



ACSJC BRIEFING

No. 68 – May 2006

From the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, the social justice and human rights agency of the Catholic Church in Australia - www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

IN THIS ISSUE

- From the Chairman
- Current Issues/Resources
- Latest Publications
- May Notices
- April News Monitor
- May Justice Calendar

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends,

Below is the text of a Pastoral Letter issued to mark the Feast of St Joseph the Worker (1st May), which I invite you to consider and circulate in your parish and local communities:

THE VOICE OF VULNERABLE WORKERS IN THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK

In November 2005, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference voiced its concerns about the impact of the federal government's industrial relations changes on the poor and the vulnerable and on family life.

On this Feast Day of St Joseph the Worker, let us recall what the Church has said and listen to the voice of vulnerable workers in the changing context of workplace relations.

CHANGES IN THE WORLD OF WORK

It would be difficult to overstate the enormity of the changes in the world of work over the past two decades. In 1988, 74 per cent of all employees were permanent full-time workers. This category now describes only 60 per cent of all employees.[1] The trend is particularly concerning because it has been accompanied by increased casualisation, a general reduction in job security, persistent underemployment and a pattern of low-paid jobs replacing higher-paid jobs.

It is sometimes claimed that such trends are the result of inevitable economic processes, and that little can be done to prevent their development. This position, however, is contrary to the Church's teaching that we should be unmoved by ideologies that would abandon a purposive role for government and the community. Labour markets, like all markets, are continually shaped by the decisions governments make. This is certainly true in the field of industrial relations.

In 2006, the community awaits the effects of the federal government's changes to industrial law — changes that have been described by many experts as the most far-reaching in a century. This level of change requires vigilance. The Church's social justice tradition, as outlined in the Compendium of Social Doctrine, holds that:

"The historical forms in which human work is expressed change, but not its permanent requirements, which are summed up in the respect of the inalienable human rights of workers... The more substantial the changes are, the more decisive the commitment of intellect and will to defend the dignity of work needs to be..." [art. 319]

THE VOICE OF THE CHURCH

In keeping with this tradition, my brother bishops and I articulated a number of concerns that go to the likely general effects of the 'WorkChoices' legislation, and to particular effects that can strike the most vulnerable:

- * that minimum wages would be pushed lower or erode over time
- * that creating jobs by allowing wages and conditions to fall would do little to lift people out of poverty
- * that a reduction of the award safety net would see the loss of fair standards of employment for all
- * that the removal of unfair dismissal laws for most businesses would exacerbate job insecurity
- * that the role of unions representing their members and other workers would be weakened.

These concerns remain.

THE VOICE OF VULNERABLE WORKERS

The Feast of St Joseph the Worker provides the opportunity to learn from the experiences of those workers who have already endured negative consequences of a changing labour market. What do vulnerable workers say about their 'flexible' working arrangements?

- CASUAL WORK AND YOUNG WORKERS

For two decades, young workers have experienced the impact of the dramatic rise of casual employment, which now comprises one third of all paid work. This work is sometimes an opportunity to finance study or an entrée to full-time work. But for many it offers little hope of advancement and is characterised by poor wages and conditions, unreasonable hours and no training.

The Australian Young Christian Workers Movement has highlighted the growth of a 'casual mentality' among workers who have no say in their work arrangements and often fear the loss of work or conditions if they 'rock the boat'.

"With the work environment turning increasingly towards individual contracts in the form of Australian Workplace Agreements, the desire for job security on the part of the employee, the lack of bargaining skills among many young workers, and the possibility of intimidation on the part of the employer in negotiating agreements, makes the so-called 'casual mentality' an issue of growing concern." [2]

While there are many exemplary employers who provide meaningful and rewarding jobs, market pressures and poor employment practices can easily undermine the working relationship.

- LOW-PAID WORKERS IN PRECARIOUS JOBS

Vulnerable workers often experience contradictory pressures that limit the influence of employees in workplace relations. On one hand, the ease with which they can be laid off or have their hours reduced exposes them to periods in and out of employment. On the other, they are increasingly offered jobs with fewer conditions but the same level of expected obligation as in permanent work.

The 'Clean Start' campaign of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union is seeking to address the low pay and conditions of cleaners in the property services industry. Already on an average income of less than \$15,000 pa, these workers are being pushed to intensify their workloads:

"Each time the contract goes up for tender we worry about our jobs. Each time the contract changes I have watched the new contractor expect us to do the same work in less hours." [3]

Where contractors cut costs to win contracts, the most vulnerable of people can be easily exploited. For example, in order to secure a cleaning job, some are asked to undertake a month-long 'training' period where they work for no pay.

"They just sent me around with another worker and got my labour for free. That's not training. The training could really have happened in three or four days."

- WORKERS AND FAMILIES IN POVERTY

Researchers currently engaged in a 'Low Pay Project' claim that the number of 'working poor' in Australia has increased substantially over the past decade and shows no sign of a turnaround.

In addition to the economic consequences of poverty, irregular hours can leave workers 'time poor' for family and other jobs. The pressure to supplement low family income with a cleaning job, for example, can see parents absent when their children are preparing for school or attending religious, social and sporting events. Excessive work demands undermine the stability of family life.

The difficulty of juggling multiple low-paying jobs is illustrated by a childcare worker seeking additional income as a cleaner:

"My cleaning [job] is only relief... I had a set [childcare] shift where it was 7.30 to 2.30 every day... I was made to quit my [second] job so I could do rotating shifts... the times just don't meet." [4]

These workers are unlikely to benefit from 'family-friendly' arrangements let alone 'work-friendly' ones as they struggle to achieve a family wage.

THE CHURCH WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE A VOICE

One wonders how those workers with fewer skills, little bargaining power and no representation will cope in the cut and thrust of workplace negotiations.

The role of the Church in voicing its concern for vulnerable workers and families was challenged during the public debate about the 'WorkChoices' legislation. The wisdom to be gained from the lived experience of vulnerable workers is likely to be challenged similarly.

It is important to note the foundations on which the Church's concerns are voiced.

The pastoral care of people in need in communities around Australia provides strong insight into the circumstances of low paid and unemployed workers and their families. As a major employer, the Church also draws on the expertise of Catholic industrial relations bodies at the national and diocesan levels, together with the opinion of other industrial relations experts in the analysis of legislation.

Fundamentally, it is the Church's concern for the inherent dignity of the person that informs these views. For over a century, the Church has spoken of the central importance of work to the dignity of individuals and families and the foundation of a properly functioning society.

The person is the measure of the dignity of work. Adequate pay, fair conditions, the representation of industrially weak workers and the availability and security of work are the grounds on which the fairness of industrial relations is and will continue to be tested.

*Most Rev Christopher Saunders
Bishop of Broome
Chairman, ACSJC*

NOTES

1. Ian Watson, et al., 2003, *Fragmented Futures: New Challenges in Working Life*, The Federation Press, Annandale, pp.46-7
 2. Australian Young Christian Workers, 2005, *From Money to Meaning: Young People and Work*, Catholic Social Justice Series No.56, ACSJC, Sydney
 3. Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, 2006, *A Clean Start for the property and services industry*, Sydney.
(http://lhmu.org.au/lhmu/campaigns/Clean_Start/)
 4. Helen Masterman-Smith, Robyn May, Barbara Pocock, 2006, *Living Low Paid: Some Experiences of Australian Childcare Workers and Cleaners*,
<http://www.lowpayproject.com.au>
- The ACSJC gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Dr Tim Battin, senior lecturer in political science, University of New England and the Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations. For further information on ACCER's work, visit <http://www.accer.asn.au>

CURRENT ISSUES/RESOURCES

ACSJC MEDIA RELEASE – LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF VULNERABLE WORKERS – 1 May 2006

On the Feast Day of St Joseph the Worker, Bishop Christopher Saunders, ACSJC Chairman has issued a pastoral letter reiterating concerns raised by the Catholic Bishops regarding workplace relations changes and considering the experiences of those workers who have already endured some of the negative consequences of labour market deregulation. Bishop Saunders commented, "one wonders how those workers with fewer skills, little bargaining power and no representation will cope in the cut and thrust of workplace negotiations." (refer: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>)

YCW MEDIA RELEASE ON INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY

The Young Christian Workers are celebrating International Labour Day on in solidarity with the struggle of young workers all over the world. It has expressed concern for the loss of young people's work rights, value and dignity due to the newly introduced WorkChoices legislation. Sara Kane, National Secretary of the YCW says the movement will be using the International Day of Work as a defining moment to oppose the new WorkChoices legislation. The YCW will be hosting a range of International Day events to empower young people, encouraging them to stand up to create fair and decent workplaces. These events will include: industrial relations forums educating young people on the new changes and their work rights and responsibilities; communication, conflict resolution and negotiating skills workshops; and work with unions and community and church organisations to promote the 'Your Rights at Work' campaign. For more information contact the YCW National Secretary on 0409 083 170 or sara.kane@ycw.org.au

LOW PAY PROJECT

The Low Pay Project is a major Australian research undertaking involving researchers and advocates from academic, union and welfare sectors. It aims to develop deeper understandings about low pay services sector work in Australia. Australian workers experience low pay in diverse ways, depending on their industry, occupation, location, gender, cultural background, age and household circumstances. The project focused on case studies in three industries – building services, hospitality and human services sectors. Each case study is being conducted in a different state. The project will consider the effects of low pay on workers, households and the national social and economic fabric. For more information and to access papers and resources, visit the Low Pay Project website: <http://www.lowpayproject.com.au>

CLEAN START: FAIR DEAL FOR CLEANERS CAMPAIGN

Clean Start - Fair Deal for Cleaners is the Australian and New Zealand part of a worldwide campaign voicing concerns over the low wages and poor conditions in the property services industry. This is a significant campaign and one that aims to have a real impact on the lives of low paid, predominantly women, workers and the lives of their families. The campaign organisers, the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union members want the chance to bargain for good jobs capable of providing their families with a decent standard of living. They are asking the people in our various communities, migrant networks, religious communities, human rights and interest groups, women's organisations to work in partnership with cleaners and their unions on this campaign. Catholic Church leaders who spoke at the launches of this campaign around Australia on 20 April included Bishop Patrick Power of Canberra and Goulburn, Sister Libby Rogerson IBVM in Sydney, and Monsignor David Cappo in Adelaide. For further information on the campaign, visit:
http://lhmu.org.au/lhmu/campaigns/Clean_Start/

SECONDARY SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS FOR YOUNG INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

The Foundation for Young Australians "Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme" (IYLP) is offering secondary school scholarships are available for young Indigenous people. Young secondary students are invited to apply to The Foundation for the scholarships of up to \$15,000 per eligible secondary student, per year, for tuition and accommodation costs. Additionally, various opportunities will be offered to IYLP scholars for the development of leadership skills. Schools and communities are encouraged to identify and assist eligible students to apply for this great opportunity. Further information and application forms available from http://www.youngaustralians.org/fund/ya_fund_IYLP.asp
Applications Close Friday 8 May 2006 @ 6.00pm

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

*(orders Tel: 02 9956 5811 or download an order form from the ACSJC website:
<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/PDF/TEMPLATE-ORDERFORM.pdf>)*

2006 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY

The ACSJC's 2006 Social Justice Diary, Seasons of Social Justice, focuses on social justice for Indigenous people. Each month, significant events for Indigenous Australians are noted and particular social justice issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are identified. Information and ideas for prayer and reflection are included. An excellent resource for parishes, schools and social justice groups, the diary is an educational and spiritual resource. Cost: \$6.60 (inc. GST), plus postage. To download an order form, go to:
http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/publications/social_justice_calendar.html

ACSJC DISCUSSION GUIDE: WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE

The discussion guide consists of: an overview of the Pope's message; some points for reflection and discussion; a prayer; and a guide to additional resources. It is available on the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

ACSJC BACKGROUND PAPER: STOLEN WAGES – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR JUSTICE?

This Background paper provides basic information on the circumstances facing many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families seeking wages they were not paid for years of work. The Paper is available on the ACSJC's website:

http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/pdf/2006_1_23stolen_wages_-_an_opportunity_for_justice.pdf

SERIES PAPER: FROM MONEY TO MEANING: YOUNG PEOPLE AND WORK

Catholic Social Justice Series No.56 – the Australian Young Christian Workers addresses the issue of young people and casual work. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage) (postage rates listed below)

SERIES PAPER: A LOVE THAT DOES JUSTICE

Catholic Social Justice Series No. 55 – Fr Neil Brown discusses the fundamental issues of charity, morality, love and justice in the Christian life. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage) (postage rates listed below)

2005 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT

The Australian Catholic Bishops' 2005 Social Justice Sunday Statement is entitled "Jesus, Light for the World – Living the Gospel today". The ACSJC is still taking orders of 10 or more for the Statement. An order form is available on the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

The Statement can be downloaded at: <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/latest.html> and

http://www.acsjc.org.au/CONTENT/publications/documentation/documentation_sjs01.html

LEAFLET & PRAYER CARD: TEN STEPS TOWARDS LIVING THE GOSPEL TODAY

Call (02) 9956 5811

(Postage rates for Catholic Social Justice Series Papers: 1 copy \$1; 2-3 copies \$1.45; 4-5 copies \$2.45)

MAY NOTICES

MAY 1: PUBLIC LECTURE, "RESPONDING NOT REACTING" (ACT). Carol Kiernan, coordinator of analytical services, Australian Federal Police, will deliver a lecture as part of the 'People in Dialogue: Living in a Multifaith Society' series. 7.00 to 8.00pm, ACU National Canberra Campus (Signadou), Antill Street, Watson, ACT. For more info call the School of Theology on (02) 6209 1172 or the CACW on (02) 6201 9864. (refer: http://www.acu.edu.au/acu_national/News___Events_Calendar/Events.cfm)

MAY 2: PUBLIC LECTURE, "CARE PROVISION IN THE CHANGING CONSTRUCTION OF WELFARE STATES" (NSW). As part of the Social Policy & Research Centre seminar series, Prof. Bettina Cass will explore paid/unpaid care configurations in the context of policy changes. 1.00 to 2.30pm, Room 25, Building G2, SPRC Western Grounds, University of New South Wales. To confirm the location, date, and time of a seminar, call (02) 9385 7803 or (02) 9385 7802. (refer: <http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/seminars/2006s1.htm>)

MAY 3: PUBLIC LECTURE, "IS PEACE POSSIBLE? PALESTINE AND ISRAEL" (Vic). Prof Jamal Nassar is a Palestinian-born, US-based academic who has written and lectured internationally on the history of the Palestinian national struggle. RMIT Globalism Institute in association with Victorian Peace Network, Australian Arabic Council and the Australian Jewish Democratic Society are convening this event. Cost \$5. 7.00 to 9.00pm, Storey Hall, RMIT, 340 Swanston St, Melbourne. Contact (03) 9925 2328. (refer: http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org/calendar/event_display_detail.php?event_id=1761&day=3&month=5&year=2006)

MAY 3: PUBLIC FORUM, "WHERE IS IRAQ HEADED?" (NSW). A public forum to discuss the current situation in Iraq, consider future peace activities and watch a short film about Cindy Sheehan who re-ignited US Peace movement. 6.30 to 8.30pm, St Mark's Church Hall, 39 Jamieson St Granville, western Sydney. For more info contact the Parramatta Peace Group on (02) 9673 2545. (refer: <http://www.active.org.au/sydney/calendar/?display=zoom&event=3505>)

MAY 3: PUBLIC LECTURE, "SOFTWARES OF COLONIALISM: CONTRADICTIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT POLICY FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS" (ACT). Patrick Sullivan, Visiting Research Fellow, Indigenous Regional Organisation and Governance, AIATSIS questions the imbalance between Indigenous multiple reporting and government streamlining, including inequities in administrative costs, in the push for a whole-of-government approach to Indigenous Affairs. 12.30 to 2.00pm, ANU Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, CAEPR Seminar Room GO58, Ground Floor, Hanna Neumann Bldg #21, Australian National University, Canberra. For more info contact (02)6125 0587 or admin.caepr@anu.edu.au (refer: <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/events.php>)

MAY 3: PUBLIC FORUM, "CLOSED HEARTS AND CLOSED BORDERS – AUSTRALIA'S OFFSHORE DETENTION PROPOSALS" (NSW). What does offshore processing mean for Australia's adherence to international law and moral principals, our international reputation and most importantly what does this mean for the refugees themselves? Come and hear some expert speakers unpack the issue for you at this event organised by A Just Australia. Speakers include: Dr Louise Newman, NSW Institute of Psychiatry; David Bitel, Parish Patience Lawyers and former Chair of the Refugee Council; Sister Susan Connolly. 7.00 to 9.00pm, Pitt Street Uniting Church, 264 Pitt St, Sydney. (refer: http://www.ajustaustralia.com/whats happening_events.php)

MAY 4: PUBLIC FORUM, "CLOSED HEARTS AND CLOSED BORDERS – AUSTRALIA'S OFFSHORE DETENTION PROPOSALS" (Vic). A Just Australia is convening this forum at the University of Melbourne. Speakers include: John Gibson, Refugee Council; Paris Aristotle AM, Director of The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture; Fr Peter Norden SJ; a refugee formerly detained on Nauru. 7.00 to 9.00pm, the Elisabeth Murdoch Theatre, University of Melbourne. Enter via Swanston St. Theatre between gates 3&4 behind the Ian Potter Museum of art. (refer: http://www.ajustaustralia.com/whats happening_events.php)

MAY 4 – 5: CONFERENCE, "SHAPING THE FUTURE: SOCIAL SERVICES & SOLUTIONS FOR TOMORROW" (WA). The WA Council of Social Service Conference 2006 provides the opportunity to engage in dialogue about the ideological and political orientation of Governments, changing cultural norms, shifting societal values, media and corporate influence, community priorities and how growing social problems impact both directly and indirectly on the social services sector. This Conference is a chance for social service workers and volunteers to renew their passion for their work. The conference will be held at the Sheraton Perth Hotel. For all enquires and additional information contact Event Edge (08) 9387 1488 or info@eventedge.com.au. (refer: <http://www.wacoss.org.au/conference2006/home.htm>)

MAY 5: PUBLIC FORUM, "AFTER CRONULLA: BEING AN AUSTRALIAN OF ISLAMIC FAITH AND LEBANESE HERITAGE" (NSW). Nadia Jamal, Sydney Morning Herald journalist since 1997, is currently night chief of staff. Nadia is the co-author of a new book titled The Glory Garage - Growing up Lebanese Muslim in Australia. 5.00 to 7.00pm, Teachers Federation House, Level 1, 23 - 33 Mary Street, Surry Hills, Sydney. RSVP to the library desk by Friday April 28: (02) 9217 2113 or email libdesk@nswtf.org.au (refer: http://www.erc.org.au/events/FridayForums_5May06.htm)

MAY 5: PUBLIC LECTURE, "RELIGION, LAW AND POLITICS" (SA). Fr Frank Brennan SJ will reflect on the relevance of religious beliefs in law, politics and public life and a range of social justice issues. Cost \$12. 7.30pm to - 9.30pm, Effective Living Centre, 26 King William Rd, Wayville, Adelaide, SA. For further info contact (08) 8271 0329, pcnet@effectiveliving.org (refer: http://www.ajustaustralia.com/whats happening_events.php)

MAY 5 – 7: PUBLIC HEARINGS, "PEOPLE'S INQUIRY INTO IMMIGRATION DETENTION" (ACT). Public hearings for the people's inquiry will be in Canberra at the Australian Catholic University, Watson. Anyone with experience or knowledge of immigration detention can testify at the hearings. For more info contact (02) 6292 1121 or aaswactsec@asw.asn.au

MAY 6: PUBLIC LECTURE, "THE PRESENT SCORECARD ON AUSTRALIA'S REFUGEE POLICY" (SA). Fr Frank Brennan SJ will speak on current developments in refugee policy. 9.30am at Verdun Uniting Church, Onkaparinga Valley Road, Verdun, Adelaide, SA. Bookings: (08) 8339 4028 (no charge) (refer: http://www.ajustaustralia.com/whats happening_events.php)

MAY 6: WORKSHOP ON GENDER (ACT). The Commission for Australian Catholic Women (CACW) is hosting a workshop developed for the Gender Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia. The workshop is energising and will capture imagination, vision and hope and will be held in conjunction with the Young Catholic Women's Interfaith Fellowship. Cost \$15. 10.00am to 3.30pm, Australian Catholic University, Antill Street, Watson. To register, contact CACW or phone 6201 9864. (refer: <http://www.cacw.catholic.org.au/>)

MAY 10: SCREENING, "INVISIBLE KASHMIR: THE OTHER SIDE OF JANNAT (PARADISE)" (NSW). The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and the University of Sydney is screening this documentary by Dilnaz Boga. This is a reflection of the turmoil that is within and around children in Kashmir. Some express it eloquently; others are unable to utter a word. This documentary peeks into their lives and attempts to bring to the fore the reality beyond mainstream media reports. 1.00pm, Education Building , Lecture Theatre 351, Manning Rd , The University of Sydney (near the Manning Building). RSVP & enquiries contact 02 9351 7686, reign.macmillan@arts.usyd.edu.au (refer: <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/centres/cpacs/seminars.htm>)

MAY 10: FORUM, "FROM MASSACRE TO HEALING" (NSW). As part of the "Reconciliation in Parliament 2006" initiative of NSW Parliamentarians and community organisations, the Sydney Friends of Myall Creek will run this event and launch of educational resources. 5.30pm to 6.45pm Jubilee Room, NSW Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney. (refer: <http://www.erc.org.au/events/100506Myall.shtml>)

MAY 10: PANEL DISCUSSION, "THE IMPACT OF WORK CHOICES" (ACT). As part of a series of 'fringe seminars' to accompany the High Court hearing of the constitutional challenge to the Work Choices legislation, the ANU Centre of International and Public Law is holding a panel discussion to address the impact of Work Choices on different sectors and groups including universities, the community sector, public employment sector and women workers. 6.00 to 7.30pm, Sparke Helmore Theatre No. 1, ANU College of Law Cnr Fellows & East Roads, The Australian National University, Canberra. RSVP to: cipl@law.anu.edu.au by cob 5 May. (refer: <http://law.anu.edu.au/cipl/events.asp>)

MAY 10: PUBLIC LECTURE, "WHY THE 'NEW DIRECTION' IN FEDERAL INDIGENOUS POLICY IS AS LIKELY TO FAIL AS THE OLD DIRECTIONS" (ACT). David Martin, Fellow at the ANU Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, will discuss evidence showing that while many Indigenous people do indeed seek to take advantage of better economic opportunities, and while cultural change is a feature of all societies, Indigenous and otherwise, there is a widespread resistance amongst Indigenous people to what they see as attempts to assimilate them into the dominant society. 12.30 to 2.00pm, CAEPR Seminar Room GO58, Ground Floor, Hanna Neumann Bldg #21, Australian National University, Canberra. For more info contact (02)6125 0587 or admin.caepr@anu.edu.au (refer: <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/events.php>)

MAY 12: SEMINAR, "DIVERSITY, DISADVANTAGE, DISCRIMINATION: MIGRANTS, REFUGEES AND RACISM IN AUSTRALIA" (NSW). This special seminar on resisting racism is being convened by SAVE – Australia Inc. It will explore how to achieve respect for diversity and sustain harmony in our society. It will help us all to devise a strategy to address contemporary race relationship and human rights issues. Speakers include: Maqsood Alshams, President, SAVE – Australia; Angelo Gavrielatos, Deputy President of the NSW Teachers Federation; Silma Ihram, Principal of Noor Al Houda Islamic College; Graham Larcombe, Director of Strategic Economics Group; Dr Nina Burridge of the University of Technology Sydney. Cost: \$20 wages, \$10 unwaged. 8.30am to 12.30pm, Lakemba Senior Citizen's Centre, Cnr The Boulevard & Croydon Street, Lakemba, western Sydney. Booking essential by 20 May. For more info and enquiries contact 0422 085 222

MAY 12: PUBLIC LECTURE, "DOING SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL ANALYSIS FOR TODAY" (NSW). When Peter Henriot SJ first published his book *Social Analysis, the Cold War and liberation theology* were at their peak. The basic tool of the "pastoral circle" became a benchmark presentation of a methodology used by thousands of conscientious Catholics worldwide. The Cold War has since ended and social justice appears to be on the retreat in Australia. Is this approach still relevant in today's age of globalisation and terror? How might we apply it to the Australian context? Speaker: Peter Henriot SJ. Respondent: Frank Brennan SJ AO. 12 noon to 1.30pm, Gleeson Auditorium, Australian Catholic University, Strathfield. Free event sponsored by Uniya, ACU National, and the ACMICA. Booking required to (02) 9356 3888 or Veronika.Jeffrey@uniya.org. (refer: http://www.uniya.org/news/news_henriot_may2006.html)

MAY 15: INFORMATION EVENING, "HUMAN TRAFFICKING" (Qld). Between 700,000 and 2,000,000 people are trafficked each year and the slavery 'trade' has become the third largest income-generating trade in the world. Australia is a 'destination' country. Want to know more? Come and hear Sr Pauline M Coll SGS, Coordinator of Sisters of the Good Samaritan Working Against Human Trafficking, and Member of the National Religious Congregations Anti-Trafficking Working Group. 7.30 to 9.00pm Lourdes Hill College, 50 Hawthorne Road, Hawthorne, Brisbane. RSVP 12 May to pauline@brisnet.org.au or fstirling@lhc.qld.edu.au or phone (07) 3399 8888. (refer: <http://www.sosj.org.au/justice/events.html>)

MAY 18: WORKSHOP & LECTURE, "BRINGING JUSTICE ALIVE FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE" (Qld). The Brisbane Catholic Justice and Peace Commission and Christian Brothers, St Francis Xavier Province, are hosting a workshop with guest speaker Dr Peter Henriot SJ, Director of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in Zambia. Dr Henriot will share insights from his many years of experience in living the Gospel call for justice and consider ways in which we can analyse local and global situations where people face injustice and disadvantage. Cost \$20. Venue the Mercy Centre, Simpsons Road, Bardon. Bookings should be made by Friday 12 May. For more info and to book a workshop place contact (07) 3327 2203 or ted.magee@ericeqld.org.au

MAY 18: SEMINAR, "CHILDCARE: A POTENTIAL UNION AND COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN" (Vic). As part of the Melbourne RMIT Community Advocacy Unit 2006 Seminar Series, Lauren Matthews and Heather Fraser will explore how union and community organisations are trying to tackle one of the most outstanding issues affecting women and working families in Australia. Free entry, 6.30 to 8.30pm, State Library of Victoria Conference Centre, Entry on 3 Latrobe St, Melbourne. For further info contact (03) 9925 2910, advocacy@rmit.edu.au (refer: <http://advocacy.tce.rmit.edu.au>)

MAY 19 – 21: BRISBANE SOCIAL FORUM (Qld). A range of speakers, workshops and activities on the theme of freedom. Aung Sun Suu Kyi Building, University of Queensland Student Union (behind the Schonell Cinema complex) St Lucia, Brisbane. For more info, visit: <http://www.brisbanesocialforum.org/>

MAY 21: EVENT, "THE FESTIVAL OF FAITH" (NSW). The Knights of the Southern Cross (NSW) Inc. in collaboration with Carnivale Christi invite interested parties to be part of this celebration focussed on our National Patron, Our Lady, Help of Christians. Highlights include the Festival Mass, Festival Stalls highlighting the wealth of the Church life, a multicultural food festival, music. Don't miss out on this celebration of our Catholic Faith! 12 noon to 5:30pm, St Mary's Cathedral Forecourt, Sydney. For further info and enquiries contact (02) 9390 5340 (Friday only) and festivaloffaith@nareg.com.au (refer: <http://www.ksc.asn.au/>)

MAY 22: PUBLIC LECTURE, "INTERPRETING FREEDOM" (NSW). The Hon. Justice Michael Kirby, A.C, C.M.G will speak to the issue of "Interpreting Freedom: The Use by Final Courts of International Human Rights Law" at this event organised by the Sydney Peace Foundation. 6.00 for 6.30pm, the Footbridge Lecture Theatre, The University of Sydney. Contact the Sydney Peace Foundation for further info: (02) 9351 4468, e-mail: spf@arts.usyd.edu.au (refer: <http://www.sydneypeacefoundation.org.au/events.shtml>)

MAY 24: PUBLIC LECTURE, "THE DEFENCE OF UNPOPULAR CAUSES IN A CLIMATE OF FEAR" (Vic). Lex Lasry QC of the Criminal Bar Association of Victoria will deliver this the 2006 Law Week Oration. From 5.30pm, Melbourne Law School, 185 Pelham Street, Carlton. RSVP by 17 May to the External Relations Unit, Melbourne Law School 03 8344 0074 or m.loane@unimelb.edu.au with "Oration" as subject. (refer: <http://www.law.unimelb.edu.au/index.cfm?objectid=4B1D1CB1-B0D0-AB80-E28E8C05438EC230&DiaryID=2790>)

MAY 25: SEMINAR, "INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS REFORM: COMMUNITY DEFENCE OF TRADE UNIONS" (Vic). As part of the Melbourne RMIT Community Advocacy Unit 2006 Seminar Series, Dave Kerin and Adam Brandt look at the current campaign against the Federal Government's new industrial relations laws. Free entry, 6.30 to 8.30pm, State Library of Victoria Conference Centre, Entry on 3 Latrobe St, Melbourne. For further info contact (03) 9925 2910, advocacy@rmit.edu.au (refer: <http://advocacy.tce.rmit.edu.au>)

MAY 26: SORRY DAY EVENT, "TALI YIRRAN" (NSW). The NSW Sorry Day Committee invites you to acknowledge, remember and honour the Stolen Generations. At First Fleet Park, Circular Quay West from 12 noon to 4.00pm there will be Stolen Generations speakers, Koori performers and guest speaker Peter Garrett MP. At the Museum of Contemporary Art from 6.00pm to 10.00pm there will be Stolen Generations speakers, Koori performers and supper with compere Paulette Whitton. For more info contact NSW Sorry Day Committee on 0437 100 121.

MAY 27: CONFERENCE, "UNITY FOR PEACE NATIONAL CONFERENCE" (Vic). A national peace activists' conference organised by Unity for Peace. Speakers include: Cindy Sheehan, Gold Star Families for Peace, USA; Hassan Juma'a, president, Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions; Dr Salam Ismael, Doctors for Iraq; Donna Mulhearn, former human shield; Kevin Bracken, Vic state secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia... to name a few. Cost: \$50. Venue: The MUA offices, 46 Ireland Street, West Melbourne. For further info contact 0418 316 310, dglanz@optusnet.com.au (refer: <http://www.vicpeace.org/unityforpeace/>)

MAY 27 – JUNE 3: NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK (National). The theme of National Reconciliation Week is "Reconciliation: take the next step". Further info can be found at <http://www.reconciliationaustralia.org/cms.jsp?page=97> or <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~rez/Journey/index.htm>

MAY 31: PUBLIC LECTURE, "POPE BENEDICT XVI'S FIRST ENCYCLICAL: GOD IS LOVE - A CHALLENGE FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE TODAY" (Vic). Public Lecture by Professor Anthony Kelly CSsR, a member of the Vatican's Interantional Theological Commission, lecturer in theology and author. 6.30pm, Christ Lecture Theatre, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne Campus (St Patrick's). For more info contact (03) 9953 3306 or m.harrington@patrick.acu.edu.au (refer: http://www.acu.edu.au/acu_national/News___Events_Calendar/Events.cfm)

JUNE 4: FORUM, "A CHURCH THAT WON'T BE SILENCED" (NSW). The second New Pentecost Forum will bring together church groups and individuals interested in networking in church and civic life for genuine dialogue, a spirituality for liberation and social justice, action for human rights. Speakers include theologians Dr Gemma Cruz (Philippines), Dr Edmund Chia (Malaysia), historian Dr Paul Collins, business leader Hind Kourouche and Uniting Church minister Rod Pattenden. All day forum 10.30am to 7.30pm. Evening public lecture 6.00 to 7.30pm. Ryan Auditorium and Carroll building, Australian Catholic University, North Sydney Campus (40 Edward St). To express your interest or pre-register contact 0403 181 586 or newpentecost@gmail.com (refer: <http://www.newpentecost.com>)

(email news of your forthcoming social justice event by the last week of each month to: admin@acsjc.org.au)

APRIL NEWS MONITOR

SOLOMONS RELIGIOUS LEADERS CALL FOR RECONCILIATION: Religious leaders in Solomon Islands launched an appeal for peace and reconciliation following riots which destroyed most of Chinatown.

AUSTRALIA'S RICHEST BANK BOOSTS GOOD SHEPHERD HELP FOR POOR: It was announced that Australia's the National Australia Bank will dedicate \$30 million over three years to fund programs developed through the Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service and personal and business loans for low-income earners.

CARITAS CALLS FOR URGENT MEDIATION IN SRI LANKA: Caritas Internationalis warned that violence in Sri Lanka could escalate into a "second tsunami" and called upon the international community to urgently mediate between the government and rebel forces.

CATHOLIC GROUP SUPPORTS McCARTNEY ANTI-FUR CAMPAIGN: An international Catholic animal welfare lobby backed a new campaign by pop legend and animal rights campaigner Sir Paul McCartney to prevent high-street shoppers from unwittingly purcing real fur.

CHURCH ADVOCATES SUPPORT CLEANERS "NAME AND SHAME" OVER WAGES: Canberra Auxiliary Bishop Pat Power and Parramatta Diocese Social Justice Coordinator Sr Libby Rogerson spoke in favour of a fair wage campaign being waged by cleaners.

BISHOP SAYS ASYLUM PROCESSING CHANGES "A STEP BACKWARDS": The Government's move to process all asylum seekers offshore is a step backwards and places Australia's international obligations at risk, the Chairman of the Bishops' refugee committee said.

FURTHER APPEAL OPPORTUNITY FOR INDONESIAN DEATH ROW CATHOLICS: Indonesia's Supreme Court gave the green light to a second appeal for three death row Catholics accused of inciting Central Sulawesi's interreligious violence in 2000.

VINNIES SPOKESMAN SAYS WELFARE TO WORK THREATENS VULNERABLE: St Vincent de Paul spokesman John Falzon said that that the entire welfare to work legislation takes away dignity from disability pensioners and single mothers in the workforce and that new workplace laws will exacerbate the problem.

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE SAYS PACIFIC SOLUTION BREACHES

CONVENTION: The Jesuit Refugee Service said that the new refugee processing laws announced last week will constitute a "grievous breach of the Refugees Convention" and create a "dangerous precedent for the future of the system of international protection".

NUN IDENTIFIES KEY TO UNDERSTANDING WEST PAPUA TENSION:

Josephite Sr Susan Connelly said there is a real connection between what had happened in East Timor and what is happening in Papua.

FRENCH BISHOPS FEAR YOUTH PROTESTS SIGNAL "DEEP CRISIS":

France's Catholic bishops said the month-long street protests about the youth employment law signal a "deep crisis" in the country, which requires more consideration of "youth suffering and distress."

CATHOLIC WELFARE NOT SURPRISED AS TAX REPORT OVERLOOKS

BATTLERS: Catholic Welfare Australia said the Treasurer's tax report released during April appears to overlook the disadvantage caused by debilitating effective marginal tax rates for people moving from welfare to work.

FRANCISCANS SAY JAKARTA IGNORING ROOT CAUSE OF WEST PAPUA

TENSION: A Franciscan lobby group said the Indonesian government failed to recognise the "root causes" of unfolding violence in the province of Papua.

CATHOLIC HEALTH SUPPORTS AGED CARE ABUSE REPORT PLAN:

Catholic Health Australia backed a plan by federal and state ministers to oblige aged-care workers to report physical and sexual abuse of elderly people.

COLUMBANS PETITION GOVT ON GE FOOD: The Columban Peace, Ecology and Justice Centre wrote to the Federal Minister for Agriculture and other officials to express concern at the Government's involvement in promoting genetically modified food technology.

VATICAN URGES RESPECT FOR IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS: The Vatican said that respect for immigrants' human rights is also an important benefit for host countries.

VINNIES SAYS "NO" TO GOVT MONEY: The National Operations Manager for the St Vincent de Paul Society said the charity "will never cease giving assistance to people (in need)" but would not accept Federal Government funding under a new welfare breaching regime.

CATHOLIC AGENCIES SEE WAY FORWARD IN MENTAL HEALTH

REPORT: Catholic Welfare Australia welcomed a senate report on mental health, saying it is a comprehensive and long overdue first step towards addressing Australia's mental health crisis.

*- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at
<http://www.cathnews.com/news/604>*

MAY SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

MAY 1 MESSAGE STICK RELAY

In 1986, Pope John Paul II addressed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia:

"You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others."

To celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to Alice Springs, the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council is planning to hold their National Assembly in the Red Centre in October, 2006.

The Pass It On Message Stick Relay is a call from the Indigenous Catholics of Australia to the church and the nation to renew their responses to the challenges identified by Pope John Paul II in 1986. The call is issued by the message stick, an indigenous symbol which reminds us that we cannot be a complete nation or a whole church until we embrace the peoples represented by such symbols.

Nine message sticks were launched on May 1st 2005, from St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney and will be relayed among parishes and schools around the States and Territories of Australia. The Message Stick Relay will culminate in the Alice Springs celebration.

MAY 25 BRINGING THEM HOME REPORT

From 1800 to 1970 it was the policy of successive Australian Governments to remove some children, especially those of mixed race, from Indigenous families to give them a "better life" and eventually assimilate them into white Australia. The National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families was established in 1995, in response to increasing concerns among Indigenous agencies and communities that this practice of separating Indigenous children from their families had never been formally examined, and the long term effects on Indigenous children, their families and communities had never been investigated or even acknowledged.

The Inquiry was asked to trace the past laws, practices and policies that resulted in the separation of Indigenous children from their families by compulsion, duress or undue influence, and to examine the effects. It was also required to consider the adequacy of current laws and to look at what might be done to help children and their families redress the losses suffered while taking into account the principle of self-determination by Indigenous people.

The report, Bringing Them Home, revealed the extent of forced removal, its consequences in terms of broken families, shattered physical and mental health, loss of language, culture and connection to traditional land, loss of parenting skills, and the enormous distress of many of its victims today. For more information: http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/stolen_children/

MAY 26 NATIONAL SORRY DAY

A 'Sorry Day' was held on 26th May 1998, exactly a year after the tabling in Federal Parliament of the report, Bringing Them Home. The report had recommended that a Sorry Day be held - a day when all Australians could express their sorrow for what had happened, and celebrate the beginning of a new understanding.

"Children were removed because the Aboriginal race was seen as an embarrassment to white Australia. The aim was to strip the children of their Aboriginality, and accustom them to live in a white Australia. The tragedy was compounded when the children, as they grew up, encountered the racism which shaped the policy, and found themselves rejected by the very society for which they were being prepared. An apology begins the healing process. Apology means understanding, a willingness to enter into the suffering. It implies a commitment to do more". - Sir Ronald Wilson, President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1900-1997

Today, we acknowledge the past hurt and its consequences, make a public apology for this practice, and promise to move forward together on the journey of healing.

MAY 27 REFERENDUM ALLOWS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO GRANT CITIZEN RIGHTS TO INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS, 1967

The question in the referendum was to determine whether two references in the Australian Constitution, which discriminated against Aboriginal people, should be removed. This referendum saw the highest YES vote ever recorded in a Federal referendum, with 91% voting for change. Australia's Indigenous People would now be included in the Census, and responsibility for them would lie with the Federal Government rather than with the States.

MAY 27 NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK & WEEK OF PRAYER FOR RECONCILIATION

The Week of Prayer for Reconciliation and National Reconciliation Week occur between May 27 and June 3. May 27 marks the anniversary of the 1967 referendum and June 3 marks the anniversary of the High Court's judgment in the Mabo case in 1992.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL Leo XIII House, 19 MacKenzie Street, PO Box 1615, North Sydney NSW 2059. Tel: (02) 9956 5811, Fax: (02) 9954 0056, Email: admin@acsjc.org.au Website: <http://socialjustice.catholic.org.au> ** ACSJC Briefing is sent by email at the beginning of each month (except January). To subscribe or unsubscribe, go to the front page of the website Comments and contributions are also welcome.