



Media Release

14 December 2016

## About the Comfort Woman Statue

As ABC reported AJCN has lodged a complaint against Uniting Church Australia at Human Right Commission.

Completely apart from interpretation of historical facts we have a numerous number of reasons to believe this statue has been promoted as a political tool causing unnecessary animosity and division to local communities. For this reason, Strathfield Council unanimously declined the Korean proposal in 2015 as more than 70% of residents voted *No* to the statue. More recently, Friedburg in Germany declined the similar proposal having realised that the statue is used as a political tool to put pressure on the Japanese government.

This kind of statues have been erected all over the world, and demonstrations taking place beside the statues are clearly political, racial and often violent. We consider this is a huge intimidation to the Japanese nationals. Please see the photos below for your references. What further concerns us is the fact that those specific Korean people promoting the statue are trying to break the governmental mutual agreement proposed by both Japanese and the South Korean governments. This agreement is implemented with the aim to provide assistance to the families of deceased comfort women and surviving comfort women, and Australian government officially announced that they also support this agreement as well. We hardly understand why we cannot let the two governments settle and build a better relationship for the future. This statue is a clear symbol with the intention of disregarding the governmental agreement.



Mr Abe beheaded beside the statue. Photography taken in South Korea



One of the ceremonies held in the U.S. to promote the “comfort women” statue.

Another point is that, we realised young children are naturally susceptible to racial hatred. We are deeply shocked by the fact that small children in South Korea are educated that Japan is an evil at a very young age in their Anti-Japan education system. The following photos are showing drawings by young Korean children which were displayed at a subway station outside Soeul.



We are frightened to see this kind of hatred has been publicly displayed at the place of train station.



These are placards held up by Korean and Chinese supporters at **Strathfield** extraordinary council meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2015. These placards clearly indicate that this issue is far beyond peaceful, but strongly political.

Because of the factors described above, the comfort woman statue has never been a peaceful monument. It can easily trigger racial hatred and provoke discrimination especially amongst young children and student. In 2014, parents who are concerned



with particular bullying and hatred their children experienced have sent a letter to Prime Minister Abe asking for a help. This happened in North America and we can easily assume this can happen in Australia, and this is the reason we have been objecting to the erection of statue since 2014. We must avoid it by all means.

In last 6months we have been explaining these in detail to Rev Bill Crews and the Uniting Church at numerous occasions, however, so far our concerns have been flatly ignored. Hence we are forced to take a more formal action.

What Rev Crews publicly stated also hightens our fear. In a video Korean group submitted online, he appeared and said that he wants to erect the statue facing the public roads to make “perpetrators aplogise.” We believe there are no perpatrators in Ashfield in regards to this issue and we are deeply shocked by being called “**perpatrators**”.

Later Rev Crews changed his words and stated in public that this statue was “representing not only comfort women but also all the women suffered in war, and even those women suffering domestic violence in today’s society.” We see this as an extremely deceptive and misleading act because the plaques attached to the statue are **specifically** blaming only Japan. This is clearly a form of racial discrimination by singling out the Japanese race.

The comfort woman issue and suffering of women in war is a universal issue that we should all seriously consider about it. However, it does not make sense if today’s mothers and children are subjected to racial hatred and discrimination because of such statue to honor women. Please let us say that we are only working for local parents who have been sensing tention and animosity since this matter was raised by the Korean group in 2014. We respect freedom of speech and thoughts, but we are also committed to protect our children and also maintain our local community harmony. This is the only thing what we are pursuing.

We would like the statue to be kept somewhere private and descreet so that people who are interested can visit but still we can minimise the risk of causing unnecessary harm to the local community which we shoud value the most. This should be a fair request.

Our message to fellow Australians is;



The world is increasing complex and turbulent. Our challenge is how to avoid importing foreign conflicts into Australia. For that purpose, the key is we put our community harmony first, not last.

I hope this media release help you understand where we stand. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Best regards

Tetsuhide Yamaoka

President

Australia-Japan Community Network