

ACSJC Monthly Briefing February 2018 No 197



From the Secretariat February 2018

Dear friends,

This February we will be commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Australian Parliament's [Apology to the Stolen Generations](#).

The Apology was an extraordinary event in Australia's relationship with its own First Peoples. It was a moment of solidarity and empathy that could be shared by everybody who heard it. Sadly, in the years before and since the Apology, those moments of solidarity have been all too few.

It is important to remember the actions and policies over generations that made the Apology necessary. The *Bringing Them Home* report, tabled in Parliament almost 11 years before the Apology, pointed out that those who had suffered under these policies 'endured gross violations of their human rights'.

'These violations continue to affect Indigenous people's daily lives,' the report said. 'They were an act of genocide, aimed at wiping out Indigenous families, communities, and cultures.'

For a large part of the 20th century, police or welfare officials could simply arrive at the home of an Indigenous family and remove the children there. Bill Simon, in his book 'Back on the Block', describes the moment he and his brothers were taken:

'A man in a suit ordered my mother to pick up Lenny and give him to me. My mother started to scream. One of the policemen bent down and picked up my brother and handed him to me. My mother screamed and sobbed hysterically but the men took no notice, and forced my brothers and me into a car. My mother ran out onto the road, fell on her knees and belted her fists into the bitumen as she screamed. We looked back as the car drove off to see her hammering her fists into the road, the tears streaming down her face.'

For Bill Simon and thousands of other children, removal meant that they were consigned to 'homes' where all too frequently they experienced brutality, neglect and exploitation. Bill spent years at the notorious Kinchela Boys' Home, forced to undergo or to watch beatings, deprived even of his own name, and without any hope of seeing his family again.

For the parents and relatives of these children, life could be circumscribed and dangerous. As one [Senate Committee report](#) says:

'In the name of protection, Indigenous people were subject to near-total control. Their entry to, and exit from, reserves was regulated as was their everyday life on the reserves, their right to marry and their employment.'

Over the past weeks, Pope Francis has made some powerful statements about the rights and importance of indigenous people. During his recent trip to South America, he [spoke to a gathering of indigenous people](#) at Puerto Maldonado in Peru. He said:

'Those of us who do not live in these lands need your wisdom and knowledge to enable us to enter into, without destroying, the treasures that this region holds. And to hear an echo of the words that the Lord

spoke to Moses: "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Ex 3:5).'

In the same address the Pope says:

'The recognition of these people – who can never be considered a minority, but rather authentic dialogue partners – as of all the native peoples, reminds us that we are not the absolute owners of creation. We need urgently to appreciate the essential contribution that they bring to society as a whole ...'

Pope Francis' commitment to the intrinsic dignity of First Peoples stands in stark contrast to the history of diminishment, marginalisation and hostility that too often marked Australia's dealings with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. On 13 February we have an opportunity to think about the legacy of that history. As we reflect, we can take inspiration not only from the words of Pope Francis but also from the words spoken in our Parliament ten years earlier:

'For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

'We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians ...

'A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

'A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

'A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.'

That vision is still to be brought to completion. The coming month can be a time when we focus on unity, mutual respect and equality in our society.

John Ferguson

National Executive Officer

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council



Current Issues/Resources February 2018

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT: CLOSE THE GAP REFRESH

The federal government is calling for more Indigenous consultation in its refresh of the failing Closing the Gap strategy. With the tenth anniversary of the strategy set to be marked this year, only one of six Close the Gap targets is on track to be reached.

Four other targets will expire in 2018. Individuals wishing to make an online submission on the future of Closing the Gap can do so by visiting this [website](#).

CALL FOR RENEWED SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST PEOPLES

As Australia prepared to take its seat on the UN Human Rights Council, the 'Redfern Statement Alliance Leaders' met to discuss its relationship with the Australian Government. In 2008 there was bi-partisan support for the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples to be an elected voice of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander People. Co-Chair Jackie Huggins said, 'National Congress is an elected body with more members than some of the major political parties. Although our relationship has improved with Government, it has been through minor contract work and is ineffective.' Co-Chair Rod Little said, 'National Congress is strongly committed to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.' The Redfern Statement Alliance Leaders call on Prime Minister Turnbull to invest in the National Congress as a lead Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation. Find out more [here](#).

SURVEY: INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS EXPERIENCE THE GREATEST AMOUNT OF DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Thirty-eight per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian workers experienced discrimination or harassment over the past year, a survey by non-profit organisation Diversity Council Australia has found. Indigenous people only comprise 2.8 per cent of the total population yet they experience a greater level of disadvantage compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's report to parliament indicated the federal government was not on track to meet six of the seven targets in its 'Closing the Gap' initiative. Find out more [here](#).

PROJECT COMPASSION 2018. Caritas Australia's annual Lenten fundraising and awareness-raising appeal, *Project Compassion* brings thousands of Australians together in solidarity with the world's poor to help end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity. They offer a different story to feature each week during Lent. Focused on the theme 'A Just Future', and featuring a new country each week, the stories explain the issues faced in each country. They highlight how Caritas Australia is working together with vulnerable people, helping them to develop their strengths and create change in their own communities. Find out more [here](#).

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE: VISIT TO MANUS REPORT

In November 2017 the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) visited Manus Island to witness first-hand the humanitarian crisis facing 606 men abandoned by the Australian Government. What they found generated national coverage on the treatment of these men, while paving the way for other international organisations to send help. Read the official report [here](#).

EDMUND RICE 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 was preparing to close and the Turnbull Government has also announced that 7500 people seeking asylum in Australia had until 1 October 2017 to apply for protection or face deportation. Access the report [here](#).

RESOURCE: 'ENGAGE HEARTS AND MINDS: A TOOLKIT FOR REFUGEE ACTION'

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) has produced a toolkit that includes a range of resources to equip parishes, workplaces and local community groups to get involved in seeking justice

for refugees and asylum seekers. The toolkit provides methods for shifting community attitudes towards people seeking asylum through activities including 'Circles of Silence', '#RightTrack Community Conversations' and 'meetings with members of parliament'. To download the toolkit, visit [here](#).

POPE TO ECONOMIC FORUM: VITAL TO SAFEGUARD DIGNITY

Pope Francis has called on world leaders to promote policies that allow each person to live in a dignified manner. Addressing the Chairman of the World Economic Forum, meeting in Davos from January 23-26, 2018, he said, 'It is vital to safeguard the dignity of the human person, in particular by offering to all people real opportunities for integral human development and by implementing economic policies that favour the family. He said, 'Economic models, therefore, are also required to observe an ethic of sustainable and integral development, based on values that place the human person and his or her rights at the center.' To read Pope Francis' message, visit [here](#).

MCKELL INSTITUTE: MAPPING OPPORTUNITY REPORT

A report from the independent research institute Mckell has called for crucial measures to be taken to improve the access to fair earnings across the nation and to create a workforce that is suitable to meet the demands of a changing, globalised world. This report introduces the second of Mckell's opportunity indexes: The Mckell Institute Index for Earnings, which maps the most advantaged and disadvantaged electorates nationally in terms of their access to wages. It explains the growing inequality in incomes across the top percentiles and the low-income earners, and the low mobility in income through generations. The report also argues that Australians on low or middle incomes are finding it increasingly hard to sustain their livelihoods and that the economic achievements of the nation's past are inadequate to overcome the difficulties that are faced by the middle class today. A copy of the report can be downloaded by visiting [here](#).

HOMELESSNESS REPORT: THE 'COUCH SURFING LIMBO'

One of the most comprehensive reports ever on 'couch surfing' in Australia has found many young people living informally out of home are falling through the gaps. 'Couch surfing' refers to situations where a homeless person resorts to finding temporary shelter with family or friends – for example, sleeping on a someone's couch. Laws and policies do not recognise youth couch-surfing as a form of homelessness. Many of the young people involved are too old for help from children's services, and too young to apply for assistance as adults. To download the report, visit [here](#).

DVD: GOSPEL LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CHAOS

The DVD of the Broken Bay Institute's 13th National eConference, *Gospel Leadership in Times of Chaos: the Hope of Pope Francis*, is now available for purchase on DVD for \$29.95, with free postage (in Australia). Prominent international and national speakers and panelists reflected upon these turbulent times and discussed them in the context of Pope Francis' unique style of leadership. Visit [here to order](#).

REPORT: 'POSITIVE PEACE REPORT 2017'

Why do some countries emerge from conflicts into peaceful societies, while others continue to exist in a highly fragile state? Understanding this question can help guide government expenditure to better create resilient societies, able to withstand internal and external shocks. The Positive Peace Report analyses the factors associated with changes in peacefulness and how they differ across different types of societies. The analysis is crucial to building a framework for creating higher rates of development, and more peaceful societies. The aim of fostering peaceful societies is more than just an ideal for humanity –

there are real economic benefits to be gained from a more peaceful world. To download the report, visit [here](#).

REPORT: GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX 2017

The Global Terrorism Index report 2017 is a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism over the last 17 years. The report includes: global results and trends; terrorism trends in Europe and other developed countries; characteristics driving terrorism recruitment; and the economics of terrorism. Measuring 163 countries and covering 99.7 per cent of the world's population, the 2017 report reveals that for the second year in a row global deaths from terrorism have declined. Significant declines in terrorism in four of the five countries most impacted by terrorism – Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria – were also recorded in 2017. Find out more [here](#).

POPE FRANCIS: INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS ON PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS NEEDED.

In his annual address to the Diplomatic Corps, Pope Francis has called for international consensus for peace, human rights and integral human development. In the year in which the centenary of the end of World War I is set to be marked, he said: 'From the ashes of the Great War, we can learn two lessons that, sad to say, humanity did not immediately grasp, leading within the space of twenty years to a new and even more devastating conflict. The first lesson is that victory never means humiliating a defeated foe. Peace is not built by vaunting the power of the victor over the vanquished. Future acts of aggression are not deterred by the law of fear, but rather by the power of calm reason that encourages dialogue and mutual understanding as a means of resolving differences. This leads to a second lesson: peace is consolidated when nations can discuss matters on equal terms. This was grasped a hundred years ago – on this very date – by the then President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, who proposed the establishment of a general league of nations with the aim of promoting for all states, great and small alike, mutual guarantees of independence and territorial integrity. This laid the theoretical basis for that multilateral diplomacy, which has gradually acquired over time an increased role and influence in the international community as a whole. Relations between nations, like all human relationships, must likewise be harmonised in accordance with the dictates of truth, justice, willing cooperation, and freedom'. To read the text in full, visit [here](#).

MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS: LENTEN REFLECTION GUIDE

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has developed a Lenten Reflection Guide full of reflections, questions and prayers based on each week's Gospel reading and the six principles of non-violence described by Dr. King in *Stride Toward Freedom*, his memoir of the 1957 Montgomery bus boycott. The guide can be downloaded by visiting this [website](#).

ST COLUMBANS MISSION SOCIETY: THE GRACE OF FORESTS - LENTEN RESOURCE

To help with your Lenten preparation for Easter, the Columban Mission has developed an online resource called The Grace of Forests. The resource is for the six Sundays of Lent and is guided by the designated Scriptural readings for each Sunday. Ecological conversion from a local Australian perspective nourishes our preparation to renew our baptism into Christ at Easter. The Columban Lenten resource invites believers to meditate on the variety of trees present in our bush as a way of returning to God with all our mind heart. The resource can be downloaded by visiting the Columban Mission [website](#).

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY: NEW GOVERNMENT BILL WILL STIFLE DEBATE

In the final Parliamentary sitting week of 2017, the Federal Government introduced a series of Bills in response to concerns about the negative impact of foreign donations on Australia's democracy. Some of the proposed changes, however, go far beyond the government's stated intent in relation to foreign donations and have the potential to stifle social advocacy and democratic debate. This [Bill](#) is currently the subject of an inquiry by the Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. To learn more about the Bill and its implications visit [here](#)



ACSJC Publications February 2018

ORDER NOW! – 2018 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY

The 2018 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: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/publications/social-justice-diary>

SERIES PAPER 81 – ‘AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL’

This paper examines Australia's economic policies and their effect on the most vulnerable and expands on themes in the Australian bishops' 2017–18 Social Justice Statement. ‘An Economy that Works for All’ discusses the serious effects of growing inequality, described by the International Monetary Fund as ‘the defining challenge of our time’. Author Joe Zabar, of Catholic Social Services Australia, also summarises the history behind Australia's current economic policies and the responses of internationally recognised economists and institutions. He proposes ways in which marginalised and excluded Australians can be helped to share in the fruits of our prosperity. To find out more and to order, visit [here](#).

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2017–2018

This year's Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Statement is entitled ‘Everyone's Business: Developing an inclusive and sustainable economy’. PDF and Word versions of the Statement as well as a range of print and multimedia resources are available on the ACSJC website, [here](#).

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. To find out more and to order, visit [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. 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 February 2018

[Banks target low-income households, inquiry told](#)

25-Jan-2018

The big banks' most vulnerable customers should be the focus of the financial services royal commission, according to a leading consumer finance advocacy group.

[Indigenous Catholic leader backs the Change the Date campaign](#)

25-Jan-2018

A Brisbane Indigenous Catholic leader has joined the call to change the date of Australia Day.

[Pope tells world leaders to promote social justice](#)

24-Jan-2018

Global leaders must implement policies that support the family and offer real opportunities for the development of all people, Pope Francis told the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, yesterday.

[Community services bill hits \\$31 billion](#)

24-Jan-2018

The Productivity Commission is investigating spending on government services and yesterday released its first findings, which look at community services, housing and homelessness.

[Vinnies 'strangers' help Salim settle in](#)

23-Jan-2018

A group of strangers from Brisbane have become the lifeline for a refugee family of seven who escaped their war-ravaged country three years ago.

[More funds needed to protect women: Centacare](#)

22-Jan-2018

Centacare Catholic Family Services is calling on South Australia's political parties to commit funding to curb family violence.

[Immigration detainees launch hunger strike](#)

17-Jan-2018

Hundreds of detainees being held in onshore immigration centres have launched a hunger strike over a tightening of visiting restrictions.

[Pope expresses concern about accidental nuclear war](#)

16-Jan-2018

In his latest papal plane interview, Pope Francis has admitted he is frightened by the prospect of an accidental nuclear war.

['Inheritance expectation' blamed for rise in elder abuse](#)

16-Jan-2018

A Gold Coast lawyer says she has seen an increase in financial elder abuse among her clients in recent months, with victims too afraid to speak up.

[New biography brings social reformer to life](#)

16-Jan-2018

Caroline Chisholm: An Irresistible Force is a warm and engaging biography, and a welcome addition to the considerable list of material already written about "the emigrant's friend".

[Overcome your fears and welcome immigrants: Francis](#)

15-Jan-2018

Pope Francis celebrated the World Day of Migrants and Refugees with a Mass in St Peter's Basilica yesterday, reminding us that in order to encounter others we must first overcome our fears

[New \\$45m plan to 'turn the tap off homelessness'](#)

15-Jan-2018

A \$45 million Victorian Government initiative targeting rough sleepers has been hailed a "critical turning point" in the ongoing battle to combat homelessness.

courtesy [CathNews](#)



Social Justice Diary February 2018

February 2018

1	Thu	Beginning of World Interfaith Harmony Week - ACSJC resources on Confronting Racism
2	Fri	Presentation of Jesus <i>World Day for Consecrated Life</i>
3	Sat	
4	Sun	5th Sunday in Ordinary Time <i>World Cancer Day</i> 1939: Walk-off by Aboriginal people from Cumeragunja Mission in protest at living conditions and restrictions - ACSJC resources on Justice for Indigenous People 1996: Signing of the Cape York Peninsula Heads of Agreement
5	Mon	
6	Tue	International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation Waitangi Day, Aotearoa New Zealand
7	Wed	
8	Thu	St Josephine Bakhita
9	Fri	
10	Sat	
11	Sun	6th Sunday in Ordinary Time International Day of Women and Girls in Science World Day of Prayer for the Sick Project Compassion Sunday

12	Mon	1965: Beginning of the Freedom Ride in Australia - ACSJC resources on Justice for Indigenous People 2005: Murder of Sr Dorothy Stang in Brazil
13	Tue	1958: Establishment of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) - ACSJC resources on Justice for Indigenous People 10th anniversary of the Apology to Stolen Generations by Australian Government (2008) READ MORE ↓ 2015: Death of Faith Bandler AC, activist for Indigenous and South Sea islander rights
14	Wed	Ash Wednesday Beginning of Project Compassion READ MORE ↓
15	Thu	
16	Fri	Chinese New Year/ Vietnamese <i>Tet</i>
17	Sat	
18	Sun	1st Sunday of Lent
19	Mon	
20	Tue	World Day of Social Justice - ACSJC resources on Social Justice Teaching READ MORE ↓
21	Wed	<i>International Mother Language Day</i>
22	Thu	
23	Fri	
24	Sat	

25	Sun	2nd Sunday of Lent
26	Mon	
27	Tue	
28	Wed	