



ACSJC BRIEFING

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FROM THE SECRETARIAT

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 circulate in your parish and local communities:

Keeping Time – Australian families and the culture of overwork

I heard a story recently that shocked me. It is of a family finding it hard to manage the demands of paid work on family time. The husband holds down multiple jobs, working all hours of the day and night and travelling from one side of town to another. The wife is also very busy caring for the six children they love dearly.

The husband starts his morning bundling papers for a newsagent. Before most of us are awake, he is cleaning a large retail store. Through the day he cleans three hotels and then he is back at another retail complex. Then he is on call. On Saturdays it's the same routine and he spends Sundays cleaning a shopping centre.

The income just covers the costs of living, running a car and paying off the mortgage. He is on the base rate of pay and depends greatly on the 15% loading for the evening jobs. Asked when he finds time for sleep, he says 'usually in two-hour blocks'. Doing over 80 hours of work a week, it is understandable that there is tension when needs at home cannot be met and the family misses their husband and dad.

On this day, the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, we might hold in our prayers the growing number of workers caught in this kind of situation. I invite all people of good will to bear in mind those who, working their hardest for the ones they love, are denied time with their family and friends.

The loss of family time

Over the past two decades there has been a massive encroachment of work into family time. An increasing number are juggling the demands of work with their family commitments. Families struggling to meet rising costs of living and higher levels of household debt have not been as well served by a labour market that has produced more jobs that are low paying, insecure and involve irregular hours.

Two new studies by the Relationships Australia Forum¹ and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)² show that after 15 years of economic prosperity, many Australians are disappointed with the results and feel overworked, stressed-out and unhappy.

We are among the most overworked nations in the world, with a very high rating among 18 developed nations on key indicators of work intensification. With 22% of the workforce doing at least 50 hours each week, Australia runs second only to Japan in terms of average working hours. Almost a third of the labour force regularly works on weekends, making Australia second only to Italy. It is revealing that around two million Australians work on Sundays. Around 27% of Australian workers are in casual employment, making us second to Spain in terms of work often characterised by irregular hours and, as a result, an enforced dysfunctional family life.

For some workers, flexible working arrangements may be a benefit. For many, however, the rhetoric of family-friendly workplaces has not been realised. This is particularly true for workers in the retail, hospitality and service industries, who have the most unpredictable hours, are often low paid and have little power when it comes to negotiating hours and conditions.

This is a real problem for families with young children and those with caring responsibilities for elderly family members. People caught in the dilemma of having to work longer and harder in jobs that really upset the normal family routine are entitled to ask, 'Where are the promised benefits of workplace flexibility?'

The studies confirm what many have experienced during two decades of labour market deregulation. The demand to work longer and more irregular hours has upset the balance. There is less time for family functions, difficulty in maintaining networks of friends, little time for religious worship, community events and recreation. More alarming is the direct damage to the family unit in the form of high levels of depression and stress, drug and alcohol problems, strained relations leading to separation and divorce, and reduced child welfare.

HREOC makes the case for a national framework and legislation that would ensure the right for workers to request flexible working arrangements, limit long working hours and improve leave arrangements. It seems unlikely, however, that such initiatives will be entertained under the current industrial relations system.

The new workplace laws

After the introduction of *WorkChoices*, there were stories in the media about the impact of the new industrial laws on individuals and groups. The trade union movement and initiatives like the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union's *Clean Start* campaign have focused on the impact on the most vulnerable. It is becoming clearer now, through detailed academic studies, that the loss of some basic protections is substantial.

The Catholic Church in Australia has voiced concerns about workers' rights and conditions under the new laws. The Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations is currently calling on the Australian Fair Pay Commission to ensure that minimum wages meet ordinary family needs without the need for both parents to enter the labour market.³

The Church has also been aware that workers could feel pressured or even forced to bargain away entitlements related to work time. That workers could cash out leave entitlements or that employers could demand additional hours have been particular issues. It is worrying to hear that there has been a substantial reduction of overtime and penalty rates in individual workplace agreements registered under *WorkChoices* and that a majority of these agreements abolish or reduce meal breaks and public holiday payments and shiftwork loadings.⁴

The loss of these conditions can result in lower pay for vulnerable workers. There is also a risk that businesses may see the reduced costs of labour after hours and on weekends as an incentive for more irregular hours of work.

We should remember that it is often small business employers who have a greater understanding and regard for the family needs of their workers, even though small businesses face many pressures. It would be a great shame if the viability of the businesses of employers who maintain their workers' entitlements were undercut by competitors who had abolished these rates.

It has been suggested that any public discussion on the work and family balance will be futile if no policies are being considered to address structural issues in the labour market, such as the casualisation and fragmentation of the workforce.⁵

A helpful first step in assessing the impact of labour market changes on working families would be for the Government to regularly release the full range of data on the terms and conditions of individual agreements registered under the new legislation. This would ensure thorough reasoning and sound debate on the system's operation and its practical outcomes.

Time together is a right

Perhaps it is time for Australia, with the help of our political leaders, to put work in its proper perspective. Work can be an expression of our God-given talents, the means for forming and supporting families and an opportunity for solidarity and contributing to the common good. It is an important means – not an end in itself. This coincides with what Australians say they most aspire to: the welfare of spouses and families, their health and wellbeing, strong friendships, community life and their faith.⁶

Can we reawaken the biblical notion of the Sabbath? It is a time of liberation from the necessity of work, for rest and giving thanks to God. Not limited to Sunday, it is about taking time to find stability in family life, for worship and for recreation. Importantly, Sabbath is also a refuge: 'a barrier against becoming slaves to work, whether voluntarily or by force, and against every kind of exploitation, hidden or evident.'⁷

Time together is every family's right. The Vatican has called on the international community to ensure working parents, both men and women, are 'assisted, if necessary by law, to bring their own unique and irreplaceable contribution to the upbringing of their children, to the evident benefit of the whole society ... [that] families receive adequate and fair wages that are sufficient to meet ordinary family needs'.⁸ Recently the Holy Father, Pope Benedict, warned of labour market changes depriving young people of their 'ability to not only dream and build up a project for the future, but even to commit themselves to matrimony and start a family.'⁹

On this Feast of St Joseph the Worker, we are invited to consider the ways in which we can establish the proper place for work, and the necessary pay and conditions, so that family life is well supported now and for future generations.

Most Rev Christopher Saunders
Bishop of Broome
Chairman, Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

Notes

1. Relationships Forum Australia, 2007, *An Unexpected Tragedy – Evidence for the connection between working patterns and family breakdown in Australia*, RFA Inc, Sydney.
2. HREOC, 2007, *It's About Time: women, men, work and family*, HREOC Sex and Age Discrimination Unit, Sydney.
3. Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations, 2007, Submission to the Australian Fair Pay Commission, 2007 Minimum Wage Review: <http://www.accer.asn.au/docs/tribunal/index.html>
4. Professor David Peetz, 2007, 'Brave New Work Choices: What is the story so far?', paper presented at the 24th Conference of the Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand.
5. Dr Tim Battin, 2006, *Choice for Whom? A discussion of the 2005 industrial relations laws*, Catholic Social Justice Series No.58, ACSJC, Sydney.
6. Survey cited in Relationships Forum Australia, 2007, p.36
7. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, n.258. See also nn. 259f, 280, 284.
8. Statement of the Apostolic Nuncio, H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, to the U.N. Economic and Social Council 45th Session of the Commission for Social Development, New York, February 2007.
9. Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the 9th International Youth Forum, 28 March 2007.

John Ferguson
National Executive Officer

CURRENT ISSUES/RESOURCES

BISHOP CALLS ON POLITICIANS TO PUT WORK IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE

In a Pastoral Letter issued for the Feast Day of St Joseph the Worker (1st May), Bishop Christopher Saunders calls on Government to regularly release data on the terms and conditions of Australian Workplace Agreements. Commenting on Australia's culture of overwork, the Bishop says, "Over the past two decades there has been a massive encroachment of work into family time. People caught in the dilemma of having to work longer and harder in jobs that really upset the normal family routine are entitled to ask, 'Where are the promised benefits of workplace flexibility?'" There have been reports of a substantial erosion of overtime and penalty rates under new individual workplace agreements. This could mean less pay but also more irregular hours for low paid and vulnerable workers. Timely information on the individual agreements registered under the new laws would allow for thorough reasoning and sound debate on the practical outcomes of the new system for working families. The media release and Pastoral Letter can be downloaded at <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

BISHOP SAYS 'THERE IS CATHOLIC POSITION ON IR'

In an address to the Bursars of Conference of Religious Institutes in New South Wales, Bishop Kevin Manning spoke of the Church's long tradition of concern for those who are less well off as well as for the common good. Having regard for that tradition, Bishop Manning said "it was nothing short of amazing to read the Prime Minister's remark in the House of Representatives in August 2006, and I quote him: 'I think it very important to make the obvious statement that there is no such thing as a Catholic position on industrial relations'.

"Of course there is a Catholic position on industrial relations!" said the Bishop, "That some Catholics may not know it, or do not agree with it, cannot obliterate the fact that we have a position clearly enunciated since Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*." For the full address visit: <http://www.parra.catholic.org.au/Bishop/speeches>

ACCER ON MINIMUM WAGE

The Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations has called for the Australian Fair Pay Commission to increase the federal minimum wage to assist low paid workers and their families. ACCER is seeking an increase of \$27.00 per week to increase the Federal Minimum Wage to \$538.86 per week for full time adult workers. To access the submission visit: <http://www.acer.asn.au/docs/tribunal/index.html>

STUDY ON IMPACT OF OVERWORK IN AUSTRALIA

A new report by the Relationships Forum Australia is entitled 'An Unexpected Tragedy – Evidence for the connection between working patterns and family breakdown in Australia'. It establishes a link between changes in Australian working patterns and aspects of wellbeing associated with relationships, particularly those in families, but also including friendships and participation in the broader community. The findings of the study and the conclusions reached provide valuable input to broader community debate about working time and patterns, and provide an analytical foundation for policy development. To download this report, visit:

<http://www.relationshipsforum.org.au/report/index.html>

RESOURCES FOR JUBILEE SUNDAY

Churches and faith communities around Australia will be raising the concerns of countries that have been impoverished by the huge payments they make on foreign debts. Jubilee Sunday, May 20, is an opportunity to remember the vision of Jubilee - freedom from oppression - for millions trapped in poverty by unfair debts. The Columban Mission Institute has teamed up with Jubilee Australia to prepare background information, resources for action and liturgical material for Jubilee Sunday. For more information and to access resources, visit:

<http://www.jubileeaustralia.org>

POVERTY STUDY – 'DROPPING OFF THE EDGE'

Extreme social disadvantage in Australia is real and measurable. It is endemic to a small number of locations in this country, and it can be fixed, according to major new research to be released on Wednesday. 'Dropping off the Edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia' is the most comprehensive national study of its kind. The report, which is a joint project with Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, is the third in a series of reports on the issue, written by Professor Tony Vinson from the University of Sydney. The report finds that just 1.7 per cent of postcodes and communities across Australia account for more than seven times their share of top rank positions on the major factors that cause intergenerational poverty. Maps and more information about how to order this publication are available at <http://www.australiandisadvantage.org.au>

CAMPAIGN – ‘MAKE INDIGENOUS POVERTY HISTORY’

The Make Indigenous Poverty History Campaign continues in 2007 with 40 Days of Action for 40 Years of Inaction. To see how you can get involved in this campaign of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission and to obtain a wide range of resources go to <http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/indigenouspoverty>

EDUCATION MODULE – ‘VOICES OF AUSTRALIA’

An educational tool to help combat racism and promote a culture of respect and equality among high school students around Australia has been launched by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). The resource provides an invaluable tool to help students reap the rewards of living in a community where a quarter of the population has at least one parent born in another country. Copies of the module can be found at: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/voices>

AMNESTY CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

Amnesty International is part of the growing campaign for a world without executions. The death penalty violates one of the fundamental human rights – the right to life itself. To take a part in opposing the use of the death penalty, anywhere, for any reason, visit the Amnesty webpage on this campaign. Resources and helpful advice for action: http://www.amnesty.org.au/Act_now/campaigns/adp

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>)

PASTORAL LETTER – FEAST OF ST JOSEPH THE WORKER 2007

The Pastoral Letter for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, entitled ‘Keeping Time – Australian families and the culture of overwork’, considers the pressures experienced by a growing number of workers trying to juggle the demands of the jobs with the needs of their families. Bishop Christopher Saunders suggests that it is time for Australia, with the help of our political leaders, to put work in its proper perspective. We are invited to consider the ways in which we can establish the proper place for work, and the necessary pay and conditions, so that family life is well supported now and for future generations. Available for download in regular and ‘three-column’ versions at: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

DISCUSSION GUIDE – WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE 2007

On 1 January, the Holy Father delivered his World Day of Peace message. The theme of his message is *The Human Person, The Heart of Peace*. The ACSJC discussion guide consists of a brief overview of the Pope’s message, some points for reflection and prayer. A helpful resource for group and classroom discussion. Download at: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

2007 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY STILL AVAILABLE

The 2007 Diary focuses on the theme of globalisation. It includes the dates of significant events, anniversaries and special days which celebrate particular aspects of social justice and highlight the theme, and provides a social justice program for the full year. Information and ideas for prayer and reflection are included. This is an essential resource for teachers and parishes. 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.

SERIES PAPER: CHOICE FOR WHOM? A DISCUSSION OF THE 2005 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LAWS

Catholic Social Justice Series No 58. At a time when Australia’s industrial relations laws are undergoing radical change, Dr Tim Battin offers an analysis of the theory underpinning the 2005 industrial relations legislation, and measures that rationale against the precepts of Catholic social teaching. (\$6.60 a copy, plus postage – postage rates listed below)

2006 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT

This year’s Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Sunday Statement is entitled ‘The Heart of Our Country - dignity and justice for our Indigenous sisters and brothers’. An order form for the Statement is available on the ACSJC website plus an electronic copy for download: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>. For associated resources visit the ACSJC website or call (02) 9956 581.

SERIES PAPER: CATHOLICS AND NATURE: TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES IN AUSTRALIA

Catholic Social Justice Series No 57. Concern for the environment has played a significant role in the Catholic Church in Australia since the 19th century. Fr Charles Rue SSC traces the development of environmental thought in Australian Catholicism. (\$6.60 a copy, plus postage – postage rates listed below)

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. (\$6.60 a copy, plus postage – postage rates listed below)
(\$6.60 a copy, plus postage. Postage rates for Catholic Social Justice Series Papers: 1 copy \$1; 2-3 copies \$1.45; 4-5 copies \$2.45)

MAY NOTICES

28 APRIL – 13 MAY. FAIR TRADE FORTNIGHT, (ALL STATES). Events around Australia can be found at <http://www.fairtrade.org.nz/FTAANZ/ftfo70z> and more information on Fair Trade Fortnight at <http://www.fta.org.au/ftf/index.html?PHPSESSID=0588554868153cd9615750e10120d318>

19 APRIL – 4 MAY. EXHIBITION, ‘THE HOME ISLAND – HOME COUNTRY’ (NSW). A rare insight into Indigenous lives, featuring more than 50 works by children from 16 far north Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. At the Australian Catholic University, Strathfield Campus (Mount Saint Mary), Sydney. 25A Barker Road, Strathfield (ACU National Gallery Strathfield, entry via gate three). (refer: http://www.acu.edu.au/media/media_releases/repository/acu_national_exhibition_a_rare_insight_into_indigenous_lives)

1 MAY. FORUM, ‘JUST WORK: IS IT POSSIBLE TO PROMOTE BOTH SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN OUR WORKPLACE RELATIONS SYSTEM?’ (QLD). The Brisbane Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, in collaboration with the Social Action Office, will hold a forum to promote a dialogue between government, business, unions, the community sector and the churches on the question of whether it is possible to promote both social justice and economic growth in Australia’s industrial relations system. The forum will be held in the Queensland Parliamentary Annexe, George St, Brisbane, from 10.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Cost: \$66 and includes lunch. For enquiries and bookings contact (07) 3336 9351 or emericka@bne.catholic.net.au (refer: <http://www.uq.net.au/cjpc/mediaapril12007.htm>)

1 MAY. SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB, VERDUM (SA). ‘Spirituality and the Environment’ – Professor Mike Tyler & Dr Lucy Larkin. Stanley Bridge Tavern, Onkaparinga Road. Info 07 8388 5957 Web: <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm>

2 MAY. SYMPOSIUM, ‘SECURING THE ENVIRONMENT’ (NSW). This symposium sponsored by the Australian Human Rights Centre and the UNSW Faculty of Law will explore the environmental, health and legal consequences if climate change. Speakers include the Hon. Peter Garrett, Prof. Matthew England, Dr Hilary Bambrick and Dr Jane McAdam. 6.30 for 7.00pm at Leighton Hall, John Niland Scientia, University of New South Wales, Sydney. Cost \$25/ \$10 concession. Limited seating. For further info contact (02) 9385 1803 or ahcr@unsw.edu.au

2 MAY. PUBLIC LECTURE, ‘INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE LAW - ANCIENT CUSTOMS: MODERN DILEMMAS’ (QLD). The Queensland University of Technology presents Prof. David Bogen, Emeritus of Law at the University of the US Maryland School of Law. Prof. Bogen will address issues of federalism and international law interacting with Indigenous and non-Indigenous law against a background of the history of particular peoples. Professor Bogen will suggest that culture provides a framework for how each country will handle the ongoing relationship of Indigenous and non-Indigenous law. 5.30 for 6.00pm, room Z1064, Level 10, Z Block, QUT Gardens Point Campus. RSVP at qutlawpubliclectures@qut.edu.au or (07) 3138 5344

2 MAY. SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB, INNER WEST (NSW). ‘Happiness – fact or fiction’ - Helen McLucas. The Pine Inn, Parramatta Road, Burwood/Concord. Information 0418 242 932 Web: <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm>

2 MAY. SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB, PENRITH (NSW). 'Living our Spirituality by working for justice' – Julie McCrosin & John O'Neill. Penrith Golf Club. Information: 02 9760 2324 Web: <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm>

2 MAY. FORUM, 'THE WAR IN IRAQ' (VIC). Speakers Associate Prof David Wright-Neville, Dr Riadh Al-Mahaidi, Associate Prof Mike Toole and Associate Prof Richard Pennell will discuss what has happened in Iraq since President Bush announced that the United States' initial mission had been accomplished after the invasion of 2003. 6:30 to 8:00 pm, Theatre A, Elisabeth Murdoch Building, The University of Melbourne, Parkville. For further info contact (03) 8344 5952 or rpennell@unimelb.edu.au (refer: http://events.unimelb.edu.au/eventid_3765.html)

3 MAY. INFORMATION EVENING, 'TIMOR LESTE: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, UNREST AND DISPLACEMENT' (NSW). Jesuit Refugee Service Australia is hosting this event with speakers: Mr. Aderito de Jesus Soares, East Timorese human rights activist, former member of Timor Leste's Constituent Assembly, PhD scholar at the Centre for International Government and Justice, ANU; Dr Annemarie Devereux, Human rights lawyer; and Dr Jay Maheswaran, Recent East Timor Country Director for Caritas Australia. 6.00 – 7.30pm, St Francis Xavier Parish Hall, Mackenzie Street, North Sydney. For further details call (02) 9356 3888

3 MAY. FORUM, 'THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ACHIEVING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST' (NSW). The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem with the support of Caritas Australia and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference is holding this important interfaith event. Speakers include: Archbishop Elias Chacour, Melkite Catholic Archbishop of Galilee; Jeremy Jones, Past President, Executive Council of Australian Jewry; Mohommad Sammak, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister of Lebanon and Adviser to the Mufti of Lebanon. The event will be chaired by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC Governor of New South Wales. 6.30 to 8.00pm, St Benedict's Hall, University of Notre Dame, cnr Broadway and Abercrombie Street, Chippendale. RSVP to khsmeastforum@hotmail.com or (02) 9221 7675

3 MAY. DISCUSSION GROUP: CHOOSING THE COPORATION – A CORPORATE LAWYER LOOKS AT WORK CHOICES - Professor Harry Glasbeek (ACT) Staff library (level 1), ANU, College of Law, the ANU. 1pm (Sandwiches from 12.45pm) RSVP cipl@law.anu.edu.au 1 May (for catering purposes)

8 MAY. ADDRESS, 'THE WIDOW IN THE TEMPLE: GIVING OF THE SELF' (ACT). Guest speaker Mary Porter, Member of Legislative Assembly and founder of Volunteering ACT, will present at the series of talks on the theme of 'Interfaith and Life: sharing, working, celebrating', organised by the Office for the Participation of Women and Australian Catholic University. 6.00 – 7.00pm, ACU, B10, Blackfriars Building, Signadou, Antill Street, Watson. For further info call (02) 6201 9867 or director.opw@catholic.org.au

10 MAY. PUBLIC DEBATE, 'WORKPLACE FREEDOM? WORKCHOICES ONE YEAR ON' (NSW). Prof. Russell Lansbury of the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Sydney, and Ron Baragry of the Australian Industry Group will debate the operation and implications of the new Industrial laws. Event organised by the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts. 6.00pm, SMSA Level 1, 280 Pitt St, Sydney. For further info contact outreach@sydneymsa.com.au (refer: <http://www.sydneymsa.com.au/lectures.htm>)

11 MAY. ADDRESS ON ETHICAL LEADERSHIP (NSW). The Edmund Rice Business Ethics Initiative is holding this Breakfast address with guest speaker General Peter Cosgrove. General Cosgrove will reflect on his leadership experience in the military and enter into dialogue with those in attendance. Cost \$45; Members: \$35; Students \$25. 7.15 for 7.30am, Dooley's Lidcombe Catholic Club, John Street, Lidcombe (opposite Lidcombe railway station). For further info contact (02) 9745 9700 or busethics@erc.org.au (refer: <http://www.erc.org.au/busethics/forum.shtml>)

14 MAY. SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB, JAMBEROO (NSW). 'Prophets in our Time – Robbing our Children of a Healthy Future' – Col Brown and Phil Woods. The Jamberoo Hotel. Information: 02 4232 2735 Web: <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm>

15 MAY. AFTERNOON TEA FOR THE FUTURE (NSW). Edmund Rive is hosting this afternoon tea to discuss water habits as well as sources of water and any issues the attendees decide. Edmund Rice Centre, 9 Alexandra Ave (cnr Monash) Croydon. Hear music from Ecopella and watch an exert from Fresh Water, Sacred Water. Donation \$5 or \$2 depending on your ability to pay. More details: 02 9745 9700 or leoniec@erc.org.au

16 MAY. SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB, ENGADINE (NSW). 'A Place Without Religious Prejudice' - Makiz Ansari & tba. Sutherland United Services Club. Information: 02 9520 0617 or 02 9548 2475 or Web: <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm>

16 MAY. SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB, WAITARA (NSW). 'Ours is a destitute time. What is the way forward for religion?' – Teresa Pirola & Peter Maher. The Blue Gum Hotel. Information: 02 9869 1069 a/h Web: <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm>

17 MAY. NETACT MEETING (NSW). Guest Speaker Andrew Johnson, Executive Director of ACOSS. ACLRI Offices, 36 Collins Street, Annandale (cnr Johnston Street). 9.30am-11.30am. For more information / RSVP contact suzette@acsjc.org.au

17 MAY. 20TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER, CATHOLICS IN COALITION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE (NSW). Guest Speaker Phillip Adams plus Dermot Dorgan. Dinner to celebrate 20 years of action for social justice. Bankstown Trotting Club, 6.30pm. Cost \$55. RSVP by 8th May to 02 0745 0820 or ccjp@bigpond.com More information: www.ccjpoz.org

17 MAY. SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB, COLAC (VIC). 'A Missionary experience in Tanzania' – Melissa Patterson. Information 03 5236 2091 Web: <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm>

21 MAY. SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB, NORTH SYDNEY (NSW). 'Human Dignity and Social Justice – Love one another with mutual affection, outdo one another in showing honour' – Jack de Groot & Alex Nelson. Union Hotel, Pacific Highway & West Street. Web <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm>

22 MAY. PUBLIC LECTURE, 'TAKING ABORIGINAL HEALTH AND WELFARE SERIOUSLY' (NSW). As Part of the UNSW Social Policy Research Centre Seminar Program, Robert Griew, former Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services, will explore recent efforts in the NT not only to create a more serious mainstream service engagement but also a stronger underpinning framework for addressing Indigenous need. 1.00 – 2.00pm, Room 2, Building G2, SPRC Western Grounds University of New South Wales. RSVP at (02) 9385-7817 or megangriffiths@unsw.edu.au (refer: <http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/seminars/2007s1.htm>)

MAY 23. SEMINAR, 'THE CONTRACTION OF THE CDEP SCHEME UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT AFTER THIRTY GOOD YEARS' (ACT). As part of the ANU Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research's seminar series, Will Sanders will consider how the Community Development Employment Program will undergo a significant reduction in participant numbers which is unprecedented in the Scheme's history. This seminar will relate this contraction in participant numbers to the new management of the Scheme by the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. 12.30 to 2.00pm, CAEPR Seminar Room GO58, Ground Floor, Hanna Neumann Bldg #21, The Australian National University, Canberra. For further info contact (02) 6125 0587, admin.caepr@anu.edu.au (refer: <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/events07.php>)

23 MAY. SPIRITUALITY IN THE PUB, MORNINGTON PENINSULA (VIC). 'A Life lived in Fear is a life half-lived' – Greg Lowe & Margaret Clerke. The Royal Hotel. Information: 03 9775 2163 or 03 5976 1024 Web: <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/news.htm>

24 MAY. PANEL DISCUSSION (NSW). Susan Ryan AO, Richard Ackland, George Williams and Geoff Gallop (moderator). Panel Discussion at Gleebooks to discuss George Williams' new book, 'A Charter of Rights for Australia'. 6.30pm for 7pm, Gleebooks, 49 Glebe Point Road, Glebe. Cost \$10 / \$7 Concession. Bookings 02 9660 2333 or www.gleebooks.com.au/events

24 MAY. GURINGAI FESTIVAL LAUNCH (NSW). Celebrate the opening of the Guringai Festival. "Welcome to Country" music and dance performed by Yidaki Didg. 6.00-7.30pm, St Ives Shopping Village (underneath the stain glass dome on the upper level). Cost: Free. The festival will run until the 15 July. More info and future events at <http://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Guringai-Festival.html>

26 MAY. NATIONAL SORRY DAY MARCH (NSW). A state march followed by a community gathering has been organised by the National Sorry Day Committee to commemorate Sorry Day 2007 and the 10th Anniversary of the tabling in Parliament of the *Bringing Them Home* report. The March commences at Town Hall at 10am and proceeds down George Street to First Fleet Park, Circular Quay (1.5km). Contact 0437 100 121.

27 MAY. NEW PENTECOST FORUM 2007, VOICES OF HOPE! 'A CHURCH THAT WON'T BE SILENCED' (NSW). Guests: Rev Dr Jojo Fung, Sr Susan Connelly, Mr. Tony Kevin and Mr. Graeme Mundine. The New Pentecost Forum this year coincides with the anniversary day of the 1967 referendum which recognised Indigenous Australian human rights. 12pm start. Cost \$20 / \$40 (or whatever you can afford). More information 0403 151 586, newpentecost@gmail.com or www.newpentecost.com

28 MAY. PUBLIC LECTURE ON AUSTRALIA – US FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (VIC). Dr Thomas Faunce, Director of the Centre for Governance of Knowledge and Development's Globalization and Health Project, will examine recent policy changes concerning reference pricing processes in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. He will discuss what effect these changes are likely to have on the prices of medicines in Australia and on the sustainability of the PBS itself. 6.00 to 7.30pm, Room GO8, Ground Floor, Melbourne Law School, 185 Pelham Street, Carlton. For further info contact 0437 695 197 or m.miller4@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au (refer: http://events.unimelb.edu.au/eventid_3693.html)

2 – 3 JUNE. YOUTH FORUM, 'RECONCILIATION' (NSW). During Reconciliation Week 2007 ReconciliACTION will be holding a National Youth Forum and Arts Showcase at the University of Technology, Sydney. The event will bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people from across Australia to participate in discussions about reconciliation, to learn about Indigenous cultures, to develop their skills, and to be entertained! The Forum is part of a program of events being organised across the country to mark the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum. Forum to be held at University of Technology, Sydney, Building 6 (Design, Architecture and Building Faculty) Harris Street (5 minutes from Central Station, off Broadway). Cost \$10 for waged (\$5 for students and those on low income). Lunch included. To register, or for more info contact 0403 977 213 or email sylvie@reconciliation.org.au. (refer: <http://www.reconciliation.org.au>)

APRIL NEWS MONITOR

Govt "canonised" economy, Manning claims

In a renewed attack against federal industrial relations laws, Parramatta Bishop Kevin Manning said that "the Government has canonised the economy" through WorkChoices, as ACSJC Chair Bishop Christopher Saunders released a statement to mark the feast day of St Joseph the Worker.

Benedict calls on G8 to cancel debt

In a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Pope Benedict called for "the rapid, total and unconditional cancellation" of the debt of the world's poorest countries.

Don't leave climate change to scientists: Cardinal Martino

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace head, Cardinal Renato Martino said that everyone needs to be concerned about climate change, not just scientists.

Priest calls for compensation for mudflow victims

An Indonesian priest called for compensation for thousands of villagers who have lost their homes and livelihoods after an explosion at a part Australian-owned gas pipeline triggered a huge mudflow.

Nigeria's bishops join critics of presidential poll

The head of Nigeria's bishops conference, Archbishop Felix Alaba Adeosin Job, joined human rights groups in denouncing the recent violence-marred presidential elections.

Peace education begins at home, Vatican tells Buddhists

In its annual message to the world's Buddhists as they celebrated their Feast of Vesakh, the Vatican said that inter-religious harmony is possible even in areas ravaged by war, starting with peace education in "ordinary homes".

Women's groups concerned over helpline privacy

Women activists expressed concerns over the Government's 24-hour pregnancy helpline, run by a group including Centacare, which will store recorded conversations between callers and counsellors for seven years.

Gen Y want justice

Sax-playing Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez and political cartoonist Fiona Katauskas called on 300 young people at the Sydney Festival for Global Concern to follow their passion and "just work for justice".

Catholic employment body calls for \$27 wage rise

In a submission to the Government's Fair Pay Commission, the Church's industrial relations body called for the minimum wage to be increased by \$27 a week so that an average family will achieve "an acceptable standard of living".

Wadeye school seeks compensation over "discrimination"

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School in Wadeye Aboriginal community, south-west of Darwin, was seeking an apology and compensation for alleged discrimination that caused it to miss out on millions of dollars in federal funding.

Bishops pressure wins Maccas pay rise

McDonald's in the US agreed to a substantial pay rise for low-paid tomato-picking farm workers after intensive lobbying by American religious congregations and bishops.

Brisbane priest in national youth homelessness inquiry

Youth advocate and Brisbane priest, Fr Wally Dethlefs, who is one of four members of a national panel looking into youth homelessness, said that the phenomenon is growing.

71-year-old nun protester jailed

American Sr Sheila Salmon was to go to jail later in the month after being convicted of trespassing at the site of the notorious former School of the Americas whose graduates tortured and killed scores of people including four US church women.

Malawi Catholics seek injunction against Aussie uranium mine

Malawi's Catholic justice commission joined other NGOs in a legal bid to block Australian mining company Paladin from opening a controversial uranium mine because an environmental impact assessment allegedly fails to address mining effects on local people.

Save "sacred earth", Scottish cardinal said

Flying less and planting more trees are not enough to avoid a devastating environmental catastrophe, Edinburgh Cardinal Keith O'Brien is warning.

- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at <http://www.cathnews.com/news/704>

MAY SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

1 TUE St Joseph the Worker; International Workers Day

3 THU World Press Freedom Day

6 SUN 5th Sunday of Easter

8 TUE World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day; War ends in Europe, 1945; Anti-Vietnam War protesters stage the first moratorium marches in Australian cities, 1970

10 THU Nelson Mandela's Inaugural Address as President of South Africa, 1994

12 SAT International Day for Nurses (Anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth); Doctors for Doctors Day

13 SUN 6th Sunday of Easter; Mothers Day; International Conscientious Objectors Day

15 TUE International Day of Families

17 THU World Telecommunication Day

20 SUN The Ascension (Solemnity); World Communications Day: Children and the Media: A Challenge for Education; Week of Prayer for Christian Unity commences Timor-Leste becomes fully independent, 2002

21 MON World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development; Murder of Josephite Sister Irene McCormack in Peru, 1991

22 TUE International Day for Biological Diversity Theme: Biodiversity and Climate Change

24 THU Mary Help of Christians, Patron of Australia (Solemnity); Foundation of World Council of Churches, 1948

25 FRI Bringing Them Home Report released, 1997; Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Human Rights commences; Africa Day

26 SAT National Sorry Day

27 SUN Pentecost (Solemnity); Referendum allows Federal Government to grant citizenship rights to Indigenous Australians, 1967; National Reconciliation Week begins; Week of Prayer for Reconciliation begins

28 MON Amnesty International founded, 1962

29 TUE Torres Strait Islander flag launched, 1992; International Day of UN Peacekeepers

31 THU World No Tobacco Day

Notes on these dates are available in the printed ACSJC Social Justice Diary (cost \$6.60, to order go to http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/publications/social_justice_calendar.html, or call 02 9956 5811)

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