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Bilateral Sanctions and Successful Alternative Approaches

Australia was one of a number of 'like-minded', largely Western (or OECD) countries that imposed political and military (and later economic) 'sanctions' against 'Burma' or Myanmar. But these were not mandatory, universally applied sanctions authorised by the UN Security Council. This meant that Australia was not aligned with the majority of countries with official relations with Myanmar, but in a small, but powerful, group of countries with a political or even ideological agenda in relation to Myanmar. Australia was acting largely in concert with the US, the UK, Western Europe, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. But, despite appearances, our sanctions were not closely coordinated or orchestrated: there was no coordinating mechanism whatsoever, no regular meeting, no 'secretariat', and no systematic information sharing (although a great deal of informal consultation and coordination occurred because diplomats are essentially practical people). Nor was there ever any attempt to discuss these sanctions with the Myanmar Government with a view to identifying changes they should make in order to have sanctions lifted. But the (at best) quasi-legal status of international sanctions and their indiscriminate effects — on trade, education, and people's welfare — had a divisive effect inside the country, with most people, except opposition 'true believers', seeming unhappy with sanctions.

The practical effects of Australia's sanctions were not necessarily well understood by Australians dealing with Myanmar, and were not necessarily supported by many of them. The bilateral Australian sanctions, imposed since the 1988 uprising, limited Australian Government support for trade, tourism, investment, and education promotion, and meant that both the quantum and content of Australia's aid program were extremely circumscribed. This meant, for example, that there was no trade or economic officer in the Australian Embassy (only an Austrade local trade officer), no aid program specialist (as there was officially no government-to-government aid), no Australia-based immigration officer (Immigration Department officers from the Australian Embassy in Bangkok visited Yangon periodically to conduct interviews), no education officer, and no defence attaché; it was definitely a second-rank embassy. However, in Australia's case, sanctions were deceptive, because they did not necessarily limit Australia's support for programs carried out by the United Nations, international financial institutions, and other international agencies. However, Australian activists supporting the Burmese democracy movement were strongly in favour of Australia's bilateral sanctions, without necessarily knowing or understanding their full impact — positive or 'negative'. They were, however, prepared to object to Australian scholarships for people from Myanmar, when desperate, even claiming that such scholarships would enable 'the sons and daughters of generals' to study in Australia on Australian Government scholarships.

In the general course of business, the Australian Embassy in Yangon received no instructions or advice or requests from Canberra relating to our sanctions 'regime' against Myanmar. Other than on first encounters — when the absence of Australian aid funding or Australian Government scholarships for study in Australia would normally arise — sanctions would not normally be raised or discussed with senior levels of the military regime. There was really little need for any such discussion more than a decade after these sanctions had been imposed. The Myanmar Government would have assumed that Australian policy would not change in the absence of political change in Myanmar and that in debates at the United Nations, Australia would, as usual, side with the 'West' against Myanmar.

There were only a very limited number of mechanisms whereby sanctions-applying countries with embassies in Yangon met to concert their policies and responses. The main one was the ‘mini-Dublin Group’ for coordinating counter-narcotics programs, in conjunction with the UNDCP (now the UN Office on Drugs and Crime). Like-minded countries occasionally met in other settings, such as the United Nations, to try to coordinate their approaches to Myanmar and to exchange ideas about how to make more progress, but no such meetings ever occurred in Yangon. Indeed, no such meetings occurred elsewhere between 2000 and 2003, because UN envoys did have satisfactory access to the country at this time, and there were some modest hopes that change might not be far away. Some of these meetings resumed later, at Wilton Park in the UK, for example, but they never produced any significant outcomes, and never had any noticeable influence on the military regime. Australia did not always attend.

However, the background presence of sanctions had the expected negative effect on many aspects of Australia’s official and unofficial contacts and interactions with Myanmar: it effectively discouraged Australian tourists, business, and investors, and contributed directly to a gradual decline in almost all manifestations of Australian interest in Myanmar. A few Australians worked in international agencies in Myanmar, but not at senior levels, and from 2000–03 no Australian headed an official international agency in Myanmar. Australians headed — very creditably — a small number of INGOs, such as World Vision, Care International, and World Concern.

Australia benefited enormously from wide appreciation in Myanmar of the well-received work and popular contributions of many individual Australians over many years. Although to this day they are not all recognised in Australia for their roles, they are still remembered by the Myanmar people with whom they worked. Amongst these, for example, were a small number of Australian nuns who were assigned to parts of the Myanmar Catholic Church to carry out educational or community health work. Staff from the Australian Red Cross were occasionally assigned to work with the Myanmar Red Cross Society, sometimes in Yangon, sometimes in regional locations. Some academics based in Australia maintained personal contacts with academic institutions in Myanmar, but some other academics also probably avoided contact with Myanmar.

After about 2000, numerous Australian doctors started coming to Myanmar regularly, often as part of programs whose costs were covered by Rotary Clubs.¹ But the doctors gave their own time *pro bono*, not once but innumerable times, out of their commitment to doing something to help those in need in Myanmar. Their medical programs and activities had no official standing for Australia, but they often were part of official programs of the Myanmar Government. So the Australian Embassy needed to be aware of their activities and be supportive of them. Occasionally, the embassy helped with any administrative problems, but more often they were well organised and well prepared for what they wanted to do. How sustainable all this was is debatable, but a strong component of all the programs was exposure for Myanmar doctors and nurses and additional skills training in Australia. The key Myanmar organisation was the Myanmar Medical Association (MMA) — a group composed of senior Myanmar medical practitioners who were still active in their (essentially government-controlled) profession. The MMA's leaders' understanding of their role was impressive, their professional skills substantial, and their commitment to high medical principles formidable.

Only a small number of Australians were present in the international community in Yangon, but whether working for humanitarian NGOs or as small business people, all were highly regarded, and were known for their effectiveness, outgoing natures, and their empathy with ordinary Burmese. The Australian Red Cross, for example, quite often provided expert staff to the Myanmar Red Cross Society and the International Committee of the Red Cross, one of only four Red Cross societies in the world providing such in-country support. At this time, no problems emanating from the local Australian community ever brought Australia into disrepute. The fact that some INGOs such as World Vision, Care Myanmar, and later Marie Stopes International were run from Australia, and were usually managed by Australians as Country Director, also enhanced Australia's local standing.

1 These groups included Interplast (cleft palate surgery); cardiac experts under Dr Alan Gale from the Adventist Hospital in Sydney; eye surgery teams under Dr James Muecke from Adelaide Hospital; Professor Bruce Conolly from the Sydney Hospital Hand Surgery Unit; Professor Bob Bauze from Adelaide University; and Professor Alan Pearson from the Nursing School of Adelaide University.

Another Australian ‘asset’ was the *Myanmar Times*, which had begun operations in 2000 as a joint venture with military intelligence without the benefit of a broader strategic plan. Under the direction of a hard drinking, hard-living ‘rogue’ of an Australian journalist, Ross Dunkley, the *Myanmar Times* sought in its own way to change Myanmar Government policy, worked diligently to reveal aspects of Myanmar and its people that were not normally covered in government-controlled media, and eventually endeavoured to interpret developments in Myanmar sensitively and objectively to the international community. It also went out of its way to publicise — very helpfully — Australian policies and initiatives towards Myanmar, so that Australia achieved a considerably higher profile than it otherwise would have had. At any time, several Australian journalists worked on the staff of the newspaper, as writers, trainers, and in senior managerial positions. Not long after it started, the *Myanmar Times* began providing significant training programs for its Myanmar journalists.²

The *Myanmar Times* was a joint business venture (Myanmar Consolidated Media) between Western Australian newspapers — and Bill Clough in particular — and a Myanmar businessman connected to military intelligence. Ross Dunkley was widely criticised in ‘activist’ circles for agreeing to work under strict censorship of a regime that activists regarded as illegitimate. The life and work of Ross Dunkley and the *Myanmar Times* was later featured in the interesting 2011 documentary film, *Dancing with Dictators: The Story of the Last Foreign Publisher in Burma*. Dunkley was sometimes accused of acting as ‘an apologist’ for the regime, and lacking independence and integrity, but the *Myanmar Times* was always run transparently and was prepared to publish articles critical of the military regime when it could. Dunkley was personally openly opposed to many regime policies and showed courage in challenging regime policies in

2 According to Wikipedia: ‘Myanmar Consolidated Media is the largest private media company in Myanmar and employs more than 300 staff and has bureaus in Mandalay and Naypyitaw. The paper has a circulation of around 25,000 copies in Burmese and 3,000 copies in English. A January 2008 report said the Burmese edition is the country’s largest circulation newspaper, while the English edition is the only privately owned and operated English-language newspaper in the country.’ See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Myanmar_Times.

the early 2000s, although this happened very rarely. Dunkley later achieved international prominence when he had a falling out with the regime and was arrested in 2011.³

There was also a handful of smaller Australian businessmen living and working in Myanmar on a long-term basis who appeared to be respected and recognised in the local community. Larger Australian firms such as Broken Hill Propriety Limited, which would normally play a leading role in the foreign business community in Southeast Asia, had closed their office in 1995 after waiting in vain for more open economic policies to deliver suitable commercial opportunities. The smaller Australian entrepreneurs often ran small, even one-person companies in somewhat specialised areas with valuable technical skills such as environmental equipment, mining and energy services, interior decorating, and legal services. They sourced goods and services from Australia, contributing to the very modest bilateral trade volume. A few other Australians were working as individuals in the hospitality, tourism, and education sectors. Given the small size of the international community overall, some of these Australians occasionally had a quite a high profile in the local community and were sometimes well known to prominent Myanmar leaders.

As a general impression, Australians residing in Myanmar at this time tended not to be taking inappropriate advantage of military rule in Myanmar. Indeed, many of them were participating in humanitarian and welfare activities, including through Christian organisations. If any Australians were involved in any kind of dubious or illicit activities, these tended not to come to light. With an Australian Federal Police presence in the Australian Embassy after 2000 producing good working relationships with the Myanmar law enforcement authorities, it could be anticipated that untoward Australian activities would come to notice, as happened elsewhere. By and large, during this period — due in large part to the very low number of Australian tourists travelling to Myanmar — the Australian Embassy experienced very few significant consular problems.

3 Some aspects of Dunkley's work in Myanmar were described by Chris Maldon after Dunkley was imprisoned on apparently trumped-up charges, on which he was found guilty but was eventually freed. See 'Newspaper Boss Ross Dunkley to Renew Push for Free Media in Burma', *The Australian*, 2 July 2011. Available at www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/newspaper-boss-ross-dunkley-to-renew-push-for-free-media-in-burma/story-e6frg6so-1226085874701.

At the same time, there were very few Australian tourists or private citizens visiting Myanmar. This was quite an abnormal situation, especially when compared with the numbers visiting Thailand next door. Although Australian pro-democracy advocates did not formally seek to ban tourism, some Australian sympathisers, such as the trade union movement and some of the small political parties, did call for a ban on tourism, but without success. A few small Australian travel companies continued to promote tourism to Myanmar, at least until 2003; after the 30 May 2003 attack on Aung San Suu Kyi at Depayin, companies such as Intrepid stopped dealing with Myanmar, and did not resume operations there until after 2010. Australian Government policy at this time was not to intervene against normal commercial activities. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's support for a tourism boycott was sometimes stated vigorously, but her position changed to one of tolerating individual tourism, but not mass tourism, for which Myanmar Government assistance might be required. To my knowledge, Australian tourists and tourism companies were not directly involved in supporting Myanmar Government activity. The NLD never drew our attention to inappropriate activities by Australian travel companies.

One of the very few high-profile consular 'cases' involving Australian travellers in this period was that of the human rights activist James Mawdsley, a British–Australian dual citizen who was imprisoned in Kengtung prison in eastern Shan State in 1999, and who was, by agreement, receiving consular assistance from the British Embassy. As Wikipedia explains, Mawdsley is

a Catholic seminarian who is also a human rights activist campaigning for democracy in Burma. He is a dual citizen of the United Kingdom and Australia. He was born in 1972. He gave up his studying at Bristol University to teach English at a Burmese refugee camp. Mawdsley was arrested three times for his involvement and deported three times. He spent over a year in a prison in Myanmar during 1999 and 2000 and was also tortured, as part of a seventeen-year jail sentence, after taking part in pro-democracy protests in Rangoon.

Mawdsley had let it be known that he wanted to be arrested again by the Myanmar authorities, and it appears that he was writing a diary of his imprisonment for later publication. The Australian Embassy kept itself informed about Mawdsley's situation through the British Embassy during the year of his imprisonment. I met his (Australian) mother when she came to visit him in late 2000, but only met

Mawdsley himself at Yangon airport after his release from Kengtung prison when he was being deported to the UK. Mawdsley's book detailing his campaign against the military regime's human rights abuses acknowledges the efforts of my predecessor, Lyndall McLean, on his behalf.⁴

Other Australians who left a distinctive mark inside and outside Myanmar at this time were a small number of Australian academic experts on Myanmar undertaking research in-country and publishing it in high-quality, world-renowned publications. Several of these scholars were social scientists connected with The Australian National University: Helen James, an expert on education and civil society in Myanmar; Andrew Selth, an expert on the Myanmar military who was later affiliated with Griffith University near Brisbane; anthropologist Monique Skidmore, author of *Karaoke Fascism*; and the Danish-born, Canberra-based PhD scholar and later political scientist, Morten Pedersen.⁵ Other scholars working out of Australia, and undertaking notable research in Myanmar at this time included Sean Turnell at Macquarie University in Sydney, and anthropologist Nancy Hudson-Rodd at Edith Cowan University in Perth. All these scholars were successful in undertaking significant research on quite sensitive topics in Myanmar at this time.

Another type of Australian visitor — often probably visiting without the knowledge of the Australian Government — was the occasional academic visiting Myanmar for personal/professional research, or as a '*pro bono*' action helping Burmese universities with advanced courses or postgraduate supervision. Sometimes members of Australian churches visited in a missionary-like role, although more often to perform social work for their Myanmar counterpart church than to engage in religious proselytising. These highly dedicated people usually had little or no contact with the Australian Embassy, although I met a few occasionally at the embassy or social gatherings. I discovered that whatever activities these people were engaged in,

4 James Mawdsley's book, *The Iron Road: A Stand for Truth and Democracy in Burma*, New York: North Point Press, 2001, was published not long after his release.

5 Andrew Selth published *Burma's Armed Forces: Power Without Glory* in 2002; Monique Skidmore published *Karaoke Fascism: Burma and the Politics of Fear* in 2004; Helen James published *Security and Sustainable Development in Myanmar* in 2006; and Morten Pedersen published *Promoting Human Rights in Burma: A Critique of Western Sanctions Policy* in 2008. They were all carrying out in-country research between 2000–03.

their contributions were enormously appreciated by the Burmese people they were working with. (Australia was far from alone in having such ‘humanitarian volunteers’ spending time in Myanmar, in contrast to the isolation and sanctions practised under government policies. There were many more people from the US and the UK.)

Some Australians with a strong interest in Burma avoided visiting Burma under the military regime; some, especially those with connections to the activist movement, preferred to work with the large and relatively settled Burmese refugees on the Thai–Burma border. There were a few exceptions to this. One individual with overt political connections who did visit Burma, despite being on the military regime’s visa ‘black list’,⁶ was the New South Wales Labor party politician Janelle Saffin, who had quite extensive connections with the National League for Democracy. Janelle Saffin was one of a very small number of people at this time who recognised that political change in Myanmar might be getting nearer. She was later (in 2007) to become a Labor member of the federal parliament, an advisor to Labor prime ministers Rudd and Gillard, and — after the transition to the Thein Sein Government — a tireless campaigner for rebuilding the full range of Australian relations with Myanmar. I recall telling staff in the Myanmar Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Myanmar Embassy in Canberra at the time — not acting on any official instructions — that it was not in their interests to ban Australian academics from visiting Myanmar, no matter what they said or wrote, and mentioning Janelle Saffin by name as an example.

The period between 2000–03 saw a number of Australians coming to Myanmar as ‘good Samaritans’, trying to help the ordinary people of Myanmar in one way or another. My predecessor as ambassador, Lyndall McLean, and her husband even came into this category when they returned in 2002 to work for a UN agency and a private company respectively. Another category of visitors was project managers from various Australian Rotary Clubs⁷ undertaking humanitarian projects — their projects ranging from building water supplies to the provision of medical equipment and medical services and training — although

6 Janelle Saffin’s visa applications around this period were mostly unsuccessful because of this, but on at least one occasion she managed to obtain a tourist visa in Bangkok and called on the Australian Embassy in Yangon.

7 These included Rotary Clubs from New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory, but there could have been more.

they rarely had any direct requirements of the embassy. Their activities were all carried out with the knowledge and approval of the Myanmar authorities, often through the intermediation of the Myanmar Medical Association — and often with the direct approval of the Myanmar customs authorities — and never in this period caused problems for the Australian Embassy or the Australian Government. Indeed, the embassy enjoyed very good relations with the Myanmar Medical Association, which in later years also sponsored high-level Myanmar medical delegations to Australia.

As a measure of their commitment to assisting Myanmar, a number of these Australian individuals subsequently established their own charitable NGOs (or non-profit organisations (NPOs)) to cover their ongoing operations in Myanmar. These organisations include Sight for All, based in Adelaide, and the Conolly Medical Foundation for Myanmar, based in Sydney. Possibly the most successful Australian NGO to be set up in this period is Graceworks Myanmar, set up by retired Australian businessman Peter Simmons in Melbourne, which was able to operate effectively with a range of local partners in a variety of humanitarian and capacity-building fields in and around Yangon, with the approval of the Myanmar authorities, and largely without interference from them. Their activities were carried out in the public eye, and often attracted publicity — in Myanmar and/or in Australia — but this was usually low-key, modest publicity that offended nobody, but definitely helped fundraising. Some of these activities also received partial funding from the Australian aid program.

The activities of these individuals and groups were uniquely Australian. They were not the product of consultation with other countries, they were not part of broader programs that were regional or global in their character, they were not even ‘blessed’ by elements of the United Nations, and they were not the result of any ingenious Australian Government strategy to influence and change Myanmar. But they were all conducted openly and transparently and in accordance with accepted ‘best practice’. They all achieved identifiable results, were ‘sustainable’, and mostly continued for several years and gradually expanded the range of their activities. The individuals involved brought credit to Australia through their undertakings. They also brought many more Australians into some form of contact with Myanmar, including as visitors.

Australian media visitors, however, were few and far between. They were usually based in Bangkok, as were the ABC correspondents, and visited Yangon only from time to time to report, mostly when significant events were happening. Often they could not obtain a journalist visa, which was a problem; occasionally, I was asked to intercede with the Myanmar authorities to assist their visa applications, which I normally did. A few other Australian journalists visited, but not many. As Australian Ambassador, I often received requests for interviews with visiting Western journalists such as the *Financial Times* (and sometimes Japanese journalists), which at that time I could agree to do without consultation with Canberra. Some of these media visitors had also been in contact with my predecessors. I felt it was worth responding to such requests, as Western media access was on the whole so limited, and anything to expand the information available was beneficial. I don't recall any embarrassing consequences from this at all, and did not feel pressured to promote any particular political 'line' as long as I was providing factual information about developments or Australian policy.

Very few Australian politicians visited Myanmar during these years, largely because visiting under a military regime might have implied some kind of endorsement of the status quo, or because it might have required some overt criticism of the regime, which might or might not have been appropriate. It was unusual for an Australian embassy not to have to look after a stream of Australian political visitors, but the absence of a parliament in Myanmar actually meant this lack of visitors was logical and unsurprising. There were few political visitors from other countries (with perhaps the exception of Japan), so Australia did not stand out. In other words, it was highly unlikely that political visitors to Myanmar at such an uncertain and polarised time would have achieved anything. Alexander Downer's visit to Yangon in early October 2002 occurred just before the Bali bombing on 12 October 2002, an event which significantly distracted political attention from issues other than terrorism for some time. Over the next year or so, no questions were asked about Burma in the Australian Parliament, in contrast with earlier periods. Nor did many Australian officials visit Myanmar during this period: with a wide range of activities sanctioned, there was little practical work for Australian officials to pursue. In the early 2000s, when some smaller Australian universities began to look further afield for international students —

or even possible sites for off-shore campuses — and started making exploratory visits to Myanmar, we saw a few Australian academic entrepreneurs coming through, but they faced many practical obstacles and considerable competition from other countries, so it took some time before their plans materialised.⁸

One international institution which had taken root in Yangon some years before my arrival was the Hash House Harriers, the running and walking club, mainly for foreigners, which had its origins in British colonial times in Kuala Lumpur.⁹ Participating regularly in the weekly Yangon 'Hash' was, for me, an invaluable way of seeing parts of the city the authorities did not normally want foreigners to enter — as a result, the Hash House Harriers event often attracted the attention of the security authorities. Participating also brought a great range of people from different countries and different jobs into contact, but in an informal and friendly ambience. I occasionally invited other ambassadorial colleagues to participate, which they found most interesting, but perhaps not commensurate with their status. It was also a place where many locally based or visiting Australians would gather. Overall, the Hash House Harriers provided opportunities for anyone participating in the run/walk to ascertain how the Myanmar interests of residents and visitors in very different occupations were faring, and what unannounced initiatives were under way. But there were also a few Burmese men and women who participated very wholeheartedly in the activities, and were always interesting to talk with. Many short-term visitors, including quite a few from Australia, would find their way to the Yangon Hash House Harriers each week.

The Hash House Harriers was where I learnt more about how the Myanmar authorities were 'managing' their 2002–03 bank crisis than would ever come out through the media or scholarly writings.¹⁰ I was fortunate enough to befriend a fellow walker who was a consultant for the Yoma Bank, one of the private Myanmar banks caught up in the run on the banks that occurred. (Unrelated to the crisis, Yoma Bank

8 Educators from Australia at this time included some from Curtin University in Western Australia and the University of Central Queensland in Rockhampton.

9 See the Wikipedia entry at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hash_House_Harriers.

10 The Australian economist who specialises in Myanmar, Professor Sean Turnell from Macquarie University in Sydney, wrote the most detailed account in his *Fiery Dragons: Banks, Moneylenders and Microfinance in Burma*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2009. However, Turnell was not in Myanmar during the crisis.

was trying to install modern electronic banking systems for the first time across its branches in Myanmar.) What was known in banking circles was that when the bank crisis was at its most serious point — probably during February and March 2003 — the Myanmar Government was convening a daily meeting of the main banks and the government representatives, led by the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Myanmar, but also including military intelligence. The purpose was to monitor closely the demands on the private banks, and to manage and direct their responses, to avoid the situation worsening and getting out of control. While my walking ‘friend’ was fairly careful in what he disclosed, he indicated that questions about how to manage deposits at the customer level and the banks’ capitalisation were on the table.

Unsurprisingly, some of the decisions taken by the Myanmar authorities left the banks uncomfortable, and the regulators were fairly authoritarian in their approach, but the overall process was more inclusive than might have been expected, and was certainly very ‘hands-on’. Reassuring Myanmar consumers — no easy task, given that they had always been notoriously sceptical about banks — was a high priority. Thus, on 21 February 2003, the head of the government, Secretary One General Khin Nyunt, issued a statement announcing a Central Bank loan to the private banks in question (including Yoma Bank) and seeking to reassure people that private banks were safe.¹¹ Details of what was going on behind the scenes were not secret, but for obvious reasons were not being advertised. Subsequently, private depositors and local businesses lost quite substantial amounts, but the banking system — such as it was — survived. (Yoma Bank, never very close to the government, was criticised for unspecified breaches of its obligations, but continues operating and today remains the second largest private bank in Myanmar.)

The weekly Hash House Harriers event often meant going to parts of Yangon where the authorities might prefer foreigners not to go: areas where there was extreme poverty; areas where local residents were openly less supportive of the authorities; and areas where the Myanmar authorities’ presence was, for one reason or another, problematical — there might be an ‘off-limits’ military establishment, military activities

11 This was reported on page one of the *Myanmar Times* of 24 February in an article entitled ‘S1 reassures public that private banks are safe’.

that were not for public acknowledgement, or questionable police behaviour. So the Hash House Harriers group occasionally found itself at odds with the security authorities, but since it was officially acceptable to move around anywhere in Yangon, there was little the local police could do about this. (In practice, the Hash group went out of its way to respect local practices — removing footwear if we passed through a monastery, for example.) On one occasion, as the local security agent tried surreptitiously to photograph Hash participants, we turned the tables by asking him to take a group photograph of the Hash with his own camera. On another occasion, the Australian Federal Police representative from the Australian Embassy was acting as the 'hare', setting the trail for the Hash running event, but was arrested for trespassing near a military camp. He was released by the police when they discovered his identity, but the Hash proceeded to have an illustrated t-shirt printed to commemorate that occasion.

Eventually, I was given the 'Hash name' of 'Ambolator', appropriate since I always walked rather than ran, and much more respectable than some of the names other participants were given. After my return to Australia and my retirement, while working on Myanmar at The Australian National University, I would endeavour to join up with the Yangon Hash House Harriers whenever I visited Myanmar. It was still an enjoyable and relaxing institution where one could understand a different side of Myanmar.

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