

Progressive Atheists Inc.

Annual Report

1 July 2014 - 30 June 2015

*Presented at Progressive Atheists Inc. Annual General Meeting
Tuesday, 29 September 2015*

Report Approved By
Progressive Atheists Committee
Term 2015

President Alice Carr
Vice President Andrew Rawlings
Secretary Brian Jones
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Executive Summary

This report lists the projects, campaigns, events and activities of Progressive Atheists over the Term 2015 (1 July 2014 - 30 June 2015). The report also contains news items that are of significance to the purposes of Progressive Atheists. News items that are included generated interest and discussion within the committee, at open meetings, and via online social media. They may also require further attention by Progressive Atheists.

This term Progressive Atheists have taken action to promote and maintain secular government schools with regards to school chaplaincy, special religious instruction / education and exemptions to anti-discrimination laws. We have also maintained awareness of the abuse of children whilst in the care of religious organisations by sharing all news items and promoting campaigns such as 'The White Shield Appeal'. The Australian government is still unfairly influenced by the Australian Christian Lobby that represents only a minority of Christians.

Progressive Atheists did a number of candidate surveys this term for the state elections in Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and the South Gippsland by election. Candidates were surveyed on a number of topics including secularism in education, end of life choices, abortion laws, justice for survivors of child abuse and climate change. Progressive Atheists also met with a Victorian state politician Fiona Patten MCL, and made a submission to the Victorian government End of Life Choices parliamentary inquiry.

Progressive Atheists have also been keeping a close eye on the fate of atheists overseas in countries where apostasy and blasphemy can be punished by imprisonment and death. We have marked a few international days for blasphemy rights, against state religion and to defend apostates and blasphemers. We have also written letters and promoted community awareness of the effects of Islamic extremism on human rights for atheists, apostates, LGBTI and other minority groups.

Progressive Atheists president Alice Carr was interviewed about the atheist movement on Radical Philosophy on local radio station 3CR. We continue our support for the Secular Coalition of Australia (SECOA). Founding member of Progressive Atheists and board member of Atheists Alliance International (AAI) Elida Radig attended a conference in the Philippines and was able to network with many atheists from around the world.

Progressive Atheists have started up a local welfare team who can provide support to members and atheists. We also held a workshop to assess the needs of ageing atheists who will require secular services for health care and choices in death and dying unrestrained by religious beliefs. This term we have also raised funds to support a humanist group in Africa who were the target of an attack because of their non-religious worldview. Progressive Atheists also participated in a number of community events to celebrate achievement, diversity and sharing including Darwin Day, International Women's Day, Harmony Day and the Solstice parties.

Contents

1 of 2

July 2014	5
<i>Campaign:</i> National School Chaplaincy Program	
<i>In the News:</i> Free Mubarak Bala	
<i>Media:</i> Radio Interview on 3CR Monday Breakfast	
<i>Fundraising:</i> HALEA Fund	
August 2014	6
<i>International Day:</i> Against State Religion	
<i>In the News:</i> Sydney Mother Faces Jail in Lebanon on Adultery Charges	
<i>Protest:</i> Endeavour Forum	
September 2014	8
<i>Letter:</i> Secular Schools	
<i>Protest:</i> ACCESS Ministries: Keep Our Public Schools Secular	
<i>Letter:</i> Islamic Extremism	
<i>Workshop:</i> Aging Atheists	
<i>International Day:</i> International Blasphemy Rights Day	
October 2014	10
<i>Media:</i> Radio Interview on Radical Philosophy on 3CR	
<i>AGM:</i> Progressive Atheists Inc.	
November 2014	11
<i>In the News:</i> Bill Shorten & The Australian Christian Lobby	
<i>In the News:</i> Does Islam need a Reformation?	
<i>Alliance:</i> Secular Coalition of Australia (SECOA)	
<i>Project:</i> Welfare Team	
<i>Election:</i> Victorian State Election Campaign	
December 2014	13
<i>In the News:</i> Halal: Terrorism, Animal Welfare & Interview with Halal Australia	
<i>Event:</i> International Human Rights Day	
January 2015	14
<i>Project:</i> Proselytising on Council Property	
<i>Election:</i> Queensland State Election Campaign	
February 2015	15
<i>In the News:</i> Abolish Blasphemy Laws	
<i>Religious Persecution:</i> Supporting Apostates	
<i>International Day:</i> Darwin Day BBQ	
<i>Report:</i> Persecution of Atheists Globally	
<i>In the News:</i> Confessions of Iranian refugee	

Contents

2 of 2

March 2015	16
<i>National Day: Clean Up Australia Day</i>	
<i>International Day: International Women's Day</i>	
<i>International Day to Defend Apostates and Blasphemers</i>	
<i>Election: South Gippsland By-Election - Victoria</i>	
<i>National Day: Harmony Day</i>	
<i>Election: New South Wales State Election</i>	
April 2015	18
<i>Team Member: Bulletin Editor</i>	
<i>In the News: Another Blogger Hacked to Death</i>	
<i>In the News: Progress for Apostate Asylum Seekers</i>	
May 2015	19
<i>Campaign: Religious Exemptions to Anti-discrimination Laws</i>	
<i>In the News: Buddhist Monks in court for Blasphemy</i>	
<i>Meeting: Strategic Plan Review</i>	
<i>Cultural Festival: Yaldā</i>	
<i>Conference: Breaking Through With Reason and Humanism</i>	
June 2015	20
<i>In the News: Blasphemy Laws</i>	
<i>In the News: Special Religious Instruction</i>	
<i>In the News: Secular Bloggers in Bangladesh</i>	
<i>In the News : Islamic Enlightenment is the only way forward</i>	
<i>In the News : Iranian Refugee Case Could Test Religious Freedom Laws</i>	
<i>In the News : The White Shield Appeal</i>	
<i>Meeting: Fiona Patten MLC</i>	
<i>Celebration: Winter Solstice Party</i>	
<i>Parliamentary Submission: End of Life Choices</i>	
Social Media Report - Term 2015	23
<i>Fast Facts: Website, Facebook & Twitter</i>	

July 2014

Campaign: National School Chaplaincy Program

July 2014

The High Court has for the second time handed down a decision against the School Chaplaincy Program. The funding of the NSCP is illegal. After the first decision was handed down in 2012, the then Labor government rushed through legislation to keep the program federally funded. The program has a history of rushed legislation.

In 2012 Senator Brandis warned: “The Commonwealth is clearly asking for another clobbering by the Court”. Well thanks to the hard work of Ron Williams and his team, they did indeed get another clobbering.

The Progressive Atheists launched this most recent campaign on 13th June, 6 days before the High Court handed down its decision that the NSCP funding is illegal. The main aim of the campaign is to mobilise all concerned citizens into taking action. Let your local government state and territory leaders know that you don't support the continuation of the NSCP.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/201407-PA-Bulletin-July-2014.pdf>

See the Campaign page on the website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/stop-nationalschool-chaplaincy-program/>

In the News: Free Mubarak Bala

July 2014

Mubarak Bala has been beaten, drugged and confined to the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Kano in Nigeria. This has been done because he renounced Islam and has openly declared himself to be an atheist.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/201407-PA-Bulletin-July-2014.pdf>

Media: Radio Interview on 3CR Monday Breakfast

July 2014

Beth Matthews

President of Progressive Atheists Alice Carr was interviewed for 3CR Monday Breakfast to talk about the high court case on school chaplaincy and SRI in Victorian schools.

Unfortunately there is not a recording of the program available online.

Fundraising: HALEA Fund

July 2014

The Humanist Association for Leadership, Equity and Accountability (HALEA) was established to advance humanism values and principles to positively contribute to among other objectives; the empowerment of marginalized, victimized and forgotten members of society and solving human problems through the application of reason and science.

Progressive Atheists raised \$300 to donate towards the Humanist Ugandan organisation HALEA, who had their offices destroyed by people who did not like what they were doing. Together with the IHEU over \$9,000 was raised to assist them to buy computers and equipment necessary to continue their valuable work in Uganda promoting awareness of Humanism and tolerance for minority groups.

See their website here:

<http://www.haleauganda.org/>

Read more on the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/201408-PA-Bulletin-August-2014.pdf>

August 2014

International Day: Against State Religion

11 August 2014

Ghulam Mustafa Lakho of Karachi, Pakistan, has launched a petition to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to recognise "The International Day Against State Religion" in solidarity with victims of the State Religion, namely, non-Muslims and non-believers of Pakistan.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/201408-PA-Bulletin-August-2014.pdf>

In the News: Sydney Mother Faces Jail in Lebanon on Adultery Charges

11 August 2014

A Sydney mother faces adultery charges in Lebanon that can attract a 6 months jail term. She also faces death threats from her own family back in Sydney. Whilst awaiting trial in Lebanon the mother of 2 has run out of money, has nowhere to stay and is being pursued by bounty hunters. Staff at the Australian Embassy in Beirut told the mother that they could not help, Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop said it is "outside the scope of their consular role". Progressive Atheists wrote letters to ministers requesting action be taken to assist.

Read news story:

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/sydney-woman-facing-adultery-charges-refused-help-with-finding-safe-house-20140802-zzphg.html>

Protest: Endeavour Forum

World Congress of Families, Regional Event

Melbourne, Saturday, 30th August 2014

Catch the Fire Ministry, 30 Star Crescent, Hallam

Progressive Atheists view the protest as a success on so many fronts.

1. Progressive Atheists worked successfully in coalition with Radical Women, Equal Love, The Block Party Against Hate, The Rainbow Army, The Council of Single Mothers and their Children, theoretical physicist Lawrence Krauss and many others.
2. The World Congress of Families moved venues 5 times due to venue cancellations and police advice.
3. Eventually they showed their true colours by accepting Catch the Fire Ministries venue hosting.
4. Most politicians pulled out from attending the event citing the anti-Muslim stance of Rise Up Australia – the political party associated with Catch the Fire Ministries.
5. The WCF final event venue was far south of Melbourne in an industrial estate, far from convenient to attend.
6. Progressive Atheists protested with the united front against homophobic, transphobic, anti-LGBTI, anti-marriage equality, anti-feminist, anti-women, anti-sex before marriage, anti-contraception, anti-abortion, anti-divorce, anti-euthanasia, anti-union, anti-science, anti-freedom of choice, anti-freedom of belief and anti-secular views.
7. Politician Rev Fred Nile from the 'Christian Democratic Party' did attend and decided the best statement to make was "the protest outside is part of my talk today, I'm illustrating that there are two forces, the God force and the devils force"

World Congress of Families, Matt Barber, Rick Scarborough and Daniel Lapin have called protesters "sexual radicals", whilst Rev Fred Nile from the 'Christian Democratic Party' labels us collectively as "the devils force".

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/201408-PA-Bulletin-August-2014.pdf>

See more on the website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/evangelism/world-congress-of-families/>

September 2014

Letter: Secular Schools

Open Letter To ACCESS Ministries
10 September 2014

The letter was hand delivered to ACCESS Ministries, providers of SRI and Chaplaincy in Victorian schools.

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/201409-Open-Letter-to-ACCESS-Ministries.pdf>

Protest: ACCESS Ministries: Keep Our Public Schools Secular

On the 11 September 2014 Progressive Atheists joined with others from Equal Love, WACA and concerned individuals to protest against ACCESS Ministries provision of Special Religious Instruction and Chaplaincy in public schools.

The ACCESS Ministries teacher handbook asks Special Religious Instructors to take advantage of the innocence of children to indoctrinate them into Christian beliefs. SRI classes in Victoria inform 5 year old children that “God loves them”.

When SRI classes commence, children are segregated on the basis of religion, often the non-SRI children are placed at the back of the class within hear shot of the SRI class activities. Children in schools that have SRI miss out on 20 hours of curriculum every year.

Protest Report:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/religious-infiltration-in-australian-schools/protest-access-ministries/>

Religious Infiltration in Australian Schools

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/religious-infiltration-in-australian-schools/>

See report in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/201410-PA-Bulletin-October-2014.pdf>

Letter: Islamic Extremism

Open Letter to The Australian National Imams Council
19 September 2014

The formation and conquest of ISIS has been of great concern to many around the world. At this time it is essential that Islamic leaders speak out against the atrocities committed by ISIS in the name of Islam.

Your statement distancing “the pure teachings of Islam” from the crimes and atrocities committed by ISIS, and assuring us that “their misguided actions do not represent the overwhelming majority of Muslims” will offer relief to concerned Australians.

We welcome your statement that Australians are united in wanting “peace and security for everyone regardless of religion.” We live in a democratic and secular society that protects freedom of religion for all. This means that a person is free to join or leave a religion, based on their personal choice, without coercion or consequence. Upholding these values is fundamental to maintain the secular democracy that we all enjoy here in Australia.

Historically war has been driven by mistrust, deception, fear, retaliation and pre-emptive strike. When considering political and economic policies, domestic and foreign, including decisions pertaining to war and peace, Progressive Atheists call for a reasonable approach that considers human rights, social justice and the safeguarding of our secular democracy. We wish to go beyond divisive racial, religious, tribal, and sectarian constructs, and instead, contribute to a universal humanity.

Secular democracy and ensuring universal human rights is fundamental to a free and fair society.

View the letter on our website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/201409-Open-Letter-to-The-Australian-National-Imams-Council-ANIC.pdf>

Workshop: Aging Atheists

La Notte Restaurant

29 September 2014

Progressive Atheists hosted a workshop on Monday, 29 September 2014 to investigate the services and experience available to people who seek a secular experience as they get older.

Discussion Items:

Hospital & Home Visiting

Retirement & Dependent Accommodation

End of Life Choice

Ensuring Wishes are Respected

This workshop was a preliminary meeting to ascertain what needs to be done in order to ensure a secular experience in health care and welfare services, focusing initially on aged care services and facilities for those seeking freedom from any sort of prejudice and discrimination.

We have since brought these issues to the attention of politicians in person and also via election candidate surveys. As well as making a submission to the Victorian enquiry on End of Life Choices.

See more on the website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/secularism/health-welfare-services/>

International Day: International Blasphemy Rights Day

30 September 2015

International Blasphemy Rights Day, held each year on September 30, is administered by the Center for Inquiry as part of its Campaign for Free Expression.

See the Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/blasphemyday>

October 2014

Media: Radio Interview on Radical Philosophy on 3CR

16 October 2014

Beth Matthews

Alice Carr who is the President of the Progressive Atheists spoke about the group and what the New and Old Atheism is, what needs religion meets, and if the New Atheism can compete with religion.

Listen to the interview here:

<http://www.3cr.org.au/radicalphilosophy/podcast/radical-philosophy-16102014>

AGM: Progressive Atheists Inc.

Held Monday, 27 October 2014 at 7 pm

Trotters Restaurant – 400 Lygon St, Carlton VIC 3053, Melbourne

Progressive Atheists hosted a lively meeting with a shared meal before hand coupled with much discussion. The President of Progressive Atheists Inc. Alice Carr, presented the attending members and guests with the [Progressive Atheists Inc. Annual Report July 2013 to June 2014](#) providing a summary speech of that report covering events, campaigns and projects completed by the committee during the previous financial year.

Attending members voted for a [new committee](#) of 10 members for Term 2015. Members also voted for changes to our association's model [Rules](#) that are as yet to be accepted by Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Progressive Atheists were pleased to welcome back onto the committee Alice Carr, Andrew Rawlings, Brian Jones, Peter Veitch, Vidura Jayaratne, Sudhir Kumar, Trish Delaney and Rick Barker and also welcome new committee members Phillipa Toia and Tracy Oliver.

Read more on the website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/>

In the News: Bill Shorten & The Australian Christian Lobby

November 2014

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has become the first Australian political leader to confront the Australian Christian Lobby on same-sex marriage, telling them he is a Christian who believes in marriage equality. Religion should never be used as an instrument of division or exclusion, he said. Mr Shorten read from the scriptures and said he couldn't remain silent about those who said marriage equality was the first step on the road to polygamy and bigamy and bestiality.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/201411-PA-Bulletin-November-2014.pdf>

In the News: Does Islam need a Reformation?

November 2014

Maajid Nawaz, co-founder and chairman of Quilliam, believes that Islam needs reform. Quilliam is the world's first counter-extremism think tank set up to address the unique challenges of citizenship, identity, and belonging in a globalised world. Quilliam stands for religious freedom, equality, human rights and democracy.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/201411-PA-Bulletin-November-2014.pdf>

Alliance: Secular Coalition of Australia (SECOA)

22 November 2014

At the November committee meeting, members voted to accept the 'Official SECOA Charter'.

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The Secular Coalition of Australia (SECOA) campaigns for a secular State, where:

No individual, group or organisation, is either privileged or disadvantaged because of their religion, belief or non-belief, and...

The State...

- ❖ does not establish any religion nor stipulate any religious beliefs or practices.
- ❖ does not promote or advance any religion, nor base its laws or policies, or the implementation thereof, on any religious beliefs.
- ❖ does not intervene in the setting of religious doctrines, or in their implementation providing that implementation does not contravene human rights.

- ❖ neither promotes nor facilitates the promotion of any religion in public education through the curriculum, religious instruction, pastoral care programs, or the provision of organised worship or religiously-based activities.
- ❖ has no anti-blasphemy laws, and no religious consideration is used to restrict freedom of expression, including the freedom to express views about religious beliefs.

The judicial system...

- ❖ does not recognise any alternative religion-based legal system.

Religious organisations...

- ❖ are subject to the same laws of the State in the same way as other organisations.
- ❖ that are funded by the State to conduct community support activities or services, such as education or welfare, remain, in the course of such activities, neutral in religious matters.
- ❖ do not preference or discriminate on the grounds of religion, belief or nonbelief. (This includes organisations controlled by religious organisations.)

Everyone:

- ❖ enjoys freedom of religious belief, or non-belief, and freedom to change or renounce their religion.
- ❖ is equal before the law, regardless of their religion, belief or non-belief.

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SECOA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SecularCoalitionOfAustralia>

Project: Welfare Team

22 November 2014

At the November Committee meeting the committee voted to create a welfare team who would be tasked to follow up members who hadn't been seen for a while, or visiting members who were in hospital.

The Progressive Atheists welfare team has been created to facilitate better care in our community. The members of the welfare team are all volunteers and will, when available, phone or visit members either at home, in hospital or in care due to illness, injury or other need, any life event that is easier to get through with the care and support of family, friends and community members.

If you know a member in need you can contact the Welfare team directly via email or contact a committee or other member of progressive atheists, to arrange the team member best placed to assist at that time (lives the closes and is available):

welfareteam@progressiveatheists.org

Welfare team members will aim to visit at the earliest convenient time for a chat, to raise spirits and ascertain how the Welfare Team can best assist. Assistance might include, but is not limited to: meals, housework, calls to family, finding services or just arranging more visits. Welfare Team members work closely together in order to provide the best care available.

See website for more details:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/about-us/welfare-team/>

Election: Victorian State Election Campaign

29 November 2014

The Progressive Atheists have conducted a 10 Survey Questions of candidates standing in the Victorian State Election on 29 November 2014.

The Progressive Atheists Victorian State Election Candidate Survey attracted 171 responses (19%) of the total 896 candidates standing for the 2014 Victorian state election.

See website for more information and survey results:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/elections/victorian-state-election-campaign-2014/>

December 2014

In the News: Halal: Terrorism, Animal Welfare & Interview with Halal Australia

December 2014

George Christensen, Liberal National Party of Queensland and Federal member for Dawson, wants Halal certifiers to open their books, presumably to show the public how Halal certification fees are used.

The vast majority of halal meat products sold in Australia are from animals that have been stunned PRIOR to slaughter, just as all other meat products are. Stunning the animal prior to slaughter is vital to ensure the best animal welfare practice. The time to regain consciousness following a reversible stun may vary depending on the intensity of the stun.

Objection to Halal Certification in Australia has been prominent in the news recently with groups such as Halal Choices, Boycott Halal in Australia and The Pickering Post all encouraging consumers to boycott Halal certified foods.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/201412-PA-Bulletin-December-2014.pdf>

Event: International Human Rights Day

10 December 2014

This year's slogan, ***Human Rights 365***, encompasses the idea that every day is Human Rights Day. It celebrates the fundamental proposition in the Universal Declaration that each one of us, everywhere, at all times is entitled to the full range of human rights, that human rights belong equally to each of us and bind us together as a global community with the same ideals and values.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/HRDay2014/Pages/HRD2014.aspx>

The '*Freedom Of Thought Report*' is an annual global report on discrimination against Atheists, Humanists and other non-religious people. It has been published for the last three years (2012, 2013 and 2014) to mark the UN's international 'Human Rights Day' of December 10th.

Progressive Atheists promote the report and take action to raise awareness of atheists, freethinkers and apostates who are in danger around the world.

Freedom of Thought Report webpage:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/combating-religious-persecution/freedom-of-thought-report/>

January 2015

Project: Proselytising on Council Property

January 2015

Progressive Atheists committee received a complaint about proselytising on council property. The Green Wedge Christian Community have gained the contract to run the on site Reuse Shop at the hard rubbish council collection facility at 290 Yan Yean Road. They apparently receive hard rubbish for free from the site and sell to make money in their shop.

At the shop they play loud gospel music and display a digital sign on the cash register stating "Those who believe in Jesus are the children of God." John Smyth, Waste Management

Coordinator at the Nillumbik Shire Council Operations Centre has stated that because they have been given this contract there isn't much that the council can do about the music they play or the signs that they display.

Election: Queensland State Election Campaign

Saturday, 31 January 2015

The Progressive Atheists conducted a [10 Question Survey of candidates](#) standing in the Queensland State Election on 31 January 2015.

A total of 433 candidates nominated for the 2015 Queensland election, an increase of three compared to the 2012 election, but five short of the record 438 candidates that contested the 1998 state election.

See website for more information and to see candidate survey results:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/elections/queensland-state-election-campaign-2015/>

February 2015

In the News: Abolish Blasphemy Laws

February 2015

Raif Badawi is a Saudi Arabian man who was arrested and charged in 2012 by his own government with insulting Islam through electronic channels; with setting up a website that undermines general security; with ridiculing Islamic religious figures; with going beyond the realm of obedience and finally for apostasy.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/201502-PA-Bulletin-February-2015.pdf>

Religious Persecution: Supporting Apostates

February 2015

Progressive Atheists supported Ali Sayed, a founding member of Progressive Atheists in his asylum seeker application based on religion persecution resulting from blasphemy laws. Progressive Atheists then treasurer Brian Jones wrote a letter of support and later attended an interview along with Vice President Andrew Rawlings to provide support and evidence of the religious persecution in the applicant's country of origin. In February 2015 asylum was granted.

International Day: Darwin Day BBQ

12 February 2015

Darwin day is an internationally recognised and celebrated event. Progressive Atheists hosted a BBQ, followed by a lecture, in coalition with the Atheist Society and Vic Skeptics at the Unitarian Hall in East Melbourne.

See website for more: <http://progressiveatheists.org/events/calendar/darwin-day/>

Report: Persecution of Atheists Globally

12 February 2015

Board director of AAI and committee member and Vice President of Progressive Atheists Andrew Rawlings produced and presented a report on the persecution of atheists globally. The report including news on Saudi Arabian writer and activist Raif Badawi. Raif was arrested in 2012 on a charge of insulting Islam through electronic channels and brought to court on several charges including apostasy.

Andrew's report has since led to the launch of Progressive Atheists Campaign to Combat Religious Persecution.

See more on the website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/combating-religious-persecution/>

In the News: Confessions of Iranian refugee

28 February 2015

Iranian doctor, author and former refugee Kooshyar Karimi has built a comfortable life in Australia. But his freedom came at a cost, and 15 years on, it haunts him still.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-May-2015-ONLINE.pdf>

March 2015

National Day: Clean Up Australia Day

Sunday, 1 March 2015

Progressive Atheists promote Clean Up Australia Day as a simple way to take action to clean up, fix up and conserve our prized Australian environment.

See website for more:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/events/calendar/clean-up-australia-day/>

International Day: International Women's Day

Sunday, 8 March 2015 | Theme 2015: Make It Happen

Progressive Atheists promoted and attended a number of events taking place on International Women's Day to celebrate women and raise awareness of more that needs to be done to address human rights and equality for women.

See websites for more information:

<http://www.internationalwomensday.com/>

<http://progressiveatheists.org/events/calendar/international-womens-day/>

International Day to Defend Apostates and Blasphemers

Saturday, 14 March 2015

So much more needs to be done in order to assist apostates and blasphemers in countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. But even countries such as Ireland have blasphemy laws.

See website for more information - Combating Religious Persecution

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/combating-religious-persecution/>

Election: South Gippsland By-Election - Victoria

Saturday, 14 March 2015

Candidates are being surveyed with questions similar to the 10 questions used in Victorian State Election last November 2014.

See more information on the website including candidate survey results:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/elections/victoria-south-gippsland-by-election-2015/>

National Day: Harmony Day

21 March 2015

Harmony Day is held every year on 21 March to coincide with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The message of Harmony Day is everyone belongs. It's a day to celebrate Australia's diversity – a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home.

See website for more information:

<http://www.harmony.gov.au/about/>

Election: New South Wales State Election

Saturday, 28 March 2015

See candidate survey results, survey questions, candidate comments and the raw data on our website.

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/elections/new-south-wales-state-election-campaign-2015/>

April 2015

Team Member: Bulletin Editor

April 2015

Progressive Atheists were pleased to welcome Oriana Zanon, to the position of bulletin editor to put together our monthly bulletin.

Please send articles to: editor@progressiveatheists.org

Bulletins are available to read on the website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/bulletin/>

In the News: Another Blogger Hacked to Death

April 2015

A young man named Oyasiqur Rahman Babu was hacked to death on the morning of March 30, 2015 in Bangladesh, allegedly by religious fundamentalists. This is the second such killing in a month.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-April-2015.pdf>

In the News: Progress for Apostate Asylum Seekers

April 2015

Progressive Atheists are in the process of collecting information and contacts that will assist us to provide support for atheists overseas who are seeking to flee due to fear of persecution or harm. If you are able to assist us with this project, or are indeed someone who has survived such an experience we would welcome your assistance. To offer assistance or request assistance email: contact@progressiveatheists.org.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-April-2015.pdf>

Campaign: Religious Exemptions to Anti-discrimination Laws

May 2015

What is more important religious belief or universal human rights? Australia needs strong human rights protections to ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute and achieve their full potential no matter what their race, sex, ability, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Read more in the bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-May-2015-ONLINE.pdf>

In the News: Buddhist Monks in court for Blasphemy

6 May 2015

COLOMBO: Four of Sri Lanka's most senior hardline Buddhist monks appeared in court Monday accused of making uncharitable remarks on the Holy Qur'an, in the first such case following a spate of religious hate attacks.

Read more in the Bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-May-2015-ONLINE.pdf>

Meeting: Strategic Plan Review

Saturday, 16 May 2015

Progressive Atheists committee met to review the strategic plan. It was decided that the committee should appoint a team to create a plan, based on the previous one to cover the period 2016 - 2021.

Cultural Festival: Yaldā

20/21 December each year

As part of our efforts to be inclusive of minority groups and celebrate our multicultural society, Progressive Atheists endorses celebrations that bring communities together. At the May 2015 committee meeting it was decided that Progressive Atheists would participate in a celebration of Yaldā, an Iranian festival held on the longest and darkest night of the year is a time when friends and family gather together to eat, drink and read poetry (especially Hafez) until well after midnight. Fruits and nuts are eaten and pomegranates and watermelons are particularly significant. The red color in these fruits symbolizes the crimson hues of dawn and glow of life. The poems of Divan-e-Hafez, which can be found in the bookcases of most Iranians families, are intermingled with peoples' life and are read or recited during various occasions like this festival and at Nowruz.

Conference: Breaking Through With Reason and Humanism

May 31, 2015, Sunday | Unilab Bayanihan Center, Philippines

AAI Director and Progressive Atheists Inc. member and founder Elida Radig along with Progressive Atheists member Eric, attended the conference PATASCON 2015: Breaking Through With Reason and Humanism. Elida and Eric were in the Philippines for one week and spoke with many atheists from around the world. This was a great opportunity for Australian atheists to share ideas, make contacts and further progressive atheism.

See the Bulletin for a full report from Elida Radig:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/July2015BulletinOnline.pdf>

June 2015

In the News: Blasphemy Laws

June 2015

Norway has scrapped its longstanding blasphemy law, meaning it is now legal to mock the beliefs of others, in a direct response to January's brutal attack on the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

Read more in the bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-June-2015ONLINE.pdf>

In the News: Special Religious Instruction

June 2015

Some books used in Special Religious Education (SRE) in NSW have been summarily banned by the Department of Education and Communities, apparently on the grounds that they conveyed classical Christian teaching about sexual morality.

Read more in the bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-June-2015ONLINE.pdf>

In the News: Secular Bloggers in Bangladesh

June 2015

Ananya Azad is no stranger to assassination attempts. The prominent Bangladeshi blogger's father, Humayun Azad, wrote a scathing critique of Islamist fundamentalism in 2003 entitled Pak Sar Jamin Sad Bad (Blessed Be the Sacred Land, the title of Pakistan's national anthem).

Read more in the bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-June-2015ONLINE.pdf>

Read more on the website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/campaigns-projects/combating-religious-persecution/bangladesh/>

In the News : Islamic Enlightenment is the only way forward

June 2015

Palmyra is an extremely ancient human settlement, dating back to the eighth millennium BCE (BC). It has featured as a trading post and caravan watering hole on the ancient high roads of trade between the Levant and Asia since the third millennium BCE (BC).

Read more in the bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-June-2015ONLINE.pdf>

In the News : Iranian Refugee Case Could Test Religious Freedom Laws

June 2015

A group of Iranian asylum seekers whose claims for protection have been rejected are appealing against the decision in the Federal Court, in what constitutional experts say could test Australia's protection of religious freedom.

Read more in the bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-June-2015ONLINE.pdf>

In the News : The White Shield Appeal

June 2015

The White Shield Appeal campaign started in May, 2014. On the weekend of the 24th and the 25th of May 2014, the Salvation Army sent a tribe of doorknockers around Australia asking for Australians' money to do its "good works." For international readers, in Australia, the Salvation Army calls its main, mid-year fundraising effort the 'Red Shield Appeal'.

Read more in the bulletin:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PA-Bulletin-June-2015ONLINE.pdf>

Meeting: Fiona Patten MLC

15 June 2015

Progressive Atheists President Alice Carr and Vice President Andrew Rawlings met with Sex Party Leader Fiona Pattern MLC, member of the Victorian State Parliament. The meeting covered a number of items including:

- ❖ End of life choices (Fiona Patten is on the committee)
- ❖ Buffer zones for abortion clinics
- ❖ Alternatives to the Lords prayer in the Victorian parliament
- ❖ Secular annual opening of parliament event
- ❖ SRI and School Chaplaincy
- ❖ Comparative religious education
- ❖ Exemptions to anti-discrimination legislation
- ❖ Secular social service provisions
- ❖ Blasphemy and apostasy laws overseas
- ❖ Government responses to the Report - Betrayal of Trust regarding the Catholic Church

Celebration: Winter Solstice Party

22 June 2015

The committee of Progressive Atheists would like to express our deep gratitude to Heather and Isaac for again inviting our members to share the celebration of the winter solstice in the warm and friendly atmosphere of their lovely home.

Parliamentary Submission: End of Life Choices

June 2015

Committee member Vidura Jayaratne was commissioned by the Progressive Atheists committee to pen a submission to the End of Life choices Enquiry currently being conducted by the Victorian State Government.

Read the submission on the website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Submission-to-the-Parliament-of-Victoria-Inquiry-into-End-of-Life-Choices-July-2015.pdf>

Social Media Report - Term 2015

Fast Facts: Website, Facebook & Twitter

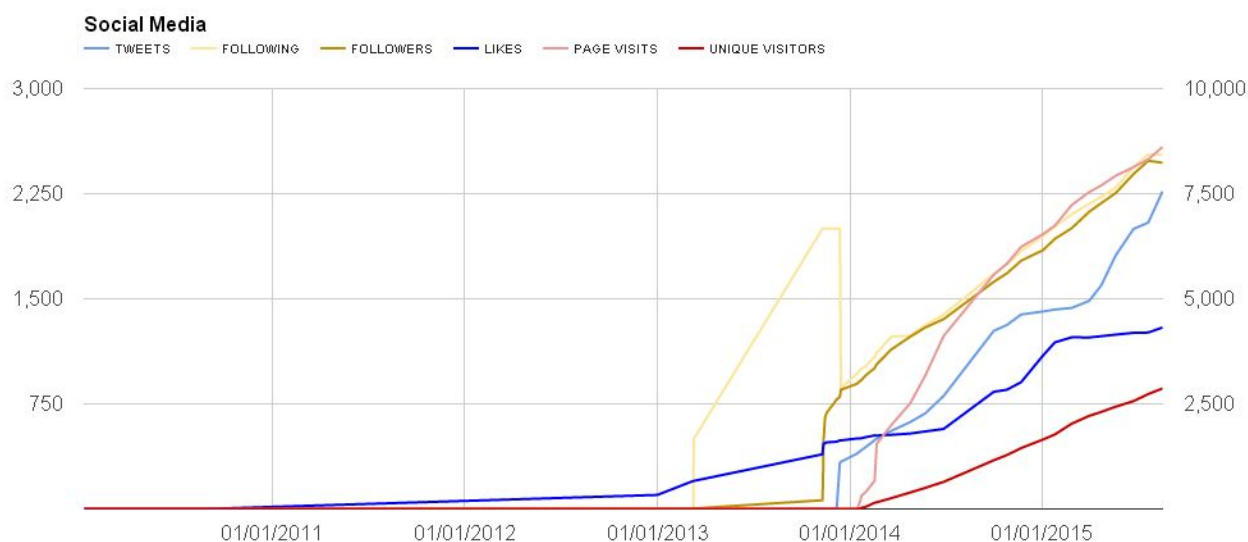
Progressive Atheists Inc. founded 10 January 2010

Facebook page created - 28 August 2010

Website created - 29 September 2012

Twitter account created - 10 March 2013

Website visitor counter added to the website 19 January 2014



	28/06/2014	26/10/2014	25/01/2015	31/03/2015	23/06/2015
TWEETS	807	1,313	1,423	1,485	1,998
FOLLOWING on Twitter	1,387	1,745	2,016	2,177	2,439
FOLLOWERS on Twitter	1,355	1,682	1,928	2,121	2,390
LIKES on Facebook	571	851	1,189	1,224	1,257
PAGE VISITS on Website	4,117	5,838	6,741	7,537	8,133
UNIQUE VISITORS	645	1,282	1,773	2,214	2,565

END OF REPORT