

30 Years of WILPF Aotearoa's achievements, 1975-2005

WILPF Aotearoa is part of the international women's peace organisation established in 1915 to bring together women of different political beliefs and philosophies who are united in their determination to study, make known and help abolish the causes and the legitimisation of war. Today there are WILPF Sections in 42 countries, all working towards the same aims. In NZ, there are three branches of WILPF, which hold meetings in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

1975

WILPF ran a successful workshop Women and Peace at Wellington's United Women's Convention. It had to be repeated to accommodate all those who wanted to attend. WILPF members obtained 9,500 signatures that year for a petition to Govt opposing the visits of nuclear ships <330,000 signatures in total>.

1976

Betty Holt, a former President of the Auckland Branch of the National Council of Women, became President of WILPF NZ, a position she held until 1984. Kath Knight, a Quaker, was National Secretary for the same period. It was during their first year of office that WILPF NZ members sent up to 2000 letters, written in French, to individual French citizens seeking their help in stopping the French nuclear tests in the Pacific. This project was initiated by Dr Viola Palmer, a Quaker, of Tauranga. Hundreds of sympathetic replies were received and the NZ Listener published a description of the campaign.

1977

WILPF made submissions to the Royal Commission on Nuclear Energy in NZ. It became a member of the National Consultative Committee on Disarmament, set up by the United Nations Association that year, at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1978

The NCCD's views were included in a statement by New Zealand at the First United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, held in New York that year. Betty Holt attended a number of WILPF's International Executive Meetings held overseas during her time as NZ President.

1979

WILPF offered honorary membership to all NZ women M.P's, all of whom accepted. As a contribution to that year's UN International Year of the Child, WILPF NZ first published: Learning Peaceful Relationships. It has continued to be popular and is now published by the NZ Foundation for Peace Studies, with copies being sold in Australia.

1980

Two members, Barbara Woods and Nora Dodds, attended WILPF's International Triennial Congress held in New Haven, USA. Barbara was a foundation member of the revived Wellington Branch in 1964 and this was her third Congress attendance, the others being in 1968, and 1974. These attendances gave her a very good grasp of WILPF's ways of operating internationally which she used to good advantage when she later became National President.

1981

WILPF organised a Women Against the Tour march in Auckland. 700 people took part and 550 signed a petition, urging that the South African rugby team's tour of NZ be cancelled. WILPF members also took part in protests held when the tour went ahead.

1982

WILPF was received into national affiliation with the National Council of Women. WILPF member Laurie Salas attended the UN General Assembly Second Special Session on Disarmament in New York. She was the only NGO representative from NZ, representing also the NZFPS, UNA and NCCD. WILPF published her 62-page report A Non-Governmental Participant – Disarmament, 1982, selling 330 copies.

1983

WILPF made submissions to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control, emphasizing the need for peace education in schools. On March 8th, International Women's Day, WILPF staged a vigil in Auckland, carrying banners from Holland saying Stop the Arms Race, and distributing over 1,000 leaflets to passers-by. On May 24th, Women's International Day of Action for Disarmament in support of Greenham Common Women, WILPF branch members took part in Women and Peace demonstrations in Aotea Square, Auckland and Parliament Grounds, Wellington. On 25 October, UN Women's Day for Disarmament, WILPF presented the US and Soviet Embassies with an Appeal for Disarmament adopted by its 22nd Triennial Congress.

1984

WILPF made submissions to the Education Dept on its Review of the Core Curriculum, advocating the introduction of Peace Studies. Based on a booklet issued that year by its HQ in Geneva, WILPF published: 101 Things You Can Do for Peace in Aotearoa. At its Biennial Conference, the NCW passed a remit, which originated from WILPF, urging Govt to discourage visits of nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed ships. WILPF supported a 10-day solidarity camp held at Auckland airport for women going to Greenham Common in England. In July 1984, when the newly elected Labour Govt adopted a policy of keeping out nuclear ships, WILPF NZ received congratulations from its International Executive and many branches around the world. It gave support to a women's protest against US nuclear ships and submarines in Cockburn Sound, Western Australia that year.

1985

Barbara Woods became President of WILPF NZ and held this position until the beginning of 1990. WILPF helped set up the NZ Committee for the UN Year of Peace 1986 on which it was represented. With a grant from the new Ministry of Women's Affairs, WILPF published a history of its activities in NZ since 1916: Women for Peace and Freedom, written by Betty Holt. Members presented a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Petition received from its HQ to the NZ Govt. Two members attended the Australian WILPF's Pacific Women's Conference in Sydney, and two young Maori women were sponsored by WILPF to attend it. WILPF wrote to the PM David Lange, urging careful consideration be given to resolutions of a national Maori gathering called to discuss the Treaty of Waitangi.

1986

In the UN IYP, WILPF had a very busy year. It recommended its history as a school resource and commented on a Discussion Document for Peace Studies. It reprinted its publication Winners All promoting non-competitive children's games <1500 copies sold>, and published On Being a Peace-full Teacher <1,000 copies sold>. It forwarded a remit to

the NCW discouraging parents from buying War Toys. It presented submissions to the Defence Committee of Enquiry, the Ministerial Committee of Enquiry into Violence and on the NZ Nuclear Free Zone and Disarmament and Arms Control Bills. It wrote to the Russian Embassy expressing approval of the decision of its Secretary General Gorbachev to resume the unilateral nuclear weapons freeze which it began in 1985. It contributed to many UNIYP events, such as the 4,000 Peace Banners held for 3.5 k. between the US and USSR embassies. Joan Macdonald from the Auckland branch attended the UN Conference on Disarmament and Development in Copenhagen and also attended a meeting with the WILPF Women from other sections, who were there.

1987

WILPF helped run a Peace Stall at the Army's 3-day Pageant and Military Exhibition, giving peace kits to people. Its comments to the NCW for the Royal Commission on Social Policy were registered as a separate submission. It wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs expressing support for Belau wanting to remain Nuclear Free and have a Compact of Free Association with the USA. It wrote to PM David Lange after the military coup in Fiji, suggesting free access to New Zealand for Indians seeking refuge. It also wrote to the PM about a special appeal from the Association of Nicaraguan Women for support of their Peace Plan for settling conflicts in Central America, and for the USA to honour its provisions. Laurie Salas was appointed to the new Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1988

Laila Harre of Auckland, nominated by WILPF NZ, was appointed by WILPF International to its 1988 Disarmament Internship at Geneva. WILPF NZ participated in the Peace Wave gathering of peace groups – a nuke-free girlcott - around the world at the time of the UN's Third Special Session on Disarmament in New York. Wellington members attended the unveiling of a sign at their Airport saying Welcome to Wellington, a Nuclear Free City . WILPF's publications were among books sold at a Women on the Move stall held at a Wellington Exhibition. The Peace and Disarmament Trust of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, managing interest on damages money received from France for the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior , made grants to WILPF to enable Maori women to travel to its International Congress held in Sydney in 1989.

1989

WILPF members attended a 3-day seminar on rights in New Zealand which concluded that the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi must be fully honoured as it legitimised British presence and defined Maori rights and status. Twenty NZ women, including an official representative from the Maori Women's Welfare League, attended WILPF's 24 th Triennial International Congress held for the first time in Sydney. NZ WILPF convened a workshop there on Militarisation of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, covering nuclear free zones, toxic wastes, deterrence, chemical weapons, bases, UN involvement and changing perceptions. Laurie Salas was made a Dame of the British Empire in recognition of her voluntary work for women and for peace. She chaired the UNA, the NCCD, was a PACDAC member and was WILPF's National Secretary from 1985 to 1990 .

1990

WILPF elected Pauline Tangiora as its first Maori woman President, at a Conference held in Wanganui to mark the 75 th anniversary of its founding. It changed its name to WILPF Aotearoa. Pauline remained President for the next four years and was co-President for a fifth

year. Pauline attended WILPF's International Executive meeting in Costa Rica and an Indigenous Women's Conference held in Norway that year. A new WILPF booklet Peaceful Games was launched, funded by PADET which also funded reprints of WILPF's Children's Games and Winners All. With 1990 funding, WILPF held a One Day Exhibition called Educating for One World - with pictures, books, videos and short entertainments, catering for schools - on International Women's Day of Peace and Disarmament May 24 1990. WILPF supported Play for Life, a group working to eliminate toys promoting violence. WILPF also broadened its educative work on Treaty of Waitangi issues by publishing a booklet on protocol for Marae visits, and supporting the Maori women's Hikoi.

1991

WILPF Aotearoa contributed its comments on a Charter for the Earth being prepared for the UN Earth Summit held in Brazil in June 1992. It supported women sent to Vietnam and Cambodia to assist in the establishment of a women's co-operative there. It circulated a statement setting out the arguments against NZ military involvement in the Gulf War. It sent resolutions to governments against the seabed dumping of nuclear waste and testing in the Pacific. It condemned the Indonesian military annexation of East Timor. It asked the NZ Govt to support peace initiatives in Bougainville, struggling for independence from Papua New Guinea. It carried out further work on Treaty issues, calling for more participation of tangata whenua in environmental and developmental decision-making.

1992

Pauline Tangiora attended the WILPF Congress held in Bolivia. Through its member Kate Dewes, WILPF locally supported a campaign begun by Harold Evans of Christchurch known as the World Court Project to have nuclear weapons declared illegal. WILPF challenged the PM Jim Bolger about his intention to change the nuclear laws to allow nuclear powered and armed ships to enter NZ ports. It continued to support the Quang Tri Women's Union Project which processed basic food for women and children. It helped raise funds and medical supplies for a Children of Chernobyl Appeal. It launched the publication of a book of peace poetry Watch Her Colours Fly by Johanna Mary. It responded to the NZ Navy's 50th Birthday celebrations by opposing the purchase of more frigates. It decided to become an incorporated society to help with applications for funding projects. An Otautahi Branch of WILPF was established in Christchurch with younger members.

1993

In the UN Year of Indigenous Peoples, Pauline Tangiora attended the UN Human Rights Conference in Vienna and was facilitator of the Indigenous Caucus at the NGO Forum there. WILPF member Moea Minhinnick gave a Workshop in Auckland on the Manukau guardianship issues of her Ngaati Te Ata tribe. Another member, Betty Tennet, went to Sri Lanka with Peace Brigade International and on a speaking tour of NZ afterwards. WILPF Aotearoa / NZ continued to lobby the Govt. against violations of human rights in places such as East Timor, Iraq, the former Republic of Yugoslavia and against the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes. WILPF's application to the Suffrage Centennial Trust and the Oral History Awards Australian Sesquicentennial Trust for funding support for its Oral History Project was successful, enabling interviews to be conducted with older members.

1994

Pauline Tangiora, Co-President of WILPF Aotearoa with Megan Hutching that year, attended the UN Population and Development Conference held in Cairo. A member of the Indigenous Peoples Council, she was nominated by WILPF Aotearoa for the Earth Council.

In the UN Year of the Family , Peter Gresham, Minister of Education, asked WILPF for its ideas about the nature of the family. With regard to violence in the family, WILPF wrote to the Minister of Justice in support of Section 59 of the Crimes Act being repealed . After 7 years' work on it, the World Court Project, supported by WILPF in NZ, appeared to be nearing its end, with 110 countries sponsoring a resolution saying nuclear weapons were illegal going to the International Court of Justice in June.

1995

WILPF's President Megan Hutching went to its 80th Congress held in Finland and on by Peace Train to China to the NGO Forum on Women near Beijing, also attending the opening of the 4th UN Conference on Women in Tiananmen Square. In NZ, on 8 th March, she spoke at the launch of Amnesty International 's campaign: Women's Rights are Human Rights . On 24 May, WILPF supported Jenny Easton's organisation LIMIT's street theatre about alternatives to military spending. WILPF Aotearoa listed the importance of the Treaty of Waitangi in a brochure about its concerns. Members wrote letters in support of Mordechai Vanunu who revealed to the world secret nuclear bomb production in Israel, asking its ambassador for an end to his solitary confinement and for his release from prison. It held vigils to protest against nuclear weapons tests on the first Monday of every month outside the French Embassy and on the 3 rd Monday outside the Chinese Embassy. It wrote to the Minister of Defence about the NZ stand on landmines not being clear.

1996

This was the UN Year for the Elimination of Poverty . The NZ Govt decided to renounce operational use of anti-personnel land-mines. In July, the International Court of Justice at the Hague declared that in its view the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law in armed conflict in just about any imaginable circumstance. However, it made one exception which was: it could not conclude definitely whether the threat of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in extreme circumstances of self-defence.

1997

WILPF made submissions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the proposed referendum on the Treaty of Waitangi and to the Defence Select Committee on NZ's Place in the World . It wrote to the US Ambassador about US subcritical nuclear tests and their refusal to sign the landmines treaty. It collected signatures for an international women's petition calling for a decrease in military spending. Its remit to the NCW calling for the non-purchase of further frigates was passed. It sent a remit to WILPF International about the establishment of an Indigenous Women's Standing Committee. It continued to liaise with other peace and social justice groups in NZ like NCW, CALM , Abolition 2000, Peace Movement Aotearoa, ANGOA < Association of Non-Governmental Organisations Aotearoa > and the Council for International Development.

1998

WILPF's President Pauline Tangiora wrote in her annual report covering this year that WILPF Aotearoa kept indigenous issues to the fore and challenged Western middle of the road societal thinking. It wrote to the NZ Govt urging public consultation on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. It supported WILPF International's WIND campaign – Women Insist on Nuclear Disarmament - to put pressure on the Non-Proliferation Treaty process to negotiate a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

In conjunction with the Disarmament and Security Centre in Christchurch and Public Connections WILPF published “Pacific Women Speak Out for Independence and Denuclearisation” a collection of material by women of the Pacific about their experiences.

1999

WILPF Aotearoa’s new President Joan Macdonald, who has been very active in WILPF since the 1980’s. Makere Harawira attended a WILPF regional conference on globalisation held in Japan. Pauline Tangiora, Nganeko Minhinnick and Joan Macdonald of WILPF organised a Pacific Conference and Court for Violence Against Women and the Land, in association with Nga Wahine Pasifika, with Auckland, Asian and Pacific women attending. Workshops included those on uranium mining, nuclear testing and dumping, militarism, effects in Pacific of colonisation, loss of land and culture, environmental effects of logging, global warming and human rights violations. The NCW passed unanimously WILPF’s remit on controls on the arms trade. WILPF wrote submissions on the Third Anzac Class Frigate and F16s, plutonium shipments through Pacific waters, East Timor, SIS Amendment Bill, NATO Bombing, Firearms Amendment Bill and Sanctions against Iraq. As well as other organisations already mentioned, it liaised with Network Waitangi, Corso, Child Poverty Action and the Puriri Foundation.

2000

This was the UN Year for a Culture of Peace. WILPF made submissions to Govt on the Housing Restructuring Bill, to the Enquiry into the Role of Human Rights in Foreign Policy and the UN Commission on the Rights of the Child. It was involved in work with Network Waitangi, the NCW, the Human Rights Network, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Review Process, the Paid Parental Leave Campaign, the YWCA Week Without Violence, and The Foundation for Peace Studies. It gave its support to Jubilee 2000, which was lobbying for the Forgiveness of Debt by the International Monetary Fund for Third World Countries. It became involved in a Saying NO to Militarism and War project with Peace Movement Aotearoa.

2001

Pauline Tangiora became a new member of PACDAC. WILPF put forward two remits to the NCW’s AGM in September - one calling for an enquiry into the activities of the GCSB, the operation of the Echelon system and the Waihopai spybase, and the other urging no support for a military response to the September 11 attacks. They were accepted by the NCW Board as suitable but neither remit was passed. Edwina Hughes, WILPF’s National Secretary, gave a speech about the impact of weapons in space on the Pacific, as part of the International Day of Action to stop the Militarisation of Space. She also made oral submissions to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee on the Nuclear Free Zone Extension Bill and on human rights in foreign policy, on behalf of WILPF Aotearoa, following up written submissions already made.

Joan Macdonald attended the WILPF International Executive Meeting in Geneva.

2002

With Joan Macdonald as President, WILPF Aotearoa organised the holding of a WILPF International Executive Committee Meeting in Auckland for the first time. Held prior to and parallel with the IEC meeting, were two workshops for young women, one on The Effects on Women in the Pacific of Colonisation, attended by women from Bougainville, West Papua, Tahiti and Australia, and the other on Courageous Women in Dangerous Times – Women Working for Peace, led by Megan Hutching. WILPF Aotearoa took part in and organised

protests and vigils opposing war against Iraq, NZ's military involvement in 'the war on terrorism' by sending SAS troops to Afghanistan, and Israeli military re-occupation of Palestinian territory. It wrote submissions on the Human Rights Amendment Bill, the Terrorism Suppression Bill and the Law Commission Inquiry into police search and seizure powers. It worked with a Human Rights Network and Treaty Educators on Maori issues such as a Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

2003

With Celine Kearney as President, WILPF Aotearoa took part, on 15 February, in the International Day of Action to stop the war on the people of Iraq, and in July on Days of Action against US Economic and Military Dominance. Pauline Tangiora visited Iraq and spoke at a Rally in Auckland opposing the War. Three NZ members attended an Australian Triennial Meeting of WILPF in Brisbane, designed to help the two countries work closely together. Back in NZ, WILPF hosted a speaking tour by an Australian member Ruth Russell, recently in Iraq, one of a large group of peace people who formed a human shield. It also hosted a tour by a West Saharan, Fatima Mahfoud, campaigning about the 25 years her people have been living in refugee camps. WILPF also lobbied the NZ Govt about violence in West Papua, after attending a solidarity meeting in Auckland.

2004

In Feb-March, WILPF Aotearoa convened a 3-day Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting in Christchurch which drew up and sent resolutions to WILPF's International Triennial Congress held in Sweden later that year. About 50 women attended the Regional Meeting, an idea put forward at the 2002 WILPF International Executive Meeting in Auckland. WILPF also gave support to Bougainville women who wrote their stories in a book : Mothers of the Land , published by Pandanus Press, first launched in Australia. Its publication in NZ was partly sponsored by WILPF Aotearoa. WILPF member, Dame Laurie Salas, seconded an NCW remit to encourage the Government to keep NZ nuclear-free. WILPF made an oral submission to the Select Committee on the Foreshore and Seabed Bill, asking for its withdrawal. Members took part in ANGOA discussions about proposed legislation to set up a Charities Commission which might affect small organisations adversely. Claire and Lynley Gregory and Rae Martell attended the Triennial Congress in Sweden.

Notes compiled from WILPF's 1985 history, Women for Peace and Freedom , and from its minutes, correspondence and newsletters, by Chris Greenwood, Barbara Holt, Maureen Hoy, Jeannette Stace and Laurie Salas, in May 2005.