC Resolutions and Australia's 1st NAP 2012-2018;

- Consider what we mean by peace and security in the current global climate and the context of emerging issues in our region; and

- To hear from the diversity of women's voices in Australia.

The Policy Dialogue, to be held on 30 November 2017, will be informed by the discussions held at the Roundtables. Together, the Roundtables and the Policy Dialogue will provide a critical platform for the work that will follow in 2018-2019 as Australia moves forward to a 2nd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The Dialogue discussions, together with this summary, will be published in a report in early 2018.

The Civil Society Roundtables

The Roundtables provided a forum for women and girls from diverse backgrounds in Australia and our region to express their views on what peace and security mean in practice today. The Roundtables, which engaged both individuals and organisations working domestically and those with an international focus, were conducted in all Australian capital cities (with multiple events in Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, and Sydney) during September 2017. Over 200 women from diverse backgrounds attended a total of thirteen roundtables and the Talanoa discussion.[10] Three questions framed the discussions at the Roundtables:

- In today's global context, what peace and security mean to women from diverse backgrounds, living in Australia and our region

- What are the stories, experiences, and information which influence these understandings of peace and security; and

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[7] Reports from the past Dialogues are available at https://wpscoalition.org/annual-civil-society-dialogue-on-women-peace-and-security-2/

[8] An additional aim of the Annual Civil Socieity Dialogues held between 2013-2016 was showcasing civil society contributions to the WPS agenda.

[9] The Australian Civil Society Coalition for Women, Peace and Security is a non-partisan, independent coalition of CSOs, networks, individuals working to advance WPS agenda in Australia, Asia-Pacific region, globally. https://wpscoalition.org/

[10] Information provided in this report is not individually attributed, and quotes are provided by permission of participants, noting only Roundtable locations.

- What decisions/actions are required to promote peace and security in Australia and internationally?

The Roundtables were supplemented by a session on women peace and security organised at the 13th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women. This Talanoa discussion was hosted in the Pacific Feminist Hub, with Pacific feminists and women's human rights defenders coming together to voice their concerns, priorities, and ideas for Australia's WPS agenda in the Pacific.

Key Themes from the Roundtable Discussions

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the key themes that emerged from the Roundtables. This will inform the discussions at the 2017 Annual Civil Society Dialogue as well as a forthcoming report to be launched in 2018.

1. What do peace and security mean to you?

Discussions on meanings of peace and security set the context for the Roundtables. Participants' ideas ranged across the personal, political, community, national and international, with 4 key themes emerging:

1) Respect for human rights and gender equality;

2) Acknowledging the diversity of women's voices around peace and security;

3) Marginalisation and women's voices; and

4) Freedom and "humanising" security.

Respect for human rights and gender equality

> *"The real weapons of mass destruction are inequality and the denial of human rights – the unhealed prejudices under the surface of every community on earth." – Adelaide Roundtable participant*
>
> *"Inequality underlines war." – Hobart Roundtable participant*
>
> *"Gender equality is basic to peace and security." – Canberra Roundtable participant*

Participants saw equal rights for all members of society as the foundation for peace and security; and peace and security as inseparable from gender equality. Empowerment, gender equality, participation, and inclusion were seen as essential elements of peace and security. Key points included:

- Enabling people to claim their rights and holding governments accountable for guaranteeing all human rights;

- Ensuring public policy, programs, services adhere to principles of equality and non-discrimination, focusing specifically on anti-discrimination policies related to sex and gender, race, disability and age; and

- Creating spaces for people, especially women and girls from diverse backgrounds and marginalised groups to participate in making decisions that affect their personal and collective lives.

Acknowledging the diversity of women's voices around peace and security

Across all Roundtables, participants highlighted the importance of understanding the diversity of women's needs, experiences, and concerns about peace and security. This was seen as fundamental to understanding the different ways that women experience and need peace and security. These critical understandings include women's race, class, age, socioeconomic status, gender or sexual identity, religion, culture, ethnicity, physical or mental ability, urban/rural location.

Need to be mindful of exclusion of diverse women from peace and security discussions; silencing of older women; more space needed for LGBTQI; young women see peace and security differently; minority women often don't get to decide on or define peace and security. – Comments compiled from across Roundtable participants

Marginalisation and women's voices

Most women participants expressed experiencing discrimination, but the intersection of race and gender was seen as exacerbating the discrimination and marginalisation experienced by diaspora, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Diaspora women, in particular, expressed the overwhelming individual and collective pressure they felt in having to challenge discrimination and racism from a position of disadvantage. This experience amplified women's sense of insecurity and contributed to a retreat to perceived "safer" spaces in their immediate communities; often inhibiting efforts to find a place and voice in the mainstream. This added to isolation, leading to more tension, and inhibiting the valuable contributions that diaspora, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women can make to Australian society. Some groups of women felt that discussions on peace and security, within government and mainstream civil society organisations/ movements (e.g. the women's movement), failed to listen to and acknowledge the needs, experiences, and concerns of women from diverse backgrounds.

"The minute you begin talking about discrimination, people withdraw or get defensive." – Perth Roundtable participant

"There is a big gap between the efforts made to discuss peace and security with government and civil society and the most marginalised communities." – Sydney Roundtable participant

"We can't talk about peace and security without talking about the sovereignty of the First Peoples. Complete cultural dispossession means no peace and security for ATSI [people] so we can't talk about peace and security without acknowledging that." – Brisbane Roundtable participant

"Freedom from, freedom to" and humanising security

Peace and security were also defined in terms of "freedom", bringing together the "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" aspects of human security. Participants focused on not only economic, health, food and personal security but also cultural and social needs, such as community and political security. Peace and security were often described as "*freedom from*" homelessness, statelessness, personal and intimate partner violence, sexual violence and harassment, all forms of discrimination, oppression, threats, intimidation, coercion, and stigma.

This "negative" conceptualisation of peace and security was offset by "positive peace" descriptions interpreted as "*freedom* (and opportunity) to": access justice, make informed choices and power to

act on those choices, autonomy and control over one's body, ability to protest and mobilise for action, speak and be heard, and freedom of movement. These dimensions are related to agency and predictability over everyday life and a sense of being safe; i.e. peace of mind, "lack of anxiety" or "peace as not having to worry".

The Roundtables also generated considerable discussion on gender-based violence in the home, on the street, at workplaces, and within communities - within and outside Australia. Many participants commented on the disconnect between women's daily experiences of violence, the focus of political discourse in Australia on domestic terrorism, framed in terms of threats to security, the apparent lack of commitment to addressing fundamental "human security", and what makes women and girls from diverse backgrounds feel unsafe; i.e. the everyday occurrences of gender-based violence and discrimination that takes away women's safety, dignity and mobility.

> *"If [security] is about moving from survival to living, then peace is about flourishing." – Melbourne Roundtable participant*
>
> *"Peace is more than the absence of war and conflict: it's an overarching umbrella that every issues should come under – safety in home and the work place from violence, being able to participate in decision-making, being able to walk down from the street safely, being able to access services (equally and affordably): health care, transport, clean water, education, childcare, communications, justice." – Pacific Triennial Participants*

2. What are the stories, experiences and information which influence these understandings of peace and security?

Perspectives on peace and security are drawn from lived personal experiences, including inherited narratives, and public discourse through the media, government institutions, politically expressed positions, and positions taken by community leaders.

Across the Roundtables there were 4 main themes that contributed to this discussion:
1) Lived experience and agency;
2) Diversity of women's voices;
3) Public discourse and the role of media; and
4) Trust in institutions.

Lived experience and agency

Lived experiences of conflict and peace and stories inherited through generations informed understandings and influenced how participants viewed the world and their place in it. Many women saw these lived experiences as a form of strength, authority, expertise, and agency, particularly in the resistance to violence; in protecting other women and family from violence; and in speaking about experiences of conflict, and/or gender-based violence in personal relationships.

> *"Living through war and having family that have lived through war makes people invested in peace." - Canberra Roundtable participant*

Specifically, the duality of vulnerability and agency in violent situations has shaped how participants engaged in peace and security. This was particularly apparent in the case of migrant and diaspora communities, where often the relative peace in Australia is benchmarked against the lack of peace in their country of origin.

Diversity of women's voices

The diversity of personal and collective experiences of peace and security was a recurrent theme. The backgrounds of participants clearly influenced their perceptions of peace and security, and the reality of their peace and security situations. The Coalition made a concerted effort to reach out to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's organisations and diaspora organisations. Their limited participation in the Roundtables demonstrates the need for a more proactive strategy to reach out to diverse communities.

Without such a strategy, Australians will not understand how marginalised women see and understand peace and security, nor be able to ensure that there is understanding of the ways in which diverse women are leading and showing agency in resisting violence and promoting peace in their own communities. Interactions with people from other cultures including those seeking refuge and asylum have great potential to widen Australian understandings of peace and security.

In this regard, the conspicuous absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and the limited participation of diaspora women at the Roundtables were raised as issues of concern for the continued marginalisation and silencing of certain voices.

> *"I came from a country where there was war [Sri Lanka] and many atrocities occurred based on ethnicity. Australia does not have the same complications. Yes, there is discrimination [in Australia] but getting things done are not hindered by your surname as this is an identifying marker in Sri Lanka." - Perth Roundtable participant*
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> *"It depends what your benchmark is: in PNG for example they are not 'at war' but are women secure? It's the same in Australia with our Indigenous communities, where we might not be at war but these communities face huge insecurities." – Canberra Roundtable participant*

Public discourse and the role of the media

Roundtable discussions also focused on how, through the use of specific language and images, the media (including social media) plays a key role in shaping how people think about peace and security. Participants noted that persistent stereotypical representations of particular communities and women in the media are related to the way that ideas about threats and insecurities are produced and reinforced. This discourse is seen as justifying the inevitability of violence, undermining alternative means to resolve conflict, and resulting in solutions which divert funds from investing in peaceful non-violent initiatives to militarised and securitised responses.

> *"This constant badgering about our physical insecurity creates a particularly fearful and distrustful state of mind. The attitude is that 'everyone is my enemy', except those who look, think and act like me." – Adelaide Roundtable participant*
>
> *"Peace means the end of patriarchy, white supremacy, compulsory heterosexuality, capitalism and all the other systems of lies that make violence appear possible, inevitable and justified." – Brisbane Roundtable participant*

Participants expressed their concerns that news media (and social media) are also guilty of emphasising and manufacturing certain kinds of threats, fear or insecurity, such as constant terrorism, while ignoring other 'everyday' kinds of threats and insecurity faced by women, such as gender-based violence, homelessness, and lack of access to healthcare and justice institutions.

Trust in institutions

The *lack of* trust in institutions was a recurrent theme at the Roundtables. Participants noted that safety in everyday life requires trusting institutions to uphold the rule of law and further trusting those in positions of power to work for the common good. This was also expressed as a desire for effective, fair and inclusive institutions that promote peace and security (including good governance, law, and security institutions themselves such as the police and military).

With respect to gender-based violence, some participants highlighted the lack of trust in justice institutions, their ability to be fair and impartial, lack of equal access to these institutions, and therefore a lack of recourse to justice. For example, some participants felt unsafe to report acts of violence, continuing to live in insecure and violent situations.

> *You are judged already even if you are the one who has experienced violence, you have to prove that you even have the right to tell your story….it can be a real source of insecurity when you don't know where to go for help." - Sydney Roundtable participants*

Linked to good governance, a sense of security was also seen as emerging from having power and access to mechanisms that influence public and political decision-making. This was otherwise expressed as having a "voice" on issues that affect everyday lives. Being, or feeling, powerless or not knowing how to influence what constitutes "national interest" leads to poor trust in institutions because powerful vested interests are seen as driving policy, rather than policy being driven in the best interest of communities. Collectively, the concern was that "national interest" was being narrowly defined by powerful political and corporate interests, without broader community consultation, resulting in a lack of representation and a sense of manipulation.

> *"This morning I read that [some people are] calling for Australia to call on its defence powers to access gas reserves in communities, a real power play. It essentially forces us to do something that we don't want to do." – Darwin Roundtable participant*

3. What decisions/actions are required to promote peace and security in Australia and internationally?

Roundtable participants identified a broad range of ideas, activities, and strategies for promoting peace and security. Notably, there was an emphasis on the need for **a dual focus:**

- A domestic program built around addressing inequality; and

- A peace-based foreign policy grounded in principles of ensuring gender equality, promoting peace and stability, focusing on preventing conflict and reflective of our international human rights commitments.

Participants were clear that both spaces, domestic and international, will require bold actions – 'business as usual' will not achieve deep structural change required for sustainable peace and security.

Localising the peace and security agenda within Australia

> *"We need to make sure we aren't just looking outwards. This approach has led to a lot of countries doing the same thing – they are not adopting WPS [women peace and security] at a national/local level. Our Government needs to start adopting it holistically as a domestic policy." - Melbourne Roundtable participant*

Roundtable discussions emphasised the importance of domestic-focussed actions and strategies in relation to peace and security. Notably, participants recognised the need for better links across local, urban/rural, national and regional contexts in Australia and between diverse women and organisations, communities, institutions, and policies.

Participants identified a range of strategies for promoting peace and security in Australia including:

A. Gender equality

Peace and security cannot be separated from gender equality. Persistent gender inequalities need to be addressed, including the gender pay gap, strengthening the representation of women in leadership roles, and valuing and recognising unpaid caring work. While there were increasing numbers of women in leadership positions, participants agreed that simply "adding women", without addressing structural, institutional and cultural gender issues would result in limited success. A sustainable transformative approach requires **challenging taken for granted values, ways of thinking and working, around gender equality, and specifically in relation to WPS**.

B. Eliminating gender-based violence

Participants raised the pervasiveness of gender-based violence in Australia as a critical issue that deserves as much, if not more attention than terrorism. There was frustration that despite persistent evidence of the number of women being killed weekly by a partner or former partner in Australia,[11] the Government's focus and funds were on 'national security threats'.

> *"We are sick of being told that the terror is out there, when the terror is in the next bedroom." – Brisbane Roundtable participant*

The critical point being made by the participants was not that a focus on terrorism and violent extremism is unwarranted, but **rather that policy responses seem to take an "either/or" approach. Participants called for a rebalancing of priorities.** Specifically, participants suggested that more effective connections need to be made to related national plans, such as the Australian National Plan to Reduce Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.[12]

C. Building social cohesion and inclusion

An important strategy for sustainable peace, according to participants, is the **promotion of social cohesion and inclusion while recognising and respecting diversity and human rights.** To build social cohesion and inclusion, participants also recognised that holistic approaches to addressing discrimination and inequality are critical.

> *"A lot of what we're struggling with in the world today… dealing with diversity which we don't know how to work with. The primary characteristic of our identity is our humanity." – Hobart Roundtable participant*

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[11] National Homicide Monitoring Program report, Australian Institute of Criminology 215
http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/mr/21-40/mr23.html
[12] The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. https://www.dss.gov.au

Discussions about social inclusion focused on promoting multiculturalism by investing in a genuine commitment to reconciliation and through proactive ongoing engagement with diaspora communities (especially diaspora women and girls). While Australia celebrates cultural diversity, it also promotes assimilation. This contradicts the **promotion of multiculturalism which requires working simultaneously on enabling a sense of collective belonging and retaining the distinctiveness of smaller community groups.**

Part of promoting multiculturalism is the unfinished work on reconciliation. This begins with supporting solutions to the problems of marginalisation, discrimination, and disadvantage led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Roundtable recommendations included: **strengthening the racial discrimination legislation**; **ensuring support for national representatives bodies** (like the now defunded National Congress of Australia's First Peoples) that give voice to the needs and aspiration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and **adopting the Uluru Statement's approach** to constitutional reform to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which has been recently rejected by the Government.[13]

> *"We are still having this conversation because we haven't been able to make peace with our history – reconciliation is still to be achieved and we will continue to have this conversation until we are able to acknowledge our violent past and human rights abuses so we can find a way forward together." – Adelaide Roundtable participant*

D. Creating spaces for ongoing sustained engagement with diverse women and their organisations

Participants linked multiculturalism, reconciliation, and inequality, and recommended the creation of **safe spaces for diverse communities (in particular, spaces for women and girls from diverse backgrounds) to exercise agency and participate in making decisions** that affect peace and security in their everyday lives. In the case of diaspora communities, this participation is seen as extending to influencing how the Australian Government responds to issues happening in their countries of origin. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and social movements (e.g. women's movement/ peace movement) were seen as providing opportunities to amplify community dialogues and to engage in a national conversation about peace and security.

E. Rewriting national discourses to promote peace

A number of suggestions were put forward to build a domestic culture of peace. These included: peace education in schools as a preventative strategy, resourcing ongoing community engagement and dialogues on peace and security (especially ensuring women's leadership and participation/representation in peace and security discussions), and instituting progressive legislation which respects and supports the independence of civil society, and their advocacy role.

There was unequivocal recognition among participants that peace and security cannot be brought about by governments alone. Active engagement with and within civil society is seen as a key element for sustainable peace. Promoting policy making and implementation that is grounded in principles of **collaborative governance and collective impact** would contribute to working in partnership with civil society**.**

Participants emphasised the importance of creating a space for diverse CSOs to shift the tenor of the national dialogue away from militarised and securitised responses to peace towards ways of thinking that incentivise non-violent means to resolve conflicts. In **calling for a rejection of war and violence as a tool for conflict resolution**, many participants commented that the profitability in arms manufacture and trade clearly inhibits the move away from militarisation.

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[13] In this light, the recent rejection of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, by the Coalition government, reflects a lack of commitment to peace. http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/sad-day-turnbull-government-rejects-indigenous-referendum-proposal-20171026-gz8mpj.html

Embedding peace in Australia's international engagement

Participants also noted the need for a **more holistic approach to local, national and global issues, including Australia's international commitments and foreign policy, with respect to promoting gender equality, preventing conflict and building sustainable peace and security**.

Participants identified a range of strategies for integrating peace into Australia's international engagement including:

A. Foreign aid budget

There have been successive cuts to the foreign aid budget, with 0.23% of Gross National Income (GNI) being spent on overseas aid, but 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on Defence. From a budget perspective, this signals a militarised approach to peace and security as opposed to a human security approach. Even though Australia's overseas aid program has a strong commitment to gender equality, in the face of these cuts to the aid budget, it is highly unlikely the that the objectives outlined in the 2016 *Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy,*[14] namely enhancing women's voice in decision-making, leadership and peace-building, promoting women's economic empowerment, and ending violence against women and girls, will be achieved. Participants recommended that Australia **increase the overseas aid budget to 0.7% of GNI.**

> *"We are spending too much on the military and need to rebalance. Foreign aid should be at the very least 0.7% of GNI." - Adelaide and Melbourne Roundtable participants*

B. International Trade

While roundtable participants acknowledged the importance of international trade, there were serious concerns that a sole focus on economic gains without due consideration for human rights, equity, and social justice would do more harm than good, particularly to the pursuit of regional peace and security. Participants recommended that trade partnerships (specifically the Trans-Pacific Partnership) should be subject to **social and environmental impact audits** to ensure a more equitable distribution of benefits.

> *"The system of trade we have reinforces the importance of profit rather than people's ability to survive and flourish." – Hobart Roundtable participant*

C. Refugee and asylum seeker policies

Roundtable participants seriously criticised the current Government's (and the former ALP Government's) refugee and asylum seeker policy. Off-shore detention was seen as inhumane and in violation of the Refugee Convention, with an urgent call for Australia to live up to the commitments made in the Refugee Convention. Deterrence policies (maintaining offshore processing, onshore mandatory detention and boat turn-backs) have come at a significant budget cost, but more importantly there are human costs: mental health issues, exposure to continued violence, abuse and exploitation, family separation, poor access to health and education, social isolation, and statelessness, to name just a few. Roundtable participants strongly support a **shift from a policy of deterrence to alternative policies that are in compliance with international law and human rights standards**. These recommendations were also put forward at a discussion on women peace and security at the Triennial Conference for Pacific Women.

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[14] Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade *Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy*. 2016.

D. Bilateral/ multilateral agreements

In considering Australia's foreign policy more broadly, Roundtable participants spoke about the need to embed the principles of peace and equality in all bilateral and multilateral agreements. The implication would be that Australian foreign policy is reframed to **focus on the long-term prevention of conflict and violence, as part of a peace and security agenda**. The specific recommendations include a greater focus on diplomacy as a mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution, disarmament (including nuclear disarmament), strengthening the focus of regional bodies (e.g. ASEAN/SAARC) on human security and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and implementation of collective responses to climate change. Specific reference was also made, both at the Roundtables and the Triennial Conference for Pacific Women, regarding mainstreaming women's participation in conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery from conflict into Australia's foreign policy, and in particular resourcing and supporting local women-led community initiatives for peace.

Building a Women Peace and Security Framework

The Roundtables have provided a valuable and timely lens on what women, peace and security mean in practice across the diversity of women's experiences in Australia and our region. There is a strong endorsement for linking and integrating the local, national and global perspectives of the WPS agenda.

The women peace and security agenda is grounded in a feminist approach to advancing peace and security which is first and foremost about the long-term prevention of violent conflict/ instability and enabling sustainable peace. In practice, this means on one hand, increasing women's substantive participation in all aspects of peace and security policy development and implementation. On the other hand, women peace and security is equally about transforming structures contributing to violence, militarization, and armament to a focus on human rights, human security, and peace, at the national, regional and global levels.

Women want more than just a seat at the table; they want equal opportunity and access to (re) frame what peace and security mean. These Roundtables and the creative contributions of participants have provided a small step along this journey.

As Australia looks to advance its women peace and security agenda, the proposed 2nd NAP on Women Peace and Security will be an important tool. The 1st NAP has been primarily internationally focused. However, Roundtable discussions provide unequivocal community support for a peace and security agenda that has a strong domestic focus, while recognising the need to be linked internationally as well. The recommendation is therefore that the 2nd NAP will need to demonstrate how Government policies, plans, and actions are promoting peace and security both domestically and internationally.

The four key elements for developing a robust Women Peace and Security framework for Australia, arising from the roundtable consultations include:

1. Giving primacy to peace and conflict prevention in ways that resources and supports the work of diverse women and their organisations; including adopting a rights-based human security approach to peace and security policy;

2. Implementing an interlinked domestic and international focus on women, peace and security; and in this regard, the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goals 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment) and 16 (promote peaceful and inclusive societies), can provide a pathway to peace and stability;

3. Resourcing and protecting robust, diverse and vibrant civil society spaces that proactively engage (on an ongoing basis) with policymakers on framing what peace and security mean; especially ensuring that diverse women's leadership and voices are heard in this space. This should see civil society organisations and women's organisations as partners not instrumentalised for their expertise, or just as a mechanism for consultation;

4. A collaborative approach to peace and security policymaking and implementation that recognises that no one actor alone can achieve collective impact.