

# INTERFAITH ROUNDTABLE ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

On 24 February 2020, around 25 leaders from different faith groups met in Sydney to receive a briefing on how faith-based organisations can work together to support the Nuclear Ban Treaty in Australia.

The gathering was facilitated by representatives of the **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)** which is a coalition of non-governmental organisations in more than one hundred countries, promoting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. ICAN was formed by a group of people gathered in Melbourne in 2007, seeking a global ban on nuclear weapons. A decade later, in July 2017, the United Nations adopted the Treaty and in December that year, ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its work to “draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons” and for its “ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons”.

Many faith leaders from diverse faith communities including Anne Walker from Catholic Religious Australia, and 2 other Catholic representatives, (Trish Madigan op on behalf of Dominican Social Justice Group and Claude Mostowik msc for Pax Christi) joined others from various Christian denominations together with Buddhist, Quaker, Jewish, Salvation Army leaders.

This is an important time for us to put pressure on politicians for Australia to sign up the Treaty. Globally, we are now at a turning point. The number of countries with nuclear weapons is growing and the power of these weapons is also increasing. ICAN advised that it is being recognised that no



effective response will be possible in the event of a nuclear attack since the damage to life on our planet would be widespread and long term.

ICAN called on faith-based organisations and their members to call on our government and all governments of the world to sign on to the prohibition of nuclear weapons. It is time for Australia to join the global majority of nations in supporting the Treaty.

ICAN explained that nuclear weapons do not keep the peace. Instead, they fuel enmity and distrust between the nations. ICAN argues that signing the Treaty will not prevent Australia from maintaining its friendship with the United States – an obstacle claimed by the government in preventing it signing the Treaty - but it will be a friendship that that excludes nuclear weapons.

## Some practical steps to push for nuclear disarmament

These include:

Australian faith communities are asked to give their support to a letter urging our political leaders to sign up to the Treaty. For Christians, the National Council of Churches has agreed to take on this initiative.

Individuals are asked to contact their local state and federal politicians urging them to express their support for the nuclear weapons ban (for a list of politicians who have already done so see ICAN website <https://icanw.org.au/pledge/>).

Individuals can also contact their local councils urging them to publicly express their support for the TPNW. A list of cities and town councils who are signed up is on the ICAN website: <https://icanw.org.au/cities/>.

Religious Institutes are encouraged to join ICAN <https://icanw.org.au/sign-up/>