

# Dr Stella Cornelius awarded Michael Klug prize

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LEADR has awarded Dr Stella Cornelius AO OBE the inaugural Michael Klug prize in recognition of her remarkable contribution to the peaceful resolution of conflict.



*Dr Stella Cornelius with Michael Klug*

Dr Stella Cornelius's outstanding contribution to the development of conflict resolution skills, nationally and internationally, has been largely through making these skills easily accessible through the Conflict Resolution Network.

Inspiring and motivating this tireless effort to introduce conflict resolution skills has been her wish to see the building of a peaceful culture as the foundation for resolving the inequalities of the world.

Born in 1919, Stella grew up as an only child in rural NSW – in Griffiths and Yenda. Both her parents were non-observant Jews – her mother from Yorkshire, her father from Lithuania. They instilled in her a strong sense of social responsibility and of the importance of helping other people.

Moving later to Sydney and then to Newcastle, Stella left school during the depression at age 13 to learn her father's trade: clothing design and manufacture.

While doing war work in Sydney during World War II, she met her future husband, Max Cornelius, a furrier by trade, who had escaped Hitler's atrocities and arrived in Australia in 1938.

After the war, they established Cornelius Furs which at its peak in the late 60s and early 70s employed around 230 people. During this time, while raising a family and running the business, Stella studied management and accountancy.

Throughout her life, Stella was passionate about peace and social justice. Through her husband and

## About the Michael Klug prize

The Michael Klug prize is awarded annually by the LEADR Board to any person or persons who have in the previous 12 months contributed towards the peaceful resolution of conflict in the best interests of the Community.

In awarding Dr Stella Cornelius the inaugural prize in 2010, the Board paid tribute as follows:

"We acknowledge your continuing inspiration and practical guidance of many, many people toward peaceful interactions. We admire your leading by example and arranging through the Conflict Resolution Network to make learning materials freely accessible. Your dedication has enabled many people to become and remain optimistic regarding peace and to put their optimism into practice."

A managing partner in Clayton Utz, Michael Klug was LEADR's Founding Vice-Chair in 1989 holding the position until the end of 1995. He was also Chair in 1996 and a Director for nine and a half years during the period 1989-2001. At the organisation's inception, Michael created the original acronym that is now known as LEADR – Association of Dispute Resolvers. He is committed to lawyers embracing ADR and the development of negotiation skills.

friends, she had heard many stories of injustice and was involved with the peace process. However while many of her friends and colleagues were against war and violence, she realised that there were few skills for actually building a peaceful world and peacefully dealing with conflict.

She understood that developing these dispute resolution skills, would lay the foundation for people being able to resolve their conflicts without physical or verbal violence and instead be empowered to work together collaboratively and non-confrontationally.

In 1973, having read an article about a course in conflict resolution being set up at the Bradford University, Stella initiated the Peace and Conflict Resolution Program of the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA).

This was quite radical at the time. In Australia, the win-win model and the use of mediation in conflict resolution was quite novel and many people were suspicious. However, Stella was unswerving in her commitment to bring conflict resolution skills to the community.

In 1986 the Peace and Conflict Resolution Program of UNAA evolved into the Conflict Resolution Network.

Together with CRN's co-director and psychologist, Helena Cornelius – her colleague and daughter – Stella succeeded in bringing conflict resolution to a wide range of people from the professional and academic community to workplaces, schools, community organisations and individuals for little or no cost.

CRN's vision is to create a conflict-resolving community in a culture of peace and social justice through its national and international networks. To enable this, it offers free training material on its website and most CRN literature can be freely reproduced.

Stella has also set up or been a leader in many other peace-building initiatives. In 1979 she established the United Nations Association of Australia Media Peace Awards and in 1985 the National Consultative Committee on Peace and Disarmament. From 1984 to 1986 she was director of the Australian Government's Secretariat for United Nations International Year of Peace. These are only a few examples from a very long list.

Stella was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1978 for her services to commerce and in 1987, in recognition of her service to international relations particularly for peace, she received the Order of Australia (AO).

In 1999, Stella was also awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters and is acknowledged as a Peace Messenger of the United Nations.

Dr Stella Cornelius has given herself whole-heartedly to the creation of a conflict-free and just world both on a practical level through providing the conflict resolution skills and by giving so many people hope and optimism that peace is possible.

*LEADR acknowledges the following websites as references about the life of Stella Cornelius: ABC, World People's Blog, Conflict Resolution Network and the Australian Women's Register.*