

ACSJC Monthly Briefing August 2017 No 192



From the Secretariat August 2017

Dear Friends

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2017–18, *Everyone's Business: Developing an inclusive and sustainable economy*, calls on all Australians to consider the lot of the most vulnerable groups in our community. They have been denied a fair share of wealth and opportunity over the course of Australia's globally record-breaking quarter of a century of economic growth.

Australia's economic performance has defended us against the worst of the Global Financial Crisis and resulted in one of the highest levels of average net worth per person. How could it be that poverty and hardship could have continued through the economic boom? The benefits of this growth have been spread unevenly, with the share of income and wealth accruing at far greater levels to the top 20 per cent of households than to the lowest 20 per cent.

The Bishops identify particularly vulnerable groups whose circumstances will not be addressed adequately without improved support and services as well as structural change in the economy's operation to stop people falling through the system.

The growing ranks of workers in low-paid, insecure and intermittent employment is increasing, with relatively smaller increases in income through minimum wage decisions and the loss or reduction in basic entitlements such as weekend penalty rates. Women continue to fare worse than males, with lower average earnings, limited opportunities for promotion and over-representation in professions that are less well-paid.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' conservative estimate shows 730,000 people are unemployed. Around two thirds of people on Allowance payments are in relative poverty – the payment has not been increased in any substantial way since the mid-90s. There is a severe shortage of job vacancies relative to the number of jobseekers and the increasing focus of the Department of Human Services is on compliance and debt recovery.

Think of the housing crisis underway in Australia. Many middle-income families are experiencing housing stress in an over-inflated market. What hope is there for low-income groups to own their own home, let alone hold on to accommodation in the private rental market? Income support recipients, low-paid workers, asylum seekers without work rights and an emerging group of older renters without savings and on low fixed incomes are particularly vulnerable to hardship and the risk of homelessness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are overrepresented on almost every indicator of disadvantage. Nine years into the Closing the Gap program, Australia is on track to meet only one of the seven targets set by the Council of Australian Governments. High imprisonment rates, low life expectancy rates and diminished economic opportunity in remote communities will remain unless social and economic policies are adequately funded and designed in close consultation with affected communities.

After a quarter of a century of economic growth, we continue to have the kind of debate we were having when Australia emerged from the recession of the early 1990s. How can we ensure a more just distribution of wealth and opportunity? How can we make sure the economy truly serves those already made vulnerable as the economy recovers and grows? What of governments' responsibility to play a substantive role in regulating the economy for equity and properly serving citizens when markets fail society?

Some argue that poverty is not a major problem in Australia – that absolute poverty is small and that opportunities are there for those in relative poverty if they are given the incentive to enter the market place rather than simply increasing welfare spending and social services.

Where does this leave people who are long-term unemployed, homeless, impoverished and withdrawn from the market? So often we hear that the unemployed are not trying hard enough, that the homeless must move on and that remote Indigenous communities are 'economically unviable'. A logic that focuses on the so-called failure of individuals' behaviour without considering the failure of the market is exclusionary and ultimately not at the service of all society and its citizens.

It can be proven that single parent families are more likely to experience income poverty – so why shift thousands parenting payment recipients from pensions onto lower Newstart Allowance payments?

Where the number of jobseekers dramatically exceeds the number of vacancies – particularly in depressed employment markets – how will an increased compliance system with harsh penalties, drug testing and income management provide the required vacancies?

The issue of 'welfare dependence' would be a genuine problem if the market had not failed to deliver enough real opportunities. Is the 'mutual obligation' that has underpinned our welfare system for decades truly mutual? For example, where is the government acting with business and in its own right as part of a national job creation strategy to assist individuals and communities where the market has failed? If the idea is to reduce dependency by encouraging recipients from welfare to work, it might be worthwhile ensuring a reasonable number of vacancies are open to people in such communities.

Clearly, fellow citizens receiving income support have important personal responsibility – but it must be matched with the structural responsibility of government, business and other social partners if it is to be a mutual obligation capable of achieving economic inclusion and social development.

The failure of the old approach that promised a great trickling down of wealth and opportunity calls into question any strategy to intensify the same approach now.

The Catholic Bishops of Australia questioned this policy approach in 1992 when they launched the report on their national inquiry into the distribution of wealth – *Common Wealth for the Common Good*. A quarter of a century later, the Bishops are again calling for a new approach that prevents economic exclusion from the outset and engages all people as dignified, active contributors to sustainable and inclusive growth.

The 2017–18 Social Justice Statement, *Everyone's Business*, will be launched on 7 September. Social Justice Sunday falls on 24 September. The Statement will be accompanied by prayer cards, a 'ten steps' leaflet, and a PowerPoint presentation that can be downloaded from the ACSJC website.

Any assistance you can give in spreading the word about Social Justice Sunday and the Bishops' Statement would be greatly appreciated.

Visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council [website](#) for order forms and details about Social Justice Sunday.

John Ferguson
National Executive Officer



Current Issues/Resources August 2017

2017 ANTI-POVERTY WEEK

Anti-Poverty week will run from 15 to 21 October, coinciding with the United Nations International Day to End Poverty on 17 October. The aims of the Week are to: strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship around the world and in Australia; and to encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems, including action by individuals, communities, organizations and governments. You can find ideas for activities [here](#) and information about what happened during Anti-Poverty Week in 2016 [here](#). Promotional material to publicise the week throughout your networks can be found [here](#). If you would or any of your network would like hard copies of the national poster, the two sided A4 flyer or the postcard, please contact the Anti-Poverty Week team at: coordinator@antipovertyweek.org.au

REPORT: 'WHAT'S AGE GOT TO DO WITH IT?'

Australia, along with the other developed economies, is grappling with the implications of an ageing population. Concerns about increasing welfare costs and shortfalls of labour supply have brought with them calls to prolong working lives. This *Per Capita* report by Philip Taylor and Warwick Smith, shows current public policy to be inadequate. A piecemeal set of measures lacking legitimacy have emerged, with objectives that lack a road-map for how they will be achieved. The push to extend working lives to 70 also has the potential to stigmatise those who retire from the paid workforce as no longer pulling their weight in a society where being retired is increasingly viewed as a kind of unemployment. To download the report, visit [here](#).

REPORT: 'NOT SO SUPER, FOR WOMEN'

Universal superannuation is a vital part of a system designed to give Australians a decent standard of living in retirement. But for millions of women, superannuation is failing. In a significant research collaboration, Per Capita and the Australian Services Union lift the lid on the real-life experiences of these women. They have surveyed over 4,000 workers, complemented by a detailed analysis of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey. This offers a rich blend of insights, both quantitative and qualitative, and the overall picture is sobering. For many women, retirement looms as a frightening prospect. Their financial circumstances will dictate that they live fortnight to fortnight, far below income standards that are considered comfortable or even modest. To download the report, visit [here](#).

REPORT: 'ELDER ABUSE'

The Australian Law Reform Commission has launched the report, 'Elder Abuse – A National Legal Response', following intensive research and consultations over a 15-month period. It considers

Commonwealth laws and legal frameworks that would better protect older persons from misuse or abuse. It makes 43 recommendations for law reform in the areas of residential aged care, screening of care workers, enduring documents, banking and financial institutions arrangements and protection of at-risk adults. It calls for the recommendations to be pursued through a National Plan to combat elder abuse and for new empirical research into the prevalence of elder abuse. The report can be accessed [here](#).

Aboriginal Peoples of the Northern Territory Response to the Northern Territory Intervention

Representative of Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory have placed on the record their sadness and disappointment about the Tenth Anniversary of the Northern Territory Intervention. They share their lived understanding that the Intervention was 'ill-considered, outrageously expensive to the Australian people and has achieved nothing for [our peoples].' They say, 'we have seen less services, less funding and less true engagement and consultation than ever before.' To access the statement, visit [here](#).

ANTaR's 'LEARNING MORE' PROGRAM

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation Qld has produced a self-guided education program aimed at helping you to listen and learn more. It gives a very basic level of knowledge and engagement with the heritage, culture and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. It is a self-led program that can be completed as quickly or as slowly as needed. This program is an excellent opportunity for non-Indigenous Australians who would like to understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to support their struggle for justice. To find out more, visit [here](#).

NEW BIBLE TRANSLATION: *Angkentye Mwerre*

About 5000 central Australian Aborigines are now able to read the Bible in their own Arrernte language, The *Catholic Leader* reports. 'It's a project that has taken more than 25 years. Having their own language Bible allows people their own identity now. And to read the Word of God in their own language has made them happy,' Divine Word Missionaries Fr Prakash Menezes, who is assistant priest at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish in Alice Springs, said. The project is the result of a long-term collaboration between indigenous elders in Alice Springs and Santa Teresa community, and linguists from the Lutheran community and Australian Society for Indigenous Languages. To find out more, visit [here](#).

WEBSITE: Colonial Frontier Massacres in Eastern Australia

From the moment the British invaded Australia in 1788 they encountered active resistance from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owners and custodians of the lands. In the frontier wars which continued until the 1960s massacres became a defining strategy to eradicate that resistance. As a result thousands of Aboriginal men women and children were killed. This site has been researched and developed by Prof. Lyndall Ryan at the University of Newcastle in consultation with The Wollotuka Institute and AIATSIS. The site is supported by the Centre For The History Of Violence and the Centre For 21st Century Humanities. It presents a map, timelines, and information about massacres in Eastern Australia from 1794 when the first massacre was recorded until 1872. Only events for which sufficient information remains from the past and can be verified are included. Visit the website [here](#).

Refugee Council: Australia digs itself into a hole

The Australian Government's lecturing of the world about how to stop the flow of refugees by boat is undermining its efforts to quietly find countries willing to join the US in taking refugees from Nauru and Manus, the Refugee Council says. Welcoming today's call from the UN Commissioner for Refugees for

Australia to end the offshore processing policy, RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said the Government still had no effective strategy. 'Australia has found no solution at all. All it has done has been to prevail on other countries to take on its responsibilities. It is paying PNG and Nauru to detain people on its behalf and forcing asylum seekers back to Indonesia or to punishment in countries of origin, while quietly begging other countries to resettle the many people found to be refugees', said Mr Power. To find out more, visit [here](#).

EDMUNDRICE CENTRE: The Responsibility to Protect

The Edmund Rice Centre has identified further evidence that Afghan refugees and people seeking asylum should not be forcibly returned to Afghanistan, as part of its long-running *Deported to Danger* research project. The latest report, *The Responsibility to Protect*, challenges Australia's most recent deportations to Afghanistan and concludes that it would be impossible for Australian, European and other governments to guarantee the safety of Afghan returnees. Afghanistan is facing significant challenges, and the security situation has deteriorated substantially since a Memorandum of Understanding, which allows for the forcible deportation of Afghan citizens, was signed between Australia and Afghanistan in 2011. The report's revelations are especially relevant as the Manus Island processing facility will close by 31 October 2017 and the Turnbull Government has also announced that 7500 people seeking asylum in Australia have until 1 October to apply for protection or face deportation. Access the report [here](#).

UNHCR's 2016 Global Trends: 'FORCED DISPLACEMENT'

The latest Global Trends reveals that, at the end of 2016, there were 65.6 million people forcibly displaced worldwide – some 300,000 more than a year earlier. This total represents an enormous number of people needing protection worldwide. Refugee numbers at 22.5 million are the highest ever seen. Those displaced inside their own countries number 40.3 million. And asylum seekers number 2.8 million. Of the 65.6 million people forcibly displaced globally, 10.3 million became displaced in 2016. This equates to one person becoming displaced every 3 seconds – less than the time it takes to read this sentence. Access the report [here](#).

#EndChildDetention PETITION

The Campaign to End Child Detention is seeking signatures on its petition that will be presented to local, national, regional, and global policy makers as the campaign continues to advocate for the rights of children. The petition reads: 'I sign this petition to support the Global Campaign to End Child Detention. Consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, detaining a child on the basis of their, or their parents migration status is a child rights violation. I urge states to take the lead and end child detention'. Take action, sign the petition today, and get 5 of your closest friends and family to do the same! Visit [here](#) to sign on.

PETITION: SWIM FOR WEST PAPUA

The West Papuan people are appealing to their friends around the world to add their names to this petition and join them in showing their support for the Swim for West Papua team. The petition calls on the United Nations to urgently address the human rights situation in West Papua and to review the UN's involvement in the administration of West Papua that led to its unlawful annexation by Indonesia and the human rights abuses that continue today. This August, the team will literally swim the petition 69 kilometres across Lake Geneva and into the hands of the United Nations. To find out more and to sign the petition, visit [here](#).

SIGN THE LAUDATO SI' PLEDGE

In June 2015, Pope Francis released his historic encyclical *Laudato Si'*. He calls 'every person living on this planet' to start a dialogue and begin to transform our hearts and communities to stop the warming of the planet and curb greenhouse gas emissions in order to combat the climate crisis. Following the second Anniversary of his encyclical, Pope Francis himself endorsed the Laudato Si' Pledge campaign. This is a global campaign by the Global Catholic Climate Movement and its member organisations to raise awareness of the encyclical's message and to encourage the Catholic community to take action with the urgency required by the climate crisis. To sign up, visit [here](#).

The Global Peace Index 2017

Produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace, the 2017 Global Peace Index shows that the world became slightly more peaceful since last year. While this is a positive trend, the Index reveals an increasingly complex world. This improvement comes despite severe ongoing conflict and humanitarian crises in many of the least peaceful countries of the world. The last ten years have seen increases in conflict deaths not seen for 25 years and historic increases in the number of refugees and displaced people. Access the report [here](#).

REPORT: 'DEFENDING DEMOCRACY'

The Human Rights Law centre says the independent voice of civil society is at risk. The report, 'Defending Democracy: Safeguarding independent community voices' highlights how in recent years the ability of community organisations to engage in activism and advocacy work has been threatened by new laws and practices which are slowly but surely eroding their independent voice. The report considers the impact of such things as funding agreements prohibiting organisations from speaking publicly on political issues, the defunding of outspoken peak civil society bodies, and attacks on individuals who speak out critically against government policies, as was the case of Gillian Triggs, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission. This report makes recommendations to defend the space in which we civil society contributes and speaks out on the matters of public importance. The report can be accessed [here](#).



ACSJC Publications August 2017

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2017–2018 – ORDER NOW!

This year's Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Statement is entitled 'Everyone's Business: Developing an inclusive and sustainable economy'. The ACSJC is now taking orders for the Statement. An order form, letter from the President of the Bishops Conference and summary material are available on the ACSJC website, [here](#).

Complementary Resources

The ACSJC website will have resources available for download free of charge before Social Justice Sunday. They will include Social Justice Sunday Liturgy Notes, a PowerPoint presentation and community and education resources.

Prayer Cards and 'Ten Steps' leaflets can be ordered from the ACSJC on (02) 8306 3499 or by email: admin@acsjc.org.au

Promotion

The Bishops would welcome promotion of the Statement in the weeks leading up to Social Justice Sunday. A possible entry in your parish bulletin or newsletter could be:

We celebrate Social Justice Sunday on 24 September.

This year, the Australian Bishops' Social Justice Statement is titled: 'Everyone's Business: Developing an inclusive and sustainable economy'. The Statement calls for an economy that is founded on justice and offers dignity and inclusion to every person.

For further details about the Social Justice Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website (www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au) or call (02) 8306 3499.

SERIES PAPER 80 – 'THE Human FACE OF HOMELESSNESS'

This paper is written by Liz de Chastel, Director of Social Policy, and Fr Frank Brennan SJ, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services Australia. In this paper they examine the realities of life for the more than 100,000 Australians who find themselves without accommodation. Homelessness has particularly severe impacts on children and on older people, especially older women; on people living with mental illness; and on Indigenous Australians. The Catholic bishops of Australia are making homelessness a particular focus of the Church's mission. This paper asks why so many people are homeless in our rich nation. It looks at some of the many ways in which the Catholic Church is working to help Australians who need suitable housing, and it asks what more the Church can do to respond to the call of Jesus regarding those most in need. The paper will be available in August. To find out more and to order, visit [here](#).

PASTORAL LETTER – FEAST OF ST JOSEPH THE WORKER 2017

The Pastoral Letter for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker for 2015 is entitled *The Right to Work – Our shared responsibility*. Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen draws on the words of St Pope John Paul II, when he visited Australia in 1986, to argue for just wages and conditions of work, adequacy in the support and dignified treatment of people who are unemployed, and for the shared responsibility of the community to shoulder the costs and burdens of job creation ensuring the right to work for all. It is available for download [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 [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. To find out more and to order, visit [here](#).

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 August 2017

[Care for creation 'adds depth' to faith](#)

Visiting theologian Anthony Kelly brought new perspective to Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, at a Perth seminar last week, The eRecord reports.

[NSW diverts \\$10m to NGOs to support homeless](#)

The NSW state government will redirect \$10 million from emergency cheap hotel-room style accommodation for homeless people in crisis to encourage new models that offer people more support, the Sydney Morning Herald reports.

[Increase in welfare spending won't help: Tudge](#)

Human Services Minister Alan Tudge has argued increasing welfare and government services to disadvantaged and remote Aboriginal communities will do little to alleviate poverty, The Guardian Australia reports.

[Refugee conference responds to Pope's call](#)

The care of migrants and refugees in Australia is the focus of a two-day conference this week, Melbourne Catholic reports.

[Family facing deportation appeals to Dutton](#)

Supported by their parish priest, a family facing deportation to South Korea has issued a last-minute plea to be allowed to stay, SBS World News

[Referendum Council wants Indigenous vote](#)

The Turnbull government has been urged to hold a referendum on establishing an Indigenous advisory body to federal parliament, NITV reports.

[Fisher supports stand on housing crisis](#)

About 600 people from across Sydney came together on Wednesday to make impassioned pleas for the housing affordability crisis to be tackled, ABC News reports.

[Cardijn still helping young 'see, judge and act'](#)

The 50th anniversary of Cardinal Joseph Cardijn's death will be commemorated later this month with a symposium in Melbourne and a Mass in Adelaide. Two young Catholics told The Southern Cross how the Cardijn movement has influenced them.

[Australia set to win UN council seat](#)

Australia's two-year-long campaign for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council may end with a no-contest victory thanks to French diplomats pulling out of the race, SBS World News reports.

[Church called to be force in confronting racism](#)

African-American Catholics must work harder to bridge the racial divide in communities, across the United States and within the Church, while the Church needs to be a stronger force in confronting racism, NCR Online reports.

[Commission rejects bid for paid domestic violence leave](#)

Paid family violence leave has been rejected by the Fair Work Commission but it agrees unpaid leave should be available to affected employees, News.com.au reports.

[Reinstate cut penalty rates: Labor](#)

Labor used the first weekend of phased-in cuts to Sunday penalty rates to again pressure the government to protect workers' pay, ABC News reports.

[Robo-debt won't target pensioners: Centrelink](#)

Centrelink has insisted it has no plans to use the automated debt recovery system to target aged pensioners, despite concerns from Labor and some community groups, The Guardian reports.

- courtesy cathnews.com



Social Justice Diary August 2017

August 2017

1	Tue	National Missing Persons Week READ MORE ↓
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		2010: Convention on Cluster Munitions came into effect - ACSJC resources on Peacebuilding
2	Wed	1965: First Indo-Chinese refugees allowed to settle in Australia
3	Thu	
4	Fri	National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day - ACSJC resources on Justice for Indigenous People
5	Sat	
6	Sun	<p>The Transfiguration</p> <p>National Vocation Awareness Week begins</p> <p>1945: Destruction of Hiroshima by atomic bomb - ACSJC resources on Peacebuilding</p> <p>READ MORE ↓</p>
7	Mon	National Homeless Persons Week begins
8	Tue	St Mary MacKillop
9	Wed	<p>International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples - ACSJC resources on Justice for Indigenous People</p> <p>1945: Destruction of Nagasaki by atomic bomb - ACSJC resources on Peacebuilding</p>
10	Thu	
11	Fri	
12	Sat	International Youth Day
13	Sun	Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

14	Mon	
15	Tue	Assumption of Mary
16	Wed	1975: Return of Wave Hill Station, NT, to the Gurindji People - ACSJC resources on Justice for Indigenous People
17	Thu	
18	Fri	St Alberto Hurtado SJ Vietnam Veterans Day - ACSJC resources on Peacebuilding
19	Sat	World Humanitarian Day 2007: Beginning of protests led by Buddhist monks in Burma
20	Sun	Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
21	Mon	
22	Tue	
23	Wed	International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition - ACSJC resources on Trade Justice
24	Thu	
25	Fri	
26	Sat	2001: Rescue of 433 asylum seekers by MV Tampa . Australian Government sent troops to prevent disembarkation. - ACSJC resources on Refugees
27	Sun	Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time Refugee and Migrant Sunday - ACSJC resources on Refugees READ MORE ↓

		1999: Death of Dom Helder Camara
28	Mon	
29	Tue	International Day Against Nuclear Tests - ACSJC resources on Peacebuilding
30	Wed	International Day of the Victims of Forced Disappearances