I want to begin by thanking the organisers of this seminar (Associate Professor Harry Minas and Tania Miletic) for inviting me to speak today. When we met in Canberra late last year, I outlined the approach to peace and conflict that is gradually being integrated into AusAID programs following the launch of the AusAID Policy, *Peace Conflict & Development*, by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, in June 2002. (Slide No. 2 – AusAID PCD Policy Aim) It seemed to us that the themes espoused in the policy were germane to the themes of this seminar series insofar as they might stimulate some thinking about the role of
mental health workers in conflict-prone societies and, more specifically, their role in promoting peace and supporting reconciliation. It has fallen to me, therefore, to try to highlight the contemporary discourse about the relationship between peace and conflict, on one hand and development assistance, on the other hand, within which these roles may be located.

The *Peace Conflict & Development Policy* fundamentally shifted our thinking on the role of development practitioners in conflict prevention, peace-building and other social transformative processes. *(Slide No.3 – Conflict Risk Avoidance)* In the past, AusAID had tended to either work around conflict (i.e. a risk management approach under which we suspended or withdrew activities if conflict broke out) or *(Slide No.4 – Emergency & Humanitarian Action)* work in conflict (i.e. the humanitarian action agenda that sought to mitigate the impacts of conflict on populations without necessarily seeking to influence the conflict trajectory). *(Slide No. 5 – PCD Policy)* The new policy challenged us to work on conflict (i.e. to utilise development assistance as an entry point for transforming relationships within conflict-affected societies). My presentation today will focus on how we go about translating this key policy direction into practice. However, I will caution at the outset, that it is a relatively new and still evolving paradigm – one that we continue to learn from and adapt our ideas and approaches accordingly.

*(Slide No. 6 – Lopiding Hospital)* It is self-evident that violent conflict inflicts damage on individuals, communities and property. *(Slide No. 7 – IDP camp in Northern Uganda)* It causes displacement and creates
untold hardship which is felt most acutely by the most vulnerable members of society. These humanitarian impacts have given rise to the phenomenon known as a “humanitarian crisis” and the response known as “humanitarian action”, i.e. action taken by the international community to address the **symptoms** of conflict by meeting the basic needs of affected populations. *(N.B. I will return to some of the nomenclature later!)* This is important work but it is not, however, the type of activity that I want to discuss today. Rather, I want to discuss the actions that can be taken by the development community to address the **causes** of conflict. These are two very different modes of action that are often confused – even by some within the humanitarian and development enterprise. Peacebuilding is **not** in my view, the work of humanitarian actors whose strict adherence to principles of neutrality and impartiality could be easily compromised by actions that seek to intervene in the trajectories of peace and conflict. *(Slide No. 8 –Children fleeing abduction by LRA in Uganda)*

Humanitarian workers **do** however, have a role in creating the critical space in which peace processes can crystallise through the provision of protection and assistance to vulnerable groups.

It is also self-evident that the outbreak of violent conflict results from (and results in) profound attitudinal and behavioural changes in individuals and groups. Murderous, predatory and debauched traits suddenly appear to emerge within societies, which have apparently been living together in relative peace and harmony. It would, of course, be simplistic to believe this was the case in practise – clearly resentments, grievances and discrimination are deeply entrenched and have simmered just below the
surface awaiting a spark to ignite them. This spark comes in the form of “spoilers”, such as political opportunists, insurgent leaders, warlords, conflict entrepreneurs and criminals who seek political and/or economic benefits through promulgation of violence. It would also be naïve to suggest that these traits would have found expression had the prevailing environment not been conducive, i.e. the authorities, which have a legitimate monopoly on violence, must be either unwilling or unable to fulfil their responsibility to protect citizens and other non-combatants on their territory. In some cases, of course, it is the institutions of the State that perpetuate violence on civilians.  

**(Slide No. 9 – The Conflict Trap)**

In other words, violent conflict generally occurs as a result of the convergence of *grievance, greed* and *opportunity*.

Of course there are leaders of violence and there are followers; just as there are winners and losers”. But overall, violence is likely to have a destructive influence on relationships that bind society. **Or does it?** There are some extraordinary stories of courage, resilience and resistance to emerge from societies imploding through violence. These harness critical *connectors* within communities to create peace constituencies that can be exploited by peacebuilders to restore the social fabric. But they are too easily overlooked in the carnage of the moment and the rush to provide humanitarian assistance.

- The Muslim Hutus, for example, who not only resisted being drawn into the genocide but also threw open their doors to Muslim Tutsi neighbours fleeing the horrific slaughter in Rwanda in 1994.
• The extraordinary efforts of communities to carve out “Zones of Peace” amid the carnage of Colombia’s civil war between FARC insurgents, the Colombian armed forces and their shadowy paramilitary proxies.

• Nearer to home, the Melanesian Brothers and the mothers who stood between warring parties on the frontline between the Malaitan Eagle Force and the Isatabu Freedom Fighters around Honiara.

• Even in the midst of the indifference and political oppression perpetuated by the Burmese regime, I was astonished, last year, to observe some encouraging examples of resilience. I witnessed communities seeking to better their plight through communal actions e.g. implementing a water supply program, an agricultural program or other development interventions. Resilience, under these circumstances, will provide a critical bedrock for peacebuilding and social transformation when the political environment in Burma eventually shifts.

(Slide No. 10 – LCP-DNH Framework) This idea that even in the midst of the most divided societies, we can find “connectors” between warring parties and constituencies for peace was championed by Mary Anderson and colleagues at the Collaborative for Development Action in the early nineties. Their seminal work gave rise to the (now) infamous local capacities for peace – do no harm methodologies that many development practitioners now routinely apply to design conflict-sensitive, peace-generating development cooperation programs.
I do not presume to understand why the incidence of violent conflict has such widely divergent impacts on individuals nor why collective behaviours seem so malleable to destructive influence under these circumstances. It is perhaps for others in this seminar series to try to unpack the complexities of individual behaviours. Rather, I will attempt to “set the scene” for later seminars by unpacking some of the complexities of the dual phenomena of violent conflict and peacebuilding – particularly as seen through the lens of development cooperation. However, I want to place some boundaries around this discussion with a few rather obvious (but often forgotten) assumptions about the linkage between peace and conflict, on one hand, and development assistance, on the other. (Slide No. 11 – Peace & Development: Assumptions)

- The first is that violent conflict is a “political crisis” and therefore not one that neutral and impartial humanitarians should dabble with. It is perhaps, a political crisis with humanitarian consequences but it is an absolute misnomer, in my view, to consider violent conflict as a “humanitarian crisis” …
- … since it might also lead to a second assumption, i.e. that aid is the panacea for violent conflict. It is not and it would be entirely erroneous to believe that simply delivering aid (whether in a humanitarian or development mode) will resolve conflict. Development assistance is just one component of the toolbox of peacebuilders attempting to avert the catastrophic impacts of conflict on societies descending into chaos or emerging from episodes of destructive violence.
• The third observation is that the incidence of violent conflict is neither uni-dimensional nor single-tiered. The popular media often tries to apply simple labels (e.g. ethnic conflict, religious conflict, nationalist conflict etc) which mask a much more complex interaction of a range of conflict systems (at regional, national, sub-national, communal and individual levels). Rather, violent conflict is the product of the intersection of multiple conflict systems, multiple grievances, multiple actors in constantly shifting formations with multiple (and again, shifting) agendas. That is, the phenomena that we describe as conflict and peace have different meanings to different people at different times, i.e. they are dynamic concepts.

• The fourth observation is that all societies are to a lesser or greater extent in conflict. Indeed, it is precisely because individuals have challenged the status quo and norms of the day that societies have evolved and progressed. Conflict is therefore, an unavoidable part of social change processes and, as such, can have positive connotations as well as negative connotations. Today, of course, we are concerned here with management of negative forms of conflict i.e. conflicts involving violent change and destructive behaviours.

(Slide No. 12 – Peace & Development Paradigm) As mentioned earlier then, violent conflict can be viewed as a political crisis characterised by governance failure. I want to use this model of conflict to further develop our understanding of peace-conflict dynamics as a necessary precursor to answering the question about what development practitioners can
contribute to support and/or rehabilitate societies wreaked by violent conflict. In particular, I want to discuss management of violent conflict as a core function of the State within the framework of the responsibility of the State to provide for the safety and welfare of citizens. These concepts are embedded in the notion of human security and reflect the contemporary discourses surrounding State fragility/functionality and the responsibility to protect. In doing so, I want to present a perspective that I have to admit is still developing as we, in AusAID, come to grips with our role not simply as development practitioners concerned with poverty reduction but also our central role in broader peacebuilding policy formulations aimed at creating the stable enabling environment in which development can indeed occur and be sustainable. This conceptualisation of development practice moves well beyond traditional aid issues to encompass security, trade and political leadership as well. In doing so, it demands enhanced interaction with other government departments that traditionally have had only marginal interest to the overseas aid program, e.g. Defence, Australian Federal Police, Treasury etc. In other words, the new paradigm is concerned with our capacity to support peace – or war if we do not adequately sensitise our activities to the peace-conflict environment – as well as our role as development practitioners driven by poverty alleviation goals. It lies at the core of the “whole-of-government” dialogue that is resounding around the corridors of the Federal bureaucracy at the moment.

But if we are to build peace, it is evident that first and foremost, we must get a better understanding of what we are dealing with. We cannot prevent
conflict or build peace if we do not understand the drivers and triggers of violent conflict. What then is this phenomenon widely known as “violent conflict”? Let us start this analysis, by considering the elements of a stable society or a society in equilibrium where inter-group relationships are balanced and conflict is managed non-violently. *(Slide No. 13 – Society in Equilibrium)* For the sake of simplicity, we will focus on three elemental spheres – the State, Civil Society and the Private Sector – recognising that within each sphere, there are further sub-divisions. The analysis involves recognition of the rights and responsibilities of the State, Civil Society and Private Sector, including:

- a legitimate State monopoly on the use of violence but limitations on its application, i.e. to protect territorial integrity and to protect civilians on its territory;
- notions of good citizenship responsibilities incumbent on all members of society; and
- concepts of corporate social responsibility and responsible labour relations incumbent on the business (private) sector; and

These responsibilities may be depicted by three interlocking spheres – each containing internal tensions and conflicts, which for the purposes of this discussion will be put aside. In this highly stylised schematic of a functional society, these primary spheres are evenly weighted not only in size – reflecting a balanced set of relationships – but also by the overlapping areas of mutual interest - thus providing an overall sense of equilibrium.
(Slide No. 14 – Fragile or Failing States) When power structures become unbalanced; or a catastrophic event occurs (e.g. natural disaster, economic collapse); or the institutional architecture to support this model of governance is otherwise weakened, then the relationships between the spheres come under stress, i.e. the spheres begin to drift apart. Tensions start to emerge and different value systems begin to clash.

(Slide No. 15 – Society in Conflict) Of course, relationships between the spheres have only limited elasticity, so that if these tensions and clashes remain unchecked, there comes a point where the spheres separate altogether resulting in the phenomenon known in the popular media as “a failed State”. It is then only a matter of time before warlords, conflict entrepreneurs and criminals grasp the opportunity to extract economic and political benefits from the ensuing chaos through rent-seeking behaviours and systems of patronage. Of course, once they have inserted themselves into these voids, history has shown that they are extremely difficult to dislodge without external military intervention (i.e. Chapter VII-type intervention under the UN Charter) and even where this course of action is taken by the international community, they will re-assert control once military peacekeepers depart unless due diligence, perseverance and commitment is forthcoming from the international community to assert the rule of law and address fundamental grievances. Unfortunately, we know that international commitment often wanes very quickly once the emergency phase of a crisis is over and, not surprisingly then, we see resurgence in tensions and cyclical bouts of conflict.
There are, of course, other crises where State dysfunctionality is not caused through weakening of relationships between the spheres - but rather by the State co-opting civil society and the private sector, e.g. Burma and DPRK. These situations require rather different policy prescriptions. However, the time limitations placed on this presentation today mean that these cannot be discussed in any depth here today but we must bear the distinction between “State fragility” and “State rigidity” in mind when developing our strategic responses to violent conflict, since the latter requires a weakening (or dampening) of relationships in the first instance – not strengthening of these key relationships between the spheres.

But what does this mean for development practitioners working in volatile conflict environments? Firstly, this kind of analysis has given rise to the contemporary discussion erroneously referred to as the “fragile States” discourse. Erroneous because it applies unhelpful terms such as “fragile States” or “failed States” to certain situations – terminology that carries awkward judgements which may not be shared internationally let alone by those in the country itself - and may inhibit productive dialogue with partners in developing countries. In AusAID, we have therefore begun to explore the twin notions of State fragility and State functionality. That is, there is likely to be a continuum between State fragility and State functionality that may be delineated by a “fragility index” and all societies lie somewhere between these extremes. Calibration of this index is “work-in-
progress”, but the intention is to draw attention to functionality not simply as characterised by the internal dynamics within each sphere but also to the areas of overlapping mutual interests - and contradictions.

(Slide No. 18 – Economic Regulatory Dimensions) Secondly then, this kind of analysis focuses attention on relational aspects of governance, i.e. peace-building is concerned with the functionality of the relationships between the spheres as much as functionality of the spheres themselves.

(Slide No. 19 – Socio-Economic Security) Whereas development practice might have traditionally focused, for example, on building the capacity of State institutions, stimulating private investment or supporting the delivery of services by civil society groups, the new paradigm of peace and development seeks to improve the quality of the interaction between - and within – the spheres. (Slide No. 20 – Representation & Responsiveness) In other words, it aims to create a positive enabling environment for more traditional development activities. (Slide No. 21 – Core Peace & Conflict Development-related Issues) [N.B. I have skipped through the last four slides rather quickly since they each represent significant themes in themselves. However, the purpose in presenting them was to demonstrate again) that the relationships defined by the overlap between the spheres are critical units of analysis – as critical as analysis of the spheres themselves]

Thirdly, the peace and development paradigm focuses attention on processual aspects of development practice as being as critical – if not, more critical – to program outcomes as the outputs. (Slide No. 22 – Logic
The renowned peace philosopher, Johan Galtung, has described “the logic of conflict” as being concerned with contradictions (or grievances), attitudes and behaviours. It follows then that “the logic of peace” should also seek to address these three elements. Grievances (political and economic marginalisation, under-development etc) must certainly be addressed. But also attitudes must be changed (from intolerance to tolerance; from apathy to empathy etc) and behaviours must be modified (from violent to non-violent dispute resolution). Too often, in our haste to deliver a “development dividend”, we build health centres or create institutions or establish livelihoods without involving those affected by the conflict. Not only is this bad practice but it also misses vital opportunities to rebuild critical relationships, to change attitudes and to modify behaviours. Even worse, it could lay the foundation for future conflict by re-establishing “old practices”, such as exclusionary decision-making processes, preferential distribution of resources or substitution for State, citizen or corporate responsibilities.

And what role do development practitioners have then in reinforcing peacebuilding processes? The process of peace-building is premised on ownership by those previously in conflict of the responsibility for establishing and sustaining relationships that have been fragmented or placed under stress by war. It invokes ideas of trust, confidence, empowerment, leadership etc as well as a sense of security and optimism for the future. Not only are these difficult to measure but they also presuppose long-term commitments – there are no “quick fix solutions” to peacebuilding. They require a shared vision since the incremental process
of building peace can only be deemed to be complete when shared aspirations are attained and relationships are re-aligned or transformed to provide all parties with a real stake in peace. Development practitioners have a role to play in helping communities formulate the vision as well as facilitating its delivery but they should not (and cannot) drive the process. And here the processes of delivering development assistance are reiterated as being important to the program/project outcomes as the development outputs themselves.

(Slide No. 23 – Ownership of Peace Processes) However, there are two important prerequisites to ownership, e.g. resilience and capacity, which must be harnessed and promoted in order that conflict-affected communities can devise their own solutions to the divisive issues. However, in order to find expression, these two important community attributes often require a further element of assistance, i.e. protection. Protection provides the critical “space” for the transference of knowledge and skills and for peace processes to take root. Conflict invariably restricts this “space” and therefore constrains both development and peacebuilding processes. Here, I return to my earlier thesis that the safety and welfare of civilians are normative functions of the State. Where the State has demonstrably failed to protect the interests of civilians – or is unable to do so – then many argue that the international community has the “right to humanitarian intervention”. This, of course, contradicts the paramountcy of State sovereignty and is vigorously resisted by many States – not least many of those who are failing in their responsibilities. Even within those States who accept the primacy of the “right to
humanitarian intervention”, there is vigorous debate about who exactly should substitute for the State responsibility – humanitarian workers or military peacekeepers or some workable combination of the two that respects the independent, impartial and neutral character of humanitarian action. It is a complex issue that cannot be adequately dealt with here today. Nevertheless, it is germane to this discussion insofar as it reminds us that those in conflict must lie at the centre of decisions aimed at restoring and building peace, i.e. they must be active participants in decisions regarding their future. Unfortunately however, too often, they are treated as “passive victims” and relegated to the periphery of decision-making. On the contrary, they are “survivors” with critical capacities and resiliencies that provide an important foundation for those directly affected by conflict to begin to build peace – a peace that I have previously noted cannot be imposed by outsiders – and they should therefore be central to decision-making processes from the onset of a crisis. But they must feel secure before they will step up to the challenge. Protection then, provides a conceptual and operational linkage between humanitarian modes of support and developmental modes of support.

Finally, I want to conclude with some remarks about the role of health professionals in conflict prevention and peacebuilding – drawing on findings from an AusAID research project with the School of Public Health & Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales. The project rationale was that opportunities exist within the health sector to promote peace and re-build communities but that these broader potentials were rarely being integrated into AusAID health programs nor
being “captured” in evaluations where they were unintentionally achieved. In essence, the project aimed to develop “sectoral approach to conflict reduction” as well as an attempt to identify and mitigate harmful peace-conflict impacts in health interventions. *(Slide No. 24 – UNSW Research: Key Assumptions)* The key assumptions underpinning the project were:

- In armed conflict situations, health professionals are often granted privileged access to civilian populations by virtue of the Geneva Conventions.
- Health represents relatively “neutral territory” and a “connector” between conflicting parties (e.g. WHO *Health as a Bridge to Peace* and UNICEF *Days of Immunisation* campaigns).
- The relationship between health professionals and patients is built on trust and confidence that might be promoted and scaled up to communities.
- On the other hand, health interventions (like any development intervention) carry an inherent capacity to “do harm” through distributional, substitutional, legitimisation and security impacts.
- The functionality of the health system is an indicator of the well-being (or fragility) of the State.

Following the first phase of research, which explored the characteristics of the relationship between health and conflict, the overarching goal became development of a tool (or filter) through which health sector professionals and those who manage health interventions could identify peace and conflict impacts of their interventions in order (a) to manage conflict risks
and (b) to seek opportunities to value-add to program outcomes by applying a conflict-sensitive, peace-promotion perspective. In other words, the project was not concerned with health interventions per se, but rather how health interventions interact with the peace and conflict environment. Specifically it generated a “Health & Peacebuilding Filter” through which we hope that health practitioners and health programmers can identify peace-conflict impacts. The research was grounded in field tests involving AusAID-supported health programs in Timor Leste, Sri Lanka and the Solomon Islands.

(Slide No. 25 – Health & Peacebuilding Filter) Again, time precludes in-depth discussion of the filter here today but more details can be found at the Schools website, http://www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sphcmweb.nsf/page/healthconflict. In brief, however, the researchers have identified five key principles of a peace-building approach to development cooperation in the health sector – cultural sensitivity, conflict sensitivity, social justice, social cohesion and good governance. Individually and collectively, these principles are likely to have application to other sectoral approaches and, in this regard, the filter may represent a prototype for other sectors.

In the case of mental health professionals dealing not only with (re-) construction of health systems in conflict-prone societies (and here I include traditional systems as well as statutory responsibilities) but also the conflict-related traumas experienced by individuals, there is considerable value in thinking of your role in much broader terms. A role
that views mental health professionals (and other health professionals) as facilitators - and agents - for change in relationships across the whole spectrum of society. I hope the presentation has, at least, stimulated some thoughts on this role and that you will bear this in mind when you listen to later speakers in this seminar series.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. Thank you for listening. I will answer any questions that you may have within the bounds of my own knowledge of what is a rapidly evolving paradigm – a paradigm of peace and development. *(Slide No. 26 - Questions)*