



## ACSJC Monthly Briefing March 2014 No 154



### From the Secretariat, March 2014

Dear Friends,

The tragedy that has unfolded in Manus Island was a ‘tragedy waiting to happen’, according to the national body for refugees and organisations and individuals working to support them. The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) says the loss of a life and the injury of over seventy people was a failure of a Government policy that is designed specifically to prevent asylum seekers by boat from being resettled as refugees in Australia.

RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said, ‘The asylum seeker who lost his life and the scores of others who sustained serious and minor injuries asked Australia for refugee protection, only to be sent to Manus Island as a punishment for arriving by boat.

‘The Government has admitted there was a risk of such a serious incident occurring. For many years, the Australian Government has understood the consequences of indefinite, long-term detention on the mental health of asylum seekers. For asylum seekers already traumatised by the persecution or torture they have suffered, and the dangerous journey to find safety and protection, long-term, indefinite detention in a harsh, remote facility creates a highly toxic environment.

‘The Australian Government is well aware that the conditions on Manus Island, described by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as arbitrary detention and harsh, will lead to self-harm and significant mental health damage for asylum seekers.

‘Until asylum seekers are given pathways to finalise their refugee status, we will see more serious incidents on Manus Island, Nauru and in facilities like Christmas Island where people are being detained for long periods of time.’

The RCOA has [called for](#) the abandonment of offshore processing and the reintroduction of alternatives providing the prompt processing claims while asylum seekers are supported in the community.

Writing in *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, Gillian Triggs, president of the Australian Human Rights Commission, emphasised that this is not the first such incident in immigration detention.



‘There are a range of factors at play that contribute to a volatile environment behind the razor wire that can explode into violence and lawlessness at any stage. It is the cumulative impact of these factors that leads to an unpredictable and dangerous situation coming into being. These factors have been documented and yet remain unaddressed. ...

‘Under international law, the Australian government has a responsibility to ensure that when it transfers people to other countries there are adequate safeguards to protect the rights of people in those countries. To the extent that it is responsible for the detention of those people in those countries, it has an obligation to ensure they are treated humanely and protected from threats to their physical safety.’

Gillian Triggs called on Government to work to establish co-operative regional processing arrangements.

‘The present arrangements are completely inappropriate– simply “outsourcing” Australia's international obligations to other countries. All people who arrive here seeking asylum should have their claims assessed in Australia by the Australian government. We should provide protection to those found to be refugees.

‘The government has rightly emphasised the importance of preventing the death of asylum seekers at sea. Now it [must take](#) steps to ensure that life and safety are equally valued when people are placed in immigration detention facilities, be they in Australia or on Manus Island or Nauru.’

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) expressed great sadness on hearing the news of the death of Reza Berati. The Bishops’ Delegate for Migrants and Refugees Bishop Gerard Hanna called for calm and urged people to consider the situations which lead asylum seekers to flee countries like Iran.

‘Asylum seekers often endure horrific violence and persecution in their home countries. Australia was once a place of refuge but now the journey to Australia is marked by grief, hardship and further exile.

‘Persecution of marginalised groups is the underlying reason the world has so many displaced people. It is essential that nations uphold the rule of law and respect fundamental human rights, such as the right to seek asylum.

‘How our government treats those in its care speaks to our community and internationally about what is acceptable in the treatment of our fellow human beings. The current asylum policy is undermining Australia’s integrity and reputation in the international arena; Australia is less a country of refuge, but increasingly one of restrictive policies,’ said Bishop Hanna.

The ACMRO is calling for each person’s claim for protection to be considered under Australian Law by competent independent authorities, with appropriate legal assistance and access to an independent judiciary such as the Refugee Review Tribunal.

Bishop Hanna [stressed](#) the importance of ensuring information is provided to the Australian public in a transparent manner so that the complex circumstances faced by asylum seekers in detention might be fully understood.



Former prime minister Malcolm Fraser has made this point most strongly. In an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, he said:

‘Precisely what has happened, we do not know. The government's commitment to secrecy should be a concern for everyone. Secrecy is completely inadequate for democracy but totally appropriate for tyranny. If the minister will not inform the public, then we are within our right to assume the worst. No free and fair nation operates with secrecy as a blanket policy position. Democracies are based on the foundation of public scrutiny and open government.’

Mr Fraser has [criticised](#) the major political parties for their determination for Manus and offshore processing arrangements to continue.

For further information on immigration policy and current campaigns of church and community organisations, visit:

[Refugee Council of Australia](#)

[Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

[Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce](#)

[Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office](#)

[Australian Catholic Social Justice Council](#)

John Ferguson  
National Executive Officer



## Current Issues/Resources, March 2014

### **NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO IMMIGRATION DETENTION OF CHILDREN. TEN YEARS ON**

The Australian Human Rights Commission has launched a new inquiry into the immigration detention of children. It has been ten years since the publication of *A Last Resort*, the report that made very clear recommendations for the protection of children seeking asylum. For those who have experienced immigration detention, who visit families and children in detention, health practitioners who have worked with people affected by immigration detention – the Commission would like to hear your input. The submission process is simple (and it can be video) and it is open until the end of May. If you know people who may like to participate, would like assistance in telling their story (have it transcribed, take part in a group discussion etc...) please get in touch with ChilOut by email [team@chilout.org](mailto:team@chilout.org) To make a submission, visit [here](#).

### **EDMUND RICE EDUCATION RESOURCE: ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS: ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES – FOCUSING ON REAL PEOPLE AND THEIR STORIES**

The free 52 page Education Resource offers 35 cross-curricular activities which are practical, engaging and focused on increasing awareness about human rights and advocacy. The activities are adaptable to all year levels in secondary school and some can also be used with primary classes, students with special needs and could also be used in community group discussions. Students are encouraged to think about asylum seekers and refugees with compassion, to move their understanding from the head to the heart. Download the resource [here](#).



### **CHILOUT REPORT: ‘DARWIN DETENTION: DAMAGING CHILDREN’**

In December 2013, ChilOut visited all three of Darwin’s so-called ‘APODs’ (Alternative Places of Detention). They were accompanied on this visit by two independent health professionals, obstetrics expert Professor Caroline de Costa and perinatal psychiatrist, Dr Emma Adams. Their observations, insights, the views of some detained families and some shocking accounts of inadequate medical care for asylum seekers detained in Darwin are all noted in this [report](#).

### **ON-LINE RESOURCES: ‘REFUGEE FACTS’ AND ‘MYTHS ABOUT REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS’**

‘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 [here](#).

### **NEW PUBLICATION: AUSTRALIA21 BOOK ‘REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS: FINDING A BETTER WAY’**

This is a collection of essays by an unprecedented range of Australian leaders in the law, military, human rights, religion and politics as well as refugees themselves, all seeking new ways of framing the public conversation about refugees and asylum seekers. Authors include: Julian Burnside, Paul Power, John Menadue, etc. For more information and to download (free) or order, visit [here](#).

### **NEW PUBLICATION: ‘THE FRANCIS EFFECT: LIVING THE GOSPEL OF JOY’**

Catholic Mission and Catholic Religious Australia’s Mission Network are excited to present ‘The Francis Effect: Living the Joy of the Gospel.’ This comprehensive book contains twelve responses to the new Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangeliu Gaudium* (‘The Joy of the Gospel’), from experts across the Church in Australia and a foreword by leading Missiologist Stephen Bevans svd. The book can be accessed [here](#).

### **PROJECT COMPASSION 2014 – A FULL AND BEAUTIFUL LIFE**

On 2 March, Caritas Australia will launch its annual Project Compassion appeal. Caritas Australia CEO, Paul O’Callaghan, said that Australians have traditionally been supportive of this annual appeal because they see how Caritas works to achieve impact in 35 countries. ‘The wonderful generosity of the Australian community has enabled Caritas to work alongside communities over the long term in Asia, Africa, the Pacific, Latin America and with First Australian communities. This has helped to transform the lives of many marginalised people. Every dollar raised and every individual, school, parish or community that embraces Project Compassion makes a real difference,’ Mr O’Callaghan said. During Lent, Australians are invited to raise funds for Project Compassion in a variety of ways. Caritas will provide a Lent Calendar that helps you explore the Project Compassion stories each day until 20 April. To donate to Project Compassion or for more information visit [here](#) or phone 1800 024 413.

### **OXFAM: ‘WORKING FOR THE FEW’**

Oxfam has just released a report entitled, ‘Working for the Few: Political capture and economic inequality’. Almost half of the world’s wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population, and seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has



increased in the last 30 years. The World Economic Forum has identified economic inequality as a major risk to human progress, impacting social stability within countries and threatening security on a global scale. Oxfam warns that this massive concentration of economic resources in the hands of fewer people presents a real threat to inclusive political and economic systems, and compounds other inequalities – such as those between women and men. Left unchecked, political institutions are undermined and governments overwhelmingly serve the interests of economic elites – to the detriment of ordinary people. To access the document, visit [here](#).

### **NEW PUBLICATION: ‘IN THE ABSENCE OF TREATY’**

This book explores the current inadequacy of the process used in engaging with Aboriginal people, which results in control slipping away from them. It provides concise but incisive account from recent reports about the reasons for the ongoing and growing frustration of many Aboriginal people in the NT. In doing so it hints at possibly the only solution – treaties. For more information and to order a book visit [here](#).

### **EMPLOYMENT AWARDS**

The Employment Awards will recognise, raise awareness and promote the benefits of employing at risk groups including disability, mature age, youth, indigenous and regional unemployed. The categories include the following: Disability Employment Award, Mature Age Employment Award, Youth Employment Award, Indigenous Employment Award and Regional Employment Award. Who can apply? Representatives from all organisations active in employment initiatives including, not-for-profit, corporate and government agencies that are aiming to better serve their communities across Australasia. Awards will be presented during the welcome reception at the Long-Term Unemployment Conference on 18 – 19 August 2014, QT Hotel Surfers Paradise. Nominations Close 16 June. To submit your nomination online, please visit the conference [website](#).

### **LENTEN REFLECTION - THE GRACE OF EARTH**

This online resource is produced by the St Columban Mission Society and is available for free to download. During Lent, it gives an opportunity to learn about six aspects of Earth’s life support systems: Atmosphere, Oceans, Fresh Water, Land, Plant Life and Animal Life. It includes ideas for reflection, inspiration, meditation, prayer, information, discussion, action. It is suitable for: Schools, Youth Groups, Religious Congregations, Parish Groups, Social Justice Groups, Ecumenical Groups, and Adult Discussion Groups. Download a copy [here](#).

### **INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS (ICAN) MEDIA RELEASE: ‘CONGRATULATIONS, COSTELLO - NOW IT’S TIME TO GIVE UP THE NUKES’**

Following the announcement that former federal treasurer Peter Costello has been appointed Chair of the government-owned Future Fund, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is calling for a review of the Fund’s investments in nuclear weapons companies. In 2011, the Future Fund barred all investments in companies that manufacture anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, but a loophole remains in the policy allowing the Fund to continue investing in nuclear weapon companies. Although these stocks represent a small portion of the Fund’s overall holdings, they pose a significant reputational risk. Read the full [media release](#) on 5 February.



## **COMPETITION: ‘ECONOMY AND SOCIETY’ INTERNATIONAL AWARD**

In order to promote the knowledge of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church (SDC) the Centesimus Annus – Pro Pontifice Foundation will bestow two awards:

A €30,000 ‘Economy and Society’ international award to publications in the fields of economics and social studies. The prize will be awarded to a work published after 2005 which stands out for its original contribution to in depth study and implementation of the Social Doctrine of the Church, is of proven doctrinal soundness and exceptional quality. The Foundation wishes to honour works that can reach out to a large audience and are the expression of a strong Christian commitment in economic and social activities.

A €20,000 award to young SDC researchers, to be divided among two or more researchers. The award will be bestowed on two or more theses in the field of SDC. Applications can be filed by young researchers born after January 1980 who must submit two copies of their thesis with a brief presentation by their Department Head.

The jury will consider works published in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Information on how to apply is [here](#), submit applications by April 15.

## **INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANISATION (ILO) CAMPAIGN: HOLD UP YOUR RED CARD TO CHILD LABOUR!**

What can you do to take action against child labour? Learn: Facts about child labour from Cher. Watch: Cher, Tim Roth, Wagner Moura and other Brazilian artists on why they have joined the Red Card campaign. Read: Nicolas Cage calls for an end to child labour. Check back: On what is going on and who is joining the campaign. Stay in the loop: Get the ArtWorks Child Labour update and check back for new polls and other products. Spread the word: via twitter, Facebook etc. Resources are available [here](#).



## **ACSJC Publications**

(Orders: phone (02) 8306 3499 or download an order form from the ACSJC website that can be faxed to (02) 8306 3498:

<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/publications/order-forms>)

## **ORDER NOW! – 2014 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY**

The 2014 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 program 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, go to our [website](#).

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE: 2014 WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE**

The theme for the 47<sup>th</sup> World Day of Peace Message from Pope Francis is *Fraternity: the Foundation and Pathway to Peace*. In this his first World Day of Peace message, Pope Francis expresses his wish for everyone to live a life filled with joy and hope, in fraternity that helps us ‘look upon and treat each person as a true sister or brother’. The ACSJC has prepared a Discussion Guide for the papal message, which is available on our [website](#).



## **SERIES PAPER 75 – ‘JUSTICE IN THE NAME OF GOD’**

Time and again in the Bible we come across the concepts of ‘name’ and ‘word’. People of our time hear and read these concepts so often in Scripture and in the liturgy that it is very easy not to ask what their deeper meaning is. In part, this is because in today’s society, ‘word’ and ‘name’ do not have the significance they had for the ancient peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean. For them, the name of God went with the idea of justice, and the prophets, in taking up the call to justice, did so in God’s name: the two are inseparable. In the Gospel of John, the Incarnation is described in a profound way: the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Author Gerard Moore describes this paper as ‘an attempt to revisit the theology of God as a God of justice’ and asks: ‘Where does justice fit as we contemplate the nature of God?’ This paper surveys the prophets as messengers of God’s ideal of justice and shows how this mission culminates in the mission of Jesus himself. Available [here](#).

## **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 Bishop Gregory O’Kelly SJ are available for download on the ACSJC [homepage](#).

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2013–2014 – STILL TAKING ORDERS**

The current 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](#):

## **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? What can we learn from the teaching of Christ and his Church as we grapple with these questions? Fr Frank Brennan tries to outline some answers to these questions in this 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.’ Frank Brennan sets out the facts calmly and clearly and points us towards some ways forward. Available [here](#).

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



## **News Monitor**

### **[Nun, 84, faces three years in jail for nuclear break-in](#)**

An 84-year-old nun was handed a 35-month jail term for breaking into a US nuclear weapons plant and daubing it with biblical references and human blood.

### **[Caritas protests government cuts](#)**

Caritas Australia added its voice to other groups protesting against Federal Government’s cuts of \$650 million from Australia’s official aid program in the 2013-14 financial year.



## [CRA shocked at latest asylum seeker policy](#)

Catholic Religious Australia leader Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc expressed shock and disappointment at the Federal Government's latest asylum seeker policy.

For details click on headlines or go to [cathnews.com](http://cathnews.com)



## Social Justice Diary, March 2014

**1 Sat** International Death Penalty Abolition Day  
Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day  
1999: International Treaty to Ban Landmines enters into force

**2 Sun** Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Clean Up Australia Day

**4 Tue** 1979: Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* ('Redeemer of Humanity')

**7 Fri** World Day of Prayer  
Theme: Streams in the Desert

**8 Sat** International Women's Day

**9 Sun** First Sunday of Lent

**12 Wed** 1913: Founding of Canberra as Australia's Capital

**15 Sat** World Consumer Rights Day

**16 Sun** Second Sunday of Lent

**17 Mon** St Patrick

**19 Wed** St Joseph, husband of Mary

**20 Thu** National Close the Gap Day

**21 Fri** International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination  
World Down Syndrome Day  
World Poetry Day  
World Forestry Day  
Week of Solidarity with the Peoples struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination  
National Harmony Day (Australia)

**22 Sat** World Water Day

**23 Sun** Third Sunday of Lent  
World Meteorological Day



- 24 Mon** International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims  
World Tuberculosis Day (WHO)  
1980: Assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero
- 25 Tue** The Annunciation  
UN International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade  
1877: Death of Caroline Chisholm
- 26 Wed** 1967: Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* ('On the Progress of Peoples')
- 30 Sun** Fourth Sunday of Lent  
Neighbour Day

