



ACSJC Monthly Briefing October 2013 No 150



From the Secretariat, October 2013

Dear Friends,

On Wednesday 11 September, the Australian Catholic Bishops' 2012–2013 Social Justice Statement, *Lazarus at Our Gate*, was launched by John Menadue, author and social commentator. The response was given by Helen Forde as acting CEO of Caritas Australia.

Graeme Mundine, Executive Officer of Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in the Archdiocese of Sydney, acknowledged the Traditional Owners, the Cammeraygal people.

Professor Marea Nicholson, Associate Vice-Chancellor (Sydney) of the Australian Catholic University, welcomed us to the Mary MacKillop campus of the ACU.

A Critical Moment

In launching the Statement, John Menadue emphasised how this is a critical moment in the fight against world poverty.

“The famous parable of Lazarus and the rich man calls all Christians to a commitment to work for the poor and the marginalised. As the statement says, whilst progress against world poverty has been made, major problems still remain.

- By 2015 almost a billion people will be living on an income of less than \$1.25 per day.
- Over a quarter of a million women in our time die in childbirth.
- Eight million children die every year from malnutrition and preventable disease.

“As the statement so eloquently puts it, with 20 per cent of the world’s poor living in our region ‘Australia is the rich man and Lazarus is at our gate’. Unfortunately our politicians keep slashing our ODA budget.”

Mr Menadue identified some immediate demands of justice in the life of our nation – to acknowledge our past treatment of Indigenous people and lead the way on refugees.

“We have still not properly acknowledged the great damage we have done to our Indigenous people. Along with the Australian War Memorial, we still blot out the Frontier War that settlers and the settler parliaments conducted right across our country from 1790 to early last century to dispossess Indigenous people. ...



“The ‘whispering in our hearts’ will continue until we are honest about our history, both its glory and its shame. Political slogans about a ‘black armband view of our history’ are designed to avoid the truth and encourage us to forget.”

On the circumstances facing asylum seekers in Australia he said “In the present toxic environment, governments are determined to curb boat arrivals. But I suggest there are still many things that we could do with strong leadership, courage and with good management.

- Negotiate orderly departure arrangements with refugee source countries like Sri Lanka, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan to provide alternate pathways.
- Negotiate upstream processing in cooperation with UNHCR with Malaysia and Indonesia.
- Increase our refugee intake to over 30,000 p.a., which would still be short of the Indochina intake of the early 1980s when adjusted for our population increase.
- Abolish mandatory detention, which is cruel, expensive and does not deter.
- Permit asylum seekers on bridging visas to work in the community.

“Our supposed land of the fair go and the second chance is punishing some of the most vulnerable people on this earth. With good leadership across the community, including the churches, we must change the conversation,” he said.

A Nation at the Crossroads

Helen Forde spoke of the current state of flux regarding Australia’s international aid and development commitment. “It’s just four days after the election and there are huge changes afoot across our nation. We stand at a crossroads in the fight against global poverty.”

“Australia is currently well positioned to help in this critical moment in the global fight against poverty. We have a place on the UN Security Council for the next two years. We will soon chair the G20 group. Our Leaders are in an influential position to reach out to our neighbours with love and compassion, and lead through actions, not just words.

“And yet we are saddened by the habit of our political leaders, diverting and proposing to cut our foreign aid budget in order to balance the books and fund their domestic policy, such as transferring asylum seekers to other countries and building better infrastructure. The incoming Coalition government is proposing \$4.5 billion in cuts to foreign aid over the next four years. ...

“In 2000, world leaders committed themselves to halving extreme through the Millennium Development Goals.

“Thanks to the successes of the MDGs, globally over 34 million extra children are able to attend and complete primary school, while over 4 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS are now able to access life-saving antiretroviral treatment.

“In 2015, just under 18 months from now, global leaders will be making decisions that affect the lives of millions of people for generations to come as they navigate the post-2015 MDGs framework.



“We call upon our leaders to put the children, women and men living in poverty at the forefront of their decision-making, as well as at the forefront of their hearts and minds,” Helen Forde said.

Globalisation of Indifference

Bishop Gregory O’Kelly SJ thanked John Menadue and Helen Forde, on behalf of the Catholic Bishops of Australia, for launching the Social Justice Statement. He read from the Gospel of Luke (Luke 16:19–31) – the Gospel reading for Social Justice Sunday.

Reflecting on the call of Christ through this parable, the Bishop spoke of the need for a twofold response. “The first is our instinctive response: we can share our good fortune and donate money or time to people and groups that are committed to helping Lazarus. That has been the tradition as set out from the earliest pages of the Bible. That is taking personal responsibility for hearing and acting on Christ’s call.

“However, we cannot say we truly hear the story of Lazarus unless we ask a second question: what kind of world is this where there is so much plenty and so much poverty? What is happening in our world that leaves so many people poor, excluded and powerless? Please remember that 189 nations penned their names to the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, goals to be met in 2015. Much good has been done since then. The number of desperately hungry has been halved, but so much remains to be done. ...

“We are reminded that there are 45 million individual stories like that of Lazarus among the refugees and asylum seekers fleeing their homes around the world. Each of the 370 million Indigenous people in the world has a name and a story. Each of the 870 million people who are chronically undernourished, whose children face the possibility of stunted growth and permanently damaged health – each of these is a parable that cries out to be told.”

In responding to the decisions of both major political parties to claw back savings from the aid budget, Bishop O’Kelly quoted at length from the homily of Pope Francis when he visited the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa and saw the plight of asylum seekers:

“The culture of well-being, that makes us think of ourselves, that makes us insensitive to the cries of others ... In this world of globalization we have fallen into a globalization of indifference. ...

But I want to set before us a third question: ‘Who among us has wept for these things, and things like this?’ Who has wept for the deaths of these brothers and sisters?”

Bishop O’Kelly observed, “Indifference is really what the rich man was guilty of, and what we are often guilty of as a society that is comfortable in its wealth.”

Catholic Bishops’ Statement and associated resources

There are many ways the message of the Bishops’ 2013–2014 Statement can be promoted throughout the year ahead.

The Secretariat still has copies of the Statement for those who would like to place an order. The Statement can also be downloaded from the ACSJC [website](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au).



View [this short Video](#) and consider passing it on to your local parish.

The Video can be downloaded from the ACSJC website along with other resources that are ideal for prayer, worship, and personal reflection, and for discussion in classrooms and among groups.

John Ferguson (National Executive Officer)



Current Issues/Resources, October 2013

MEDIA RELEASE: 'BISHOPS CALL FOR A NATIONAL RECOMMITMENT ON GLOBAL POVERTY'

Our nation has a historic opportunity to be a force for peace and generosity in the global response to poverty. Bishop Christopher Saunders said, "As we approach the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals, this is the time for a recommitment to eradicating extreme poverty. Australia is a rich country whose economy is healthy by comparison with most others in the world. The Government's proposal to cut \$4.5 billion from the forward estimates for the foreign aid program represents a serious departure from Australia's commitment to lift aid funding from 0.3 to 0.5% of Gross National Income. What are we to say to those in extreme poverty who lie like Lazarus at our gate?" In the Statement, Lazarus at Our Gate, the Catholic Bishops call on Australia to demonstrate the leadership it lays claim to by making a generous commitment to the aid budget and to keep its promise by living up to that commitment. [LINK](#)

VALE BISHOP WILLIAM BRENNAN

Bishop William Brennan, passed away on 31 August after a long illness. Son of John and Elvie, he was the second eldest of six children, the others being Therese, John, Joan, Terence and Colleen. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1960 and to the Episcopate in 1984. Bishop Brennan held various positions on the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, including Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for Industrial Affairs and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council. Dr Michael Costigan said Bishop Brennan "was involved for years in speaking out on socio-political subjects and in preparing the bishops' annual Social Justice Sunday statements ... [he] steered the bishops' committee, which he also chaired for a time, in the direction of what Pope John Paul II called 'ecological conversion'." [LINK](#)

YOUTUBE VIDEO: 'REFUGEES'

Dan is a Year 8 student who has been passionate about the plight of asylum seekers for years - it has often been a topic of conversation of his family. He was so upset at the Rudd government's introduction of the PNG solution that he tried his hand at advocacy for the first time. He wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister expressing his concern. Dan has been involved in a Friday Night School tutoring program since Year 7 and this brings him in regular contact with refugee children. The theme of Social Justice Week at school this year was refugees. It was discussed in classes and he attended Simply Sharing Dinner. Also, his parish held an Asylum seeker Information evening last month where he heard from members of a South Sudanese youth group. Dan decided to make a video about refugees and put it on YouTube. He showed it to his class at school and has had a lot of encouragement and positive



feedback from his teachers and classmates who have promoted it to others. Have a look at this inspiring [message](#).

ARTICLE: ‘POPE FRANCIS’ FIELD HOSPITAL’

In a *Eureka Street* [Article](#), Michael Mullins speaks of the recent interview of Pope Francis. “In particular the section where he compares the Church to a field hospital after battle and the first question is ‘How are we treating the people of God?’ The Pope’s main point is that rules don’t become a consideration until the wounded are healed. In a similar vein, Vinnies CEO John Falzon said on Friday: ‘There is no place in Australia for the kind of policy approach that equates to condemning people for not being able to walk up stairs while refusing to build a ramp.’ ... Pope Francis says: ‘We must always consider the person. Here we enter into the mystery of the human being. In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation’.”

ANTI-POVERTY WEEK 13–19 OCTOBER

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians. Around the world more than a billion people are desperately poor. The main aims of Anti-Poverty Week are to strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship around the world and within Australia and to encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems, including actions by individuals, communities, organisations and governments. Last year, at least 600 organisations around the world participated in more than 400 activities during the Week, with a total of more than 10,000 people. Why not organise a display, stall or award? Maybe a workshop, lecture or forum? How about a fundraiser, fact sheet or petition? For information and ideas, visit the website. Please register any activities planned for the Week on the website by clicking the red button ‘Notify us of your activity’ on the [front page](#).

JUBILEE AUSTRALIA – POSITION VACANT

Jubilee Australia is seeking a dynamic, resourceful and committed person to take up the position of Executive Director. Jubilee is a leader in championing economic and social justice for people in the Asia-Pacific region, and renowned for promoting thoughtful, practical policies to ensure the accountability of the Australian Government and of Australian corporations. The successful applicant will be expected to drive forward the Jubilee Australia policy and advocacy work in collaboration with a small, committed group of academics and activists in an exciting, rewarding and creative social justice role. The position will be based at Jubilee’s Sydney office. Initially the role will be four days per week, with the expectation of becoming full time in July 2014 pending resources and successful fundraising. Applications will close at 5pm on Monday 14 October. Please send your applications, and any inquiries to carmelan@jubileeaustralia.org. A position description and the selection criteria can be found [here](#).

PALESTINE ISRAEL ECUMENICAL NETWORK (PIEN)

PIEN has members across the denominational and theological spectrum, as well as Christian aid and development agencies working in Palestine and Israel. The group is calling on Australians to respond to the plight of Palestinians living under repressive conditions in the Middle East. “Our Christian brothers and sisters in Palestine are crying out to us,” says the



group's co-convenor, Rev Gregor Henderson. "Every month thousands of people from around the world travel to Jerusalem to remember Jesus, but Palestinians living just a few kilometres away can't reach the site." PIEN has launched a website and social media sites with theological and political analysis about the situation for Palestinians. For more information, visit the [website](#).

MEDIA BLOG – 'PEARLS AND IRRITATIONS'

John Menadue AO has had a distinguished career both in the private sector and in the public service. John is a Patron of the Asylum Seekers' Centre and a volunteer at St Vincent de Paul's Matthew Talbot Hostel in Sydney. He is a regular social commentator on matters of social equity and justice – particularly concerning the plight of asylum seekers and the current political response to those who arrive in Australian waters. He has written widely on these issues. His blog, which contains many of his articles, can be accessed [here](#).

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN TO END CHILD DETENTION

Currently Australia detains more than 1700 children while their immigration status is being processed. At least 15 children are predicted to be born into detention in 2013. Australia is unique amongst states; although it is a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, it continues the use of remote, indefinite, mandatory detention for children and their families. The Global Campaign to End Child Detention and its Australian partners are calling on the Australian authorities to establish a policy that provides against the detention of children. To find out more, visit the [website](#).

ON-LINE RESOURCE: 'REFUGEE FACTS'

'Refugee Facts' has been designed to provide quick facts and comprehensive background information on asylum seekers in Australia, in the interest of ethical and accurate reporting. Authors John Menadue, Arja Keski-Nummi and Kate Gauthier have compiled this manual, which provides key information and statistics for journalists, editors and advocates on asylum seeker issues. It has been designed to provide quick facts and accessible background information on asylum seekers in Australia in the interest of accurate reporting. Visit the [website](#).

CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

It's time to Recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's Constitution. It's the right thing to do. 'This is much more than a question of symbolism, this is a question of national wellbeing and national identity. It's about coming to terms with who we are as a nation and deciding who we want to be in the future.' Noel Pearson, Cape York Institute. Join the Recognise campaign [here](#).

AUSTRALIAN RELIGIOUS RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE: 'GO FOSSIL FREE'

Many of us are advocates for action to limit the impacts of climate change, yet are we unwittingly supporting the very things we oppose? Regrettably, Banks, Superannuation Funds and other big investors are heavily implicated in mining and exporting fossil fuels. In



response, a divestment movement has sprung up globally inspiring many religious people and organisations to divest. If you would like to join this push, either [individually](#) or as an [organisation](#), see the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) website. ARRCC is an independent multi-faith organisation committed to faith-based action on climate change.

PAPER: ‘illness/disability and everyday problems involving the law’

Legal needs surveys demonstrate a strong relationship between the experience of legal problems and long-term illness/disability. However, research to date has generally not explored different types of physical impairment separately. This paper shows that the link between the experience of legal problems and long-term illness/disability strengthens as severity of illness/disability increases and that the associations are particularly strong for mental impairment. The findings provide overwhelming support for the potential utility of integrated legal, health and broader human services. To access the paper, visit the [website](#).

REPORT: ‘GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN’

The Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW has just released a report, ‘Grandparents Raising Grandchildren – Towards recognition, respect and reward’. Grandparents have long played a major role in the lives of their children and grandchildren. Over the last quarter of the 20th century, grandparent carers have become both politically organised and a focus of policy attention. This study of grandparents raising grandchildren draws on multiple sources of data. It provides insight into the demographic and social characteristics of grandparent carers and many aspects of their experiences. Although many experience stress and hardship as a result of their care responsibilities, the survey provided powerful evidence of the joy and pride that many grandparents take in caring for their grandchildren. To access the report, visit the [website](#).

CAMPAIGN: ‘PUBLISH WHAT YOU PAY’

Publish What You Pay is a global campaign for transparency and accountability in the mining and oil and gas industries. In Australia, the campaign is supported by a coalition of organisations and individuals that are committed to ensuring that citizens of resource-rich countries benefit from their natural wealth. Join the global movement for transparency to help end corruption and poverty in resource-rich countries and support the people’s right to know the value of their oil, gas and minerals. Call on the Australian Government to act and introduce legislation requiring mining and oil and gas companies to publish what they pay to governments where they operate. To find out more, visit the [website](#).

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS – ‘BEHOLD’

The Diocese of Wollongong is taking orders for ‘Behold – Daily Advent and Christmas Reflections 2013.’ Behold contains short daily reflections from the beginning of Advent (1 December 2013) through to the Epiphany (5 January 2014). Each day contains a one-page reflection with two pages for Sundays and major feast days. The daily reflections have been written by four religious orders that also run retreat centres in the Diocese of Wollongong. The aim is to provide reflections that are both theologically and spiritually rich, yet accessible to the average reader. It also contains details about upcoming retreats at each of the retreat



centres as a next step for readers who would like to go even deeper after the program has finished. To find out more, visit the [website](#).



ACSJC Publications

LAUNCH OF THE 2013–2014 SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT

Addresses delivered at the launch of the 2013–2014 Social Justice Statement by John Menadue AO, Author and Social Commentator, Helen Forde, Acting CEO of Caritas Australia, and Gregory O’Kelly SJ are available for [download](#) on the ACSJC homepage.

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2013–2014 – ORDER NOW!

This year’s Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Statement is entitled ‘Lazarus at Our Gate: A critical moment in the fight against world poverty’. The [ACSJC](#) is now taking orders for the Statement.

Prayer Card & Leaflet: Ten Steps Towards Solidarity.

Now available. To order [click here](#)

Social Justice Statement Summary, Liturgy Notes, Community and Student Resources, PowerPoint, Video – available [here](#).

Ecumenical resource: ‘Social Justice Matters’. Download from the National Council of Churches [website](#).

SERIES PAPER 74 – ‘TIME TO DRAW THE LINE: FINDING A JUST SETTLEMENT BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND TIMOR-LESTE’

Beneath the Timor Sea vast deposits of oil and gas lie between Australia, Timor-Leste and Indonesia. Who has a just claim to those resources? What does international law say about them? What are Australians’ obligations as citizens of the world? Fr Frank Brennan tries to outline some answers to these questions in this latest Series paper, a sequel to his 2004 paper ‘The Timor Sea’s Oil and Gas: What’s Fair?’ He writes: ‘This paper attempts to explain the issue so that Australians of good will can reach a conclusion about the best way forward for any Australian government committed to justice, transparency and good neighbourly behaviour.’ What can we learn from the teaching of Christ and his Church as we grapple with these questions? Frank Brennan sets out the facts calmly and clearly and points us towards some ways forward. Order [here](#).

PASTORAL LETTER – FEAST OF ST JOSEPH THE WORKER 2013

The Pastoral Letter for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker for 2013 is entitled ‘Time for a New Start – a call to increase allowance payments’. It is available for download in regular and ‘three-column’ versions [here](#).





News Monitor

[Francis denounces 'idolatry of money' by big business](#)

Pope Francis denounced what he called big business's idolatry of money in a speech to thousands in Sardinia, one of Italy's poorest regions, reported AP in *The Huffington Post*.

[AMCRO criticises Coalition over asylum legal stance](#)

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office expressed great sadness as the Coalition announced that it will withdraw legal assistance to people seeking asylum in Australia who arrive by boat.

[Bishop Ingham slams asylum seeker policies](#)

The plight of asylum seekers has gone off the radar and the problem isn't 'fixed', according to the Bishop of Wollongong, Peter Ingham.

[Bishop Brennan hailed as 'game-changer'](#)

Cardinal George Pell led tributes to former ACSJC chair Bishop William Brennan, the fourth Bishop of Wagga Wagga, who died on Saturday after a long illness, aged 75, reports *The Australian*.

[Asylum seeker issue a 'national race to the bottom'](#)

Whenever we remove the human person from the issue of asylum seekers and refugees then we've fallen into the situation we are in at the moment which is a "national race to the bottom," said Edmund Rice Centre director Phil Glendenning.

[Caritas calls on new government to reverse foreign aid cuts](#)

Caritas Australia welcomed the Coalition as it forms Government, but urged the party to reverse its proposal to cut \$4.5 billion from Australia's foreign aid program over the next four years.

[Pope calls on G20 to find diplomatic solution to Syria](#)

Pope Francis asked leaders of the world's 20 largest economies to 'lay aside the futile pursuit of a military solution' to the Syrian civil war and promote instead a 'peaceful solution through dialogue and negotiation,' reported the Catholic News Service.

[Ex-PM joins religious heads urging restraint in Syria](#)

A US strike against Syria could spark a world war, Australian religious and political leaders, including Archbishop Denis Hart and former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, have said in a joint statement urging restraint, reported *The Age*.



[Francis wants empty convents turned into refugee shelters](#)

'Empty convents are not for the Church to transform into hotels and make money from them. Empty convents are not ours, they are for the flesh of Christ: refugees,' the Pope said, reported *Vatican Insider/Ucanews*.

[Australian bishops slam foreign aid cuts](#)

Australia's Catholic bishops have attacked the Coalition's planned foreign aid cut, saying the proposed \$4.5 billion 'clawback' was like a rich man chasing a beggar to recover crumbs from his table, reported *The Age*.

[Vatican confirms Church's desire to abolish nuclear weapons](#)

"Global security must not rely on nuclear weapons," the Vatican's top foreign-policy official told an international gathering on September 16, reported *Catholic Culture*.

[Josephites target poverty and disadvantage](#)

Josephite Justice groups from across Australia and New Zealand have targeted poverty and disadvantage as their focus areas for the next twelve months, they said after their annual gathering last weekend.

– For details click on headlines or go to the archive at <http://cathnews.com>



Social Justice Diary, October 2013

1 Tue International Day for Older Persons

2005 Bali bombings: 20 people killed and more than 100 injured

2 Wed International Day of Non-Violence

1869: birth of Mahatma Ghandi

3 Thu Day of Jewish and Christian Dialogue

4 Fri Feast of St Francis of Assisi

World Animal Welfare Day

World Space Week commences

1957: First Sputnik launched by the Soviet Union

5 Sat UN World Teachers Day



6 Sun Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

7 Mon World Habitat Day

9 Wed World Post Day

10 Thu World Mental Health Day

World Sight Day

1967: Treaty on the Exploration and Use of Outer Space

11 Fri International Day of the Girl Child

1962: Opening Session of Vatican Council II

Anti-Poverty Week begins

13 Sun Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction

15 Tue UN International Day of Rural Women

16 Wed World Food Day

17 Thu International Day for Eradication of Poverty

19 Sat 2001: Sinking of SIEV X

20 Sun Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

World Mission Sunday

24 Thu United Nations Day

World Development Information Day

Disarmament Week begins

26 Sat 1985: Uluru returned to traditional owners, the Anangu people

27 Sun Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

