

Chair report
3 April 2019
PeaceWise AGM
Woy Woy NSW

I like to welcome all those present here and those who will read this report at a later date. This is the 12th AGM of PeaceWise, since it's beginning in 2007. This will be my 6th Chair report and it is always an honour and a challenge to present it. Why an honour? Because to serve, learn and lead in an organisation like PeaceWise with such a high calling and vision is humbling. Why a challenge? Well, how do you convey the restoring impact on people's lives through mediations, conflict coaching and training? How do you describe the excitement of seeing the vision of teaching children and teenagers biblical peacemaking taking shape and becoming a reality?

But before I will attempt to address these challenges, I would like to pray.

"Father in Heaven, may the meditation of my heart and the words of my mouth be pleasing to you. Amen".

Recently I attended a secular half-day training on the Power of Influence, kindly provided by my employer. A few good insights were presented, but it became apparent that it is a fine line between sincere influencing and manipulating to reach your objectives. In this particular course the goal of understanding the power of influence was to enable you to reach your objectives.

I believe PeaceWise has a different view. We want to influence people to bless them, to help them to become peacemakers in life, to grow their personal faith and become more Christlike. We influence to equip, to bless and to bring honour to God.

Our current key objectives are:

1. Provide excellent, current, biblically based and gospel focused peacemaking courses.
2. Support organisations to build and live out a culture of peace
3. Provide world class biblically based material for children on how to deal with conflict
4. Provide conflict coaching, mediation and adjudication services

With influencing comes also responsibility. For example, because PeaceWiseKids impacts young lives and the way they relate and build relationships we have a huge responsibility to ensure that the PeaceWiseKids programmes deliver excellent and well thought out materials, that are founded on the scriptures and fulfil all outcomes of the Australian Curriculum! When we provide PeaceWise training, such as Everyday Peacemaking, Heart of Peacemaking, Conflict Coaching and Mediation, than we influence people's thinking, their biblical understanding, their relationship with God and people. Therefore we take great care to provide high quality training, materials and qualified trainers. Similarly serving people in conflict through conflict coaching and mediations comes with a great responsibility. People, who are in conflict, experience all kinds of emotions and are vulnerable. To help these people to reconcile requires wisdom, sensitivity, humility and skills on the part of the mediators. We set the bar high for ourselves, because we love people and want to bless and serve them.

I assure you that PeaceWise at all organisational levels takes its responsibility very seriously. We aim to deliver our ministry services at the highest possible standard. All feedback from training sessions or mediations is reviewed and actioned accordingly, our internal processes and governance are compliant with the standards and requirements of the ACNC and the CMA Standards Council. In fact our CMASC accreditation has recently been renewed based on their annual audit.



We train and develop trainers and mediators. This is not a quick online training, but consist of interactive teaching and training seminars with real live simulations of presentations and mediations. We also coach trainers and mediators in their development.

PeaceWise wouldn't exist and be able to minister without the faithful supporters, volunteers and staff. An organisation consists of people and people are its greatest and most precious resource. I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks for all our supporters, volunteers and staff. Their faithfulness, dedication and what they give in terms of prayer, skills, experience, creativity, time, energy and innovation, is what makes PeaceWise an organisation of people for people of all ages. I deeply value all those people, even though many I haven't met personally.

There are many reasons why we continue and persevere on the journey of biblical peacemaking, one of which is fundamentally that peacemaking is the heart of the Gospel! It is the stories like Howard, who had a conflict situation at work that affected the project team. Howard had done our training, so he saw this as an opportunity and he reflected on his motivations, his heart and his contributions to the conflict. He acknowledged to the project team his mistakes and apologised, including owning his contributions to the conflict and indicating what he could change and rectify. His apology and the way he went about it was highly appreciated by the team. The team functions now better than before! This is a typical example of everyday peacemaking. Or the young couple, only married for a few years that found themselves in a downward spiral, because of recurring arguments. With the help of experienced conflict coaches, they worked through their arguments, they gained insight in their heart issues, they confessed and they forgave each other. Their marriage is stronger through it.

A lady at one of our trainings, let's call her Jody, wrote to us that she cried through most of the training. She realised how she had reacted to circumstances and caused pain. She also cried for the renewed revelation of the love and forgiveness of our Heavenly Father. She cried for joy as the program unfolded and in her words how a magnificent new journey of opportunity was revealed to her. PeaceWise's teaching enabled her to assess situations more accurately - that is to get to the heart of her desires and conflicts; to take responsibility for her thoughts, words and actions; and to seek more often the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to embark on a journey of forgiveness! These are her words!

But what about conflicts that tear churches apart. Obviously I cannot mention any names, locations or details, because of our strict confidentiality policy to protect the identity of those involved. But mediations by PeaceWise trained mediators have resulted in reconciled relationships, resolved conflicts and prevention of church splits or disunity. The human and material cost of unresolved conflict is indescribably high. I emphasise that from a human and Kingdom perspective the healing impact of our peacemaking services is not be underestimated and a testimony for the Body of Christ. It is actually an answer to Jesus prayer in John 17 as all peacemaking works toward unity.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20-23).

It is because of those stories I just shared that we do what we do. That is why we work hard to develop new peacemaking courses, PeaceWiseYouth, PeaceWiseKids and high standards of governance and organisational health.

The year 2018 has seen the completion of PeaceWiseYouth courses for years 7, 8, 9 and 10. I am please to report that we receive very positive feedback from schools and churches that are engaging with the material. We will deliver PeaceWiseKids years 5 and 6 by the end of Term 1 of this year.



2018 was also the first year we offered our new course Everyday Peacemaking and Heart of Conflict, which replaced the Personal Peacemaking course. This year we will offer for the first time Every Day Conflict Coaching and Deeper into Conflict Coaching, which replaces the Conflict Coaching course.

Our financial statements of 2018 you can read in detail in the 2018 Director's and Finance Report, which will be available on our website and also on the ACNC website. The summary is that we had a net deficit of \$25,629 against the 2018 budget. The key reasons for this is that our a) the National Training was less well attended than forecasted, b) a subsidy out of our operating cash reserves was provided for the PeaceWiseKids project, c) historical giving for the main ministry has been redirected towards PeaceWiseKids. We are grateful for our Partners for Peace, who give financially on a regular basis, most of them monthly.

During 2018 254 participants attended our National Training events and 18 Dedicated Training events were conducted in a variety of Christian organisations. At present the number of subscriptions to our PeaceWiseYouth program by schools, churches and individuals, is 40 and growing. It is still early days and we believe that the uptake will exponentially grow over the next few years.

PeaceWise's overall financial status is still healthy and every action and decision with a financial cost is carefully and prayerfully considered. The National Director and his team work on a lean budget, but do so with joy and trust in the Lord that He is the Provider.

Having said that it is the Board's duty and responsibility to oversee the financial health of the ministry. We believe that God provides the resources and the growth. We are called to work faithfully with what we have and to employ faithful activities that provides opportunities to receive resources and nurtures growth. Prayer and fasting is fundamental to this, but also building relationships, building into people and inviting people to join us on our journey with their gifts and resources. As we look to the future we do so with faith and trust in God to provide what is needed, whilst faithfully working with what we have and building up resources to fulfil our objectives.

Talking about the future I would like you to join me again, like last year, to look ahead into the future. We are standing in the present with the past behind us and the future in front of us. Here we pray and we pray always! We thank the Lord for the past, we trust Him in the present and we seek Him in the future. Prayer is fundamental in PeaceWise and our ministry. All we plan, discuss, do, minister, relate, strategise,...we soak in prayer. We pray that all we do is born out of prayerfully seeking the Lord.

I can see three horizons. The first horizon is at the end of the next two years, 2021. It looks like a growing number of opportunities to teach people biblical peacemaking is coming PeaceWise's way. Christian organisations, such as churches, ministries and schools across the Nation, seek us out to train their leaders and staff. All our Peacemaking courses are redeveloped and contextualised for this day and age in Australia. I can see a thriving network of PeaceWise Hubs, both inside and outside organisations, where people meet to share, to up skill, to teach biblical peacemaking and to pray for Peace for every Aussie. I see children in all Australian States and Territory are being equipped and blessed through PeaceWiseKids for years 1 to 6 and PeaceWiseYouth for years 7 to 12. These children are actually starting to change their cultures around them into cultures of peace, in their families, schools and circle of friends. These children are becoming the champions of Peacemaking. Indications are that bullying is going down and social media is becoming a tool for encouragement. Schools throughout Australia are enquiring about PeaceWiseKids, because they have heard about the positive impact. Even overseas schools are starting to subscribe. However, I also see greater polarisation in our communities and an increase in conflict situations. PeaceWise is limited by the number of trained mediators, who have the skills and are also willing to sacrifice time and emotional energy to serve people in conflict. We do what we can, but we are



also burdened by the growing need for biblical, God-breathed reconciliation services. I can see a growing number of people, who are involved in PeaceWise and peacemaking ministry. Because of the growing public profile of PeaceWise we receive invitations to speak at conferences and radio. On occasion we are asked to provide an alternative view on conflicts that are reported in the public arena.

Let's look at the next horizon, about 5 years from now, in 2024. It is less clear and although I am not sure where the path is leading to exactly I do see the contours of several exciting possibilities. PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth are part of the curriculum of most Christian Schools in Australia. It is not an option but compulsory. Some schools provide peacemaking training for the parents. A growing number of overseas Christian schools have introduced PeaceWiseKids and PeaceWiseYouth in their curriculum. Non-Christian schools have also taken it up as part of religious education. Universities have approached us whether PeaceWise can develop a program for students. The high level of anxiety, stress and conflict in students' lives, due to the break-down of families, is a great concern. I can see that PeaceWise is already in the process of developing special topic courses for peacemaking and peacekeeping in marriages, teams@work and families. Over the next 5 years PeaceWise's profile has become visible as more people in Australia are being involved in and practising biblical peacemaking. People are coming to faith through peacemaking experiences, which makes the Gospel more real and tangible for them. PeaceWise has partnered with a wide variety of different Christian organisations to mutually support and bless in the mission of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. PeaceWise is the first port of call for any conflict resolution in Christian communities and organisations in Australia. Many dedicated and skilled conflict coaches and mediators have been trained and developed. These people are serving in a wide variety of conflict situations, both in Christian and non-Christian settings. PeaceWise is regularly contacted by newspapers, radio stations and even television for their view on conflict situations in the public arena. Through the social media PeaceWise is speaking Peacemaking and reconciliation messages into the public arena. Due to the higher public profile PeaceWise is also more targeted by opposing voices.

Finally I look even further into the distance and see the third horizon, 2030. This horizon we see by faith. More courses have been developed to cater for specific needs and requirements. Organisations have been trained to train themselves. PeaceWise is a peacemaking movement and significant impact is made in the public arena, even in the area of reconciliation between Aboriginal people and the non-indigenous Australian communities and also industrial disputes. Families, marriages, friendships, working relationships, communities, the young, the middle aged and the elderly are all being impacted by the message of biblical peacemaking through the power of Christ. I believe that the message of Peace is one of the key ingredients of the coming revival in Australia, that is Peace with a capital letter for every Aussie. PeaceWiseKids has expanded overseas and is reaching many children throughout the world. It has been translated in several languages, including Chinese. The media reports that it has been shown that in schools that teach peacemaking through the PeaceWiseKids program bullying and harassment have dramatically reduced. First year university students have to enrol in a peacemaking course, specially designed for students. PeaceWise has become a prophetic voice calling in the public domain and social media to consider a different perspective and approach to small and large conflicts. PeaceWise promotes publicly a new and different way of Peace and engages constructively with opposing voices.

Whilst looking at these three horizons I wonder if you can also see a man walking ahead, beckoning us onwards. It seems that at times He looks like a King, other times like a Shepherd and then like a Warrior. We know that He is our Lord Jesus. The wind of the Holy Spirit blows, wherever our Lord Jesus is walking. Amidst all the activities along the way towards the three horizons, I can see many people on their knees, praying to God, our Father.



These are exciting views and horizons, but you know that when you walk horizons change. Sometimes dark clouds gather and we lose sight of the horizons, but we walk on in faith, listening to the voice of Jesus who calls us. What was a horizon has come into focus and might be different than we expected. Therefore we do well to always heed the words of Jesus on this journey.

The most important commandment is: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31).

"A new command I give you: **Love one another**. As I have **loved** you, so you must **love one another**. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you **love one another**. (John 13:34-35)

Let me finish with this prayer:

Creator God and Father, you who love us more than we can know,
Who chose us from the very beginning to be family.
We praise your holy name.
Jesus Christ, Son of God, Word become flesh,
Who dwelt among us and was sacrificed for us,
We praise your holy name.
Holy Spirit, present and power in our lives
From the moment that we first believed,
We praise your holy name.
Amen.

Thank you.

Looking a bit further ahead I can see the next horizon, 2021. The PeaceWiseKids project is completed and used by many schools throughout Australia, providing enough income for ongoing



customer support, maintenance, improvements and new developments. The mediation training courses are completely rewritten and new special topic courses are being developed. PeaceWise starts to become a movement as more and more people in Australia are being involved and practising biblical peacemaking in every part of society and the workplace. PeaceWise has partnered with a wide variety of different Christian organisations to mutually support and bless in the mission of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. PeaceWise is the first port of call for any conflict resolution in Christian communities and organisations in Australia.

Whilst looking at those three horizons, we walk forward in faith, trust and prayer. We squint and see someone walking ahead of us. He is beckoning us. We need to focus otherwise we lose sight of Him. We know that He is our Lord Jesus. The wind of the Holy Spirit is softly blowing through the trees, wherever our Lord Jesus is walking. We feel the wind in our back, gently pushing us forward. As we walk on the bridge of the present, the horizons change, but our Master stays the same, leading us forward. Our Father in heaven has told us what to do through the prophet Micah: To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. And John the Apostle wrote: "This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us".

Horizon story:

Horizon 1

- Training in all major cities (Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane)
- Dedicated training for schools, ministries and churches
- Schools employing PWK years 7-10., Churches (youth groups), Home schoolers.
- Completion of PWK yrs 4-5.
- Enquires for PWK outside Australia.
- Invitation for speaking at conferences and Radio
- As the opportunity presents itself speaking into conflict situation is more public arena's
- Hubs - Cultures of Peace

Horizon 2

- National training in all cities in Au
- All courses redeveloped with different options. In response to the continuing crisis of breakdown of marriages, PeaceWise is developing a biblical peacemaking course for marriages both for prevention and conflict resolution
- Each city has skilled trainers to provide dedicated training of organisations
- Organisations have trained champions who provide training within the organisation in partnership with Peacewise
- PWK and PWY completed. Most Christian schools have taken up the full program from year 4 to year 12, including Catholic schools. And SRE boards.
- PWK attract attention overseas and schools in English speaking countries are taking it up.
- Request are coming to translate PWK in other languages Chinese and Spanish
- PWK has the attention of the Australian Government, because of its success to reduce bullying and teaching children how to deal with difficult relationships and grow in resilience
- PW is being asked to provide an opinion on conflict and apologies in the public space.
- For many people the gospel has become more real and tangible or more attractive. People coming to faith because of an encounter with Jesus the Peacemaker.
- Reconciliation and healing between aboriginal people and non-aboriginal people. Healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.



Horizon 3

- National training is provided several times in most cities.
- PW support similar organisation overseas to start peacemaking in their countries
- PM training is standard in most Christian organisations. Champions within the organisation provide training. PW trains champions instead of organisations.
- Young Christians, who received PWK and PWY training starting to make an impact in universities and workplaces.
- PeaceWise regularly speaks prophetically into the public space.
- PeaceWise professional mediation services is widely sought after, both in the Christian circles and secular places.
- PW marriage course is now included in any pre-marital counselling.
- PeaceWise has become a movement and is part of Australian society as football is. From child to adult.
- PW is asked to mediate in international and national conflicts (industrial, aboriginal).
- PeaceWise is starting an international school for peacemaking.