

ACSJC Monthly Briefing April 2017 No 188



From the Secretariat April 2017

Dear friends,

Last month, the Refugee Council of Australia released an excellent report, [*State of the Nation: Refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia*](#). Based on consultations around Australia over the past two years, the report provides a comprehensive investigation into the experiences of those seeking safety and settling in Australia within the broader context of the global crisis of human displacement.

Like the Catholic Bishops' 2015–16 Social Justice Statement, [*For Those Who've Come Across the Seas*](#), the Refugee Council's report covers all stages of the perilous journeys of refugees, from displacement and flight from persecution, to settlement in communities – often struggling with language, poverty and trauma resulting from the journey or the way they have been treated by the Australian Government. Many of the recommendations are the same as the ones the Bishops make in their Statement.

The report critiques our government's insular and often punitive fixation on closing Australia's borders and sending asylum seekers offshore to be detained indefinitely.

To quote from the report:

'Australia is the only country in the world that sends people who come by boat to tiny poor islands, where they are detained and, for some at least, seem set to reside there for the rest of their lives. The offshore detention policy is supported by both major political parties. The policy has caused enormous suffering to over 2,000 people stuck on Nauru and Papua New Guinea. Things have deteriorated significantly in the last two years, as the prolonged detention and deprivation of hope has started to break greater numbers of people.

'Although access to the camps is heavily restricted, we have heard more and more about deaths, attempted suicides, high levels of self-harm, and a consistent pattern of allegations of abuse and fear ...

'The policy of offshore detention is absurdly expensive, with over \$1 billion spent in each of the last three financial years, with Australia paying visa fees alone of \$2,000 monthly for each recognised refugee on the island ...

'These misspent billions do not include the \$55 million the Australian Government allocated for its deal to resettle refugees to Cambodia, which has proved a woeful failure, with only six refugees opting to take up the offer; and with four of the six having already left Cambodia.'

It is scandalous that Australia treats some of the most vulnerable people in the world in such an inhumane fashion. All the more so when it costs billions of taxpayer dollars. We have to question the morality of our funds being spent on a program of systematically inflicting pain on already injured men, women and children. Even on a basic economic assessment, how can we justify billions being spent in this manner when the government has put 'budget repair' so high on the national agenda?

As we approach Holy Week, I am reminded of the important Palm Sunday Rallies that will be taking place around Australia on 9 April. These rallies are an impressive gathering of concerned Australians marching for justice for refugees affected by the cruel and harsh policies of the Australian government.

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) has a really helpful [‘event locator’](#) on their website, which gives event details of each Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees around the country. I see that every major city is holding this event, and there are many regional centres also involved. Just type in the name or postcode of your suburb or town.

There are many reasons to get involved in this year’s Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees.

Australia pays a price economically for expensive and ineffective offshore detention facilities. Australia pays a price morally for inhumane and harmful offshore detention. But this pales into insignificance when compared to the price asylum seekers are paying because of our policies – paying with their lives, their sanity, their health and hope for the future.

These words of ‘Ali’ in the Refugee Council report say it all:

‘Detention has a lot of impact on my life and negative impact ... I have been diagnosed with trauma, anxiety and depression. They asked me to take tablets which I didn’t. I try to treat it better but I wish your Government could understand that we paid a very big price for our freedom and ... they call us illegal immigrants and what they are teaching me now which is really bad thing to have in your society is someone think like this, at the moment the mindset I have is if you are not a wolf you have to be eaten by wolves and I learnt it from your government because the wolves have eaten me. The ... wolves have eaten me in detention in Australia. So I learnt that if I am not a wolf I will be eaten by wolves so that’s the impact and that’s really bad.’

As Christians and people of good will, it is the price that asylum seekers are paying because of our policies that will be a deciding factor in what we will be doing on Palm Sunday.

John Ferguson
National Executive Officer



Current Issues/Resources April 2017

PROJECT COMPASSION

Caritas Australia’s annual Lenten fundraising and awareness-raising appeal is an extraordinary, ongoing demonstration of the faith, love and generosity of the Catholic congregation and caring supporters throughout Australia to help end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity. Project Compassion demonstrates how love for our neighbours can transform lives this year. Stories from people in Philippines, Timor Leste, Indigenous Australia, Vietnam, and Fiji stories humble and inspire. They show how your contributions to Project Compassion help people build better lives for themselves, their families and their communities. For more information and how to get involved visit [Caritas Australia](#).

'CLOSE THE GAP' PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES REPORT

Pat Turner and Jackie Huggins, Co-chairs of the Close the Gap Campaign, have launched their 2017 Progress and Priorities Report. The report raises concerns that the targets set by the Council of Australian Governments are not being met. It urges governments to commit to closing the health gap by implementing co-ordinated partnerships with the Commonwealth. It also calls on governments to take account of the social and cultural determinants of health, and asks the Federal Government to initiate a national inquiry into racism in hospitals and other health care settings to identify and counter racism's impact on health care. To access the report, visit [here](#).

PACIFIC CALLING PARTNERSHIP: 'CLIMATE CHANGE ISN'T A JOKE'

You are invited to take part in a campaign towards a Congregational voice on climate change and the Pacific Islands. For Facebook: Create a poster (hand written or typed) with the wording 'Climate change isn't a joke. We need climate action now'; Take a photo of yourself or others holding the poster; Send the photo to info@pacificclimatewatch.com.au; It will be posted on the Pacific Climate Watch Facebook page and website. If you would like to send a video: Create a 30-100 second video; Send it to info@pacificclimatewatch.com.au; It will be posted on the Pacific Climate Watch Facebook page and website. To find out more, visit the [website](#).

LENTEN RESOURCE: 'THE GRACE OF THE EARTH'

The Columban Mission Institute has produced an online Lenten resource that consists of six weekly Lenten Reflections related to the Gospel readings which focus on six aspects of Earth's life support systems: Atmosphere, Oceans, Fresh Water, Land, Plant Life, Animal Life. The resource is suitable for schools, youth groups, religious congregations, parish groups, social justice groups, Ecumenical groups and adult discussion groups. The eight-page resource is available at the [Columbans' website](#).

BOOKLET: 'TEN THINGS EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ISLAM'

Written by distinguished international scholar Professor John Esposito, and produced by Columban Missionaries, and this 36-page booklet provides basic information about Islam and enables a better understanding of the beliefs and practices of Muslims. It is beautifully illustrated and answers the most commonly-asked questions about Islam. It dispels the stereotypes and misrepresentation that too often prevail in the secular press. Suitable for schools, parishes, homes and offices. Cost: \$8.80 (Incl. GST & Postage). To order, visit [here](#).

TJHC SUBMISSION TO PUBLIC HEARING OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION

The Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council recently made a submission to Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The submission is wide ranging and deals with issues including current Church child protection policies, safety standards, and responses to allegations of child sexual abuse. The submission also looks at factors that may have contributed to child sexual abuse in the Church, including compulsory celibacy, clericalism, inadequate training and formation, denial and secrecy and the Church's culture. The submission can be downloaded [here](#).

UPCOMING CONFERENCE – 'CAST INTO THE DEEP'.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office is convening a National Conference on Pastoral Care in a Multicultural Church and Society from 19–20 July at the Melbourne campus of the Australian Catholic University. Keynote speakers include Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development within the Roman Curia, and Cardinal Orlando Quevedo from

the Philippines. To find out more, visit the [ACMRO website](#). Early bird registrations are now open until April 20 and can be made [here](#).

REFUGEE COUNCIL REPORT – STATE OF THE NATION

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCoA) has just released its first ever *State of the Nation* report. It provides a comprehensive investigation into the experiences of those seeking safety and settling in Australia within the broader context of the global crisis of human displacement. The report critiques our government's insular and often punitive fixation on closing Australia's borders. It also examines the challenges faced by those who have arrived in Australia and are seeking to build new lives. *State of the Nation* is informed by the RCoA's consultations with people across Australia and within their networks in 2015 and 2016. It provides clear actions our governments and communities can take to ensure the fair treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum. To access, visit the [State of the Nation](#) webpage.

BRING THEM HERE CAMPAIGN – EDMUND RICE CENTRE

The Edmund Rice Centre is coordinating a campaign to bring refugees on Manus and Nauru to Australia. The ERC says: 'The ongoing confusion about the future of the Australia-US refugee resettlement arrangement requires urgent leadership from Australia's politicians.' The Centre is urging people to show politicians that the community is on the side of compassion and to urge our MPs to put an end to the political games and work in a bipartisan fashion to bring refugees in Nauru and Manus to safety in Australia. To see details of the Edmund Rice Centre's campaign, go to the [Bring Them Here page](#) on their website.

FUNDRAISING: CATHOLIC ALLIANCE FOR PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) is a national initiative to influence hearts and minds in the Catholic community towards a more just, compassionate and humane welcome of people seeking asylum. CAPSA recognises that our current Australian government policy towards people seeking safety on our shores is in stark contrast to the core Gospel-teachings and recent messages of Pope Francis. The group envisages a community that values the fair and humane treatment of people seeking asylum and for a society where our government welcomes and supports people seeking asylum into our community. CAPSA is currently seeking donations to help expand their work across Australia. Your donation will help us run events in schools, facilitate meetings with politicians, create useful resources and videos, and run workshops with community members. All donations to CAPSA are tax deductible through Jesuit Social Services. To help continue this important work, please donate via [this website](#).

ACOSS REPORT: 'POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA 2016'

In October 2016, ACOSS released a new report revealing that poverty is growing in Australia, with an estimated 2.9 million people or 13.3 per cent of all people living below the internationally accepted poverty line. The report provides the most up to date picture of poverty in the nation drawing on new data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Income and Expenditure surveys for 2013–14 and previous years. It found that 731,300 or 17.4 per cent of all children were living in poverty in Australia. To download the report, visit [here](#).

OECD REPORT: 'ECONOMIC SURVEYS: AUSTRALIA 2017'

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has just released a survey of Australia. It shows how Australia's economy has enjoyed considerable success in recent decades, reflecting strong macroeconomic policy, structural reform and the long commodity boom. But adjustment to the end of

the boom has not been painless. Unemployment has risen, and there are increasing concerns about inequality. In addition, large socioeconomic gaps between Australia's Indigenous community and the rest of the population remain. Developing innovation-related skills will be important for the underprivileged and those displaced by economic restructuring, and can help reduce gender wage gaps. To download the report, visit [here](#).



ACSJC Publications April 2017

ORDER NOW! – 2017 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY

The 2017 Social Justice Diary includes the dates of significant events, anniversaries and special days which celebrate particular aspects of social justice. The Diary provides a social justice resource for the full year. Information and ideas for prayer and reflection are included. This is an essential resource for teachers and parishes. Cost: \$7.50 (including postage). To download an order form, [click here](#).

DISCUSSION GUIDE: WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE 2017

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council has issued a discussion guide for the annual Message for the World Day of Peace from Pope Francis. The theme of this year's Message is *Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace*. In it Pope Francis confronts the global violence that amounts to 'a horrifying world war fought piecemeal'. He holds up the example of Jesus himself, who walked the path of nonviolence 'to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility'. The Pope also reminds us of the many triumphs of nonviolent activism, including St Teresa of Calcutta and St John Paul II's heroic involvement in the downfall of European Communist regimes. The discussion guide is available in print and online [click here](#).

SERIES PAPER 79 – 'HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SLAVERY: A RESPONSE FROM AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS'

This paper is written by Christine Carolan, Executive Officer of Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) and Sr Noelene Simmons SM, NSW Regional Co-ordinator for ACRATH. It describes the forms that slavery and related crimes take in the modern world, the Church's teaching on and response to slavery and other forms of exploitation, and the international and Australian laws that deal with slavery. It also describes the work of organisations committed to combating slavery and helping its victims – in particular, ACRATH's efforts to educate Australians, to advocate on behalf of victims, and to work with similar organisations here and overseas to shut down human trafficking and help its victims. The paper discusses particular problems faced by those who experience trafficking and exploitation, including people who may be subject to forced marriage. It also gives suggestions for people interested in supporting the work of ACRATH and similar organisations. [Click here](#).

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2016–2017

This year's Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Statement is entitled 'A Place at the Table: Social justice in an ageing society'. PDF and Word versions of the Statement as well as a range of print and multimedia resources – [available here](#).

DISCUSSION GUIDES: DIGNITY AND WORK 2016

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council has issued three short discussion guides that address critical issues concerning justice for Australia's most vulnerable workers or for those who confront the reality of unemployment. These vital aspects of work and dignity in our country address: the inadequate levels of income support offered to people who are unemployed; the risk that penalty rates will be cut for vulnerable workers; and the increasing intrusion of work demands into family time and weekends. We encourage you to promote these documents in your networks and publications. We hope that they will be a valuable resource for anyone who wants to be informed about the Church's commitment to justice and fulfilment in the workplace. The discussion guides can be accessed [there](#).

BUILDING BRIDGES

The book, *Building Bridges: Social Justice Statements from Australia's Bishops 1988 to 2013*, brings the Statements together in an attractive and readable format. The publication is fully indexed, making this an exceptional resource for education and research. It offers an invaluable insight into Catholic social teaching brought to life in an Australian context over the past 26 years. This collection is a vital resource for anyone interested in the Church's teaching on justice. It is of special interest to schools and universities and to parish and diocesan groups.

Building Bridges is available from the ACSJC for \$35.00 per copy including postage anywhere in Australia. Order forms are available [here](#).

(Catholic Social Justice Series papers: \$7.50 a copy, including postage)



News Monitor April 2017

[Silver cross offers 'protection' from racism](#)

27-Mar-2017

Wearing a simple silver cross is a 'powerful insurance' against racist attacks, writes Sharon Verghis in The Age.

[From the streets to helping others](#)

27-Mar-2017

Homelessness is "something that just happens due to choices you make, the people you surround yourself around," says a 26-year-old success story of the Hutt St Centre homelessness service, reports The Southern Cross.

[Parish makes housing dreams come true](#)

24-Mar-2017

A parish-based initiative is offering young Brisbane families the chance to "get off the rental merry-go-round" and buy their first home, The Catholic Leader reports.

[Marching for refugees on Palm Sunday](#)

24-Mar-2017

Marches that take place throughout Australia in solidarity with asylum-seekers are particularly appropriate on Palm Sunday, writes Fr Andy Hamilton SJ on the CAPSA website.

[How should we care for migrants and refugees?](#)

23-Mar-2017

Pastoral care of migrants and refugees will be top of the agenda for the Church in Australia later this year as two cardinals arrive in Melbourne for a national conference on the issue, reports the ACBC Media Blog.

[Canonise Romero in El Salvador: Bishops](#)

23-Mar-2017

The bishops of El Salvador have asked Pope Francis to canonise Blessed Oscar Romero in their country, according to Rome Reports.

[McGuinness an architect of peace: Irish Primate](#)

23-Mar-2017

Archbishop Eamon Martin has paid tribute to the former deputy first minister of Northern Ireland and Irish Republican Army head who worked towards reconciliation with Britain, reports the Catholic Herald.

['Gay panic' murder defence abolished](#)

22-Mar-2017

The "gay panic" defence to murder was abolished from the Criminal Code in Queensland yesterday, following a lengthy campaign from a priest to have the law axed, reports the Courier Mail.

[Scrap Anti-Discrimination Act amendments: Archbishop Porteous](#)

17-Mar-2017

"Difficulties" may arise if proposed amendments to the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 are passed, writes Hobart Archbishop Julian Porteous in The Mercury.

[Pro-lifers push to reinstate foreign aid abortion ban](#)

15-Mar-2017

Pro-life advocates are pushing the Turnbull government to copy Donald Trump's ban on foreign aid money being spent on abortion, reports the Sydney Morning Herald.

[Asylum-seekers "broken" by new visa demands](#)

10-Mar-2017

Thousands of lawyers, paralegals and interpreters across Australia are volunteering to help asylum-seekers meet new demands in applying for protection, The Guardian reports.

[Philippines edges closer to reinstating death penalty](#)

09-Mar-2017

The Philippine House of Representatives has overwhelmingly voted in favour of reinstating capital punishment for serious drug offences, reports the Catholic Herald.

[Don't shut doors to refugees, plead US bishops](#)

09-Mar-2017

With people fleeing humanitarian crises around the world, US bishops and aid groups say President Donald Trump's new executive order halting refugee admissions is wrong, reports Catholic News Agency.

['Populorum Progressio' in context after 50 years](#)

08-Mar-2017

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the issuing of one of the most important papal encyclicals of the 20th Century, Paul VI's Populorum Progressio, on the development of peoples, writes Michael Costigan at La Croix International.

[Dorothy Day and Pope Francis "would have been friends"](#)

08-Mar-2017

Kate Hennessy believes her grandmother, Dorothy Day, and Pope Francis would have been "good friends", reports The Compass, newspaper of the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, in Catholic News Service.

[Warsaw Archbishop calls for Poland to take in Syrian refugees](#)

02-Mar-2017

The Archbishop of Warsaw has called for Poland to accept hundreds of Syrian refugees in need of urgent medical care, AFP reports.
more

[Give to homeless, don't worry how they spend it: Pope](#)

02-Mar-2017

Pope Francis has called on Catholics not to make excuses when it comes to giving to those asking for change, America Magazine reports.

[Cardinal calls for 'green theology of liberation'](#)

01-Mar-2017

Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon has called for a theological revolution that will provide a "new green theology of liberation", NCR Online reports.



Social Justice Diary April 2017

April 2017

1	Sat	
2	Sun	Fifth Sunday of Lent <u>World Autism Awareness Day</u>
3	Mon	

4	Tue	International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action - ACSJC Resources on Peacebuilding
5	Wed	
6	Thu	International Day of Sport for Development and Peace - ACSJC Resources on Sport
7	Fri	International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda - ACSJC Resources on Peacebuilding World Health Day
8	Sat	
9	Sun	Palm Sunday
10	Mon	
11	Tue	Jewish Passover begins 1963: Pope John XXIII's encyclical Pacem in Terris ('Peace on Earth')
12	Wed	International Day of Human Space Flight
13	Thu	Holy Thursday READ MORE ↓
14	Fri	Good Friday
15	Sat	1991: Signing of Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Royal Commission Final Report - ACSJC Resources on Justice for Indigenous People
16	Sun	Easter Sunday READ MORE ↓
17	Mon	
18	Tue	World Heritage Day

19	Wed	
20	Thu	
21	Fri	
22	Sat	<u>International Mother Earth Day</u> - ACSJC Resources on the <u>Environment</u>
23	Sun	Second Sunday of Easter <u>World Book and Copyright Day</u>
24	Mon	1945: <u>Opening of First United Nations Conference with 45 nations attending</u>
25	Tue	<u>ANZAC Day</u> - ACSJC Resources on <u>Peacebuilding</u>
26	Wed	1986: <u>Nuclear plant accident in Chernobyl, Ukraine, causing thousands of deaths and widespread contamination in Europe</u> 1998: <u>Murder of Bishop Gerardi in Guatemala</u>
27	Thu	
28	Fri	1841: <u>Death of St Peter Chanel, first martyr from Oceania, in the New Hebrides</u>
29	Sat	
30	Sun	Third Sunday of Easter