



ACSJC BRIEFING

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FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dear Friends,

In February, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations released a Discussion Paper outlining far-reaching reforms to an income and labour market program called the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). The Paper was entitled 'Building on Success – CDEP Discussion Paper 2005' (<http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Organisation/ServiceProvider/BuildingonSuccessCDEP-FutureDirections.htm>)

This program, operating since 1977, has served the needs of Indigenous communities – particularly in remote communities where sustainable employment opportunities are extremely limited. The CDEP employs up to 37,000 Indigenous people in subsidised employment, community development and small business assistance. Because participants are regarded as employed, without the program the already high Indigenous unemployment rate would jump dramatically from 23% to 43%.

And because so many people rely on CDEP, the Government's strategy must be seen as more than simply the reform of just another program. The reforms will have a huge bearing on how Indigenous people and communities interact with the welfare system and labour market.

THE GOVERNMENT'S REFORM PROPOSALS

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Kevin Andrews MP, said it was the intention of the Government to improve the operation of this program by helping Indigenous Australians become more self-reliant and to find jobs away from government assistance.

Specifically, the Government wants to provide opportunities for all participants to find non-CDEP jobs; to help organisations to support community activities and access funding opportunities; and to establish successful businesses that can generate income independent of CDEP.

Of course, this is easier said than done in remote communities already experiencing high unemployment, with no employment growth and little possibility of generating jobs. Around three quarters of CDEP participants live in remote communities.

Among the particular proposals outlined for the reform of the program are:

- * the introduction of Shared Responsibility Agreements that require local communities to fulfil a range of activities as a condition for receiving benefits.
- * stricter funding and client activity arrangements with the enforcement of the "no work, no pay" principle.
- * the establishment of program linkages between CDEP, job search agencies and Work for the Dole organisations.

These proposals were premised by an initial announcement by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs in November 2004 which emphasised a tough approach to the needs of Indigenous communities through the introduction of Shared Responsibility Agreements. Senator Vanstone revealed that the removal of remote area exemptions from its 'mutual obligation' welfare policy would be the basis for introducing contracts under which Aboriginal communities would have to meet a broad range of requirements to maintain basic entitlements or to gain community services. Reported proposals included a "no school, no pool" restriction on children, awarding a community a DVD player for acceptable levels of school attendance, repairs to public housing or the introduction of a petrol bowser in return for the washing of children.

Currently 50 communities have signed up to these shared responsibility plans (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200505/s1378527.htm>)

While these agreements are purported to be the bedrock of the Government's new approach to Indigenous Affairs, there is little information about the agreements other than that they will operate at a family or community level and set out clearly what the family, community or government are responsible for contributing to a particular activity, the outcomes of the activity, and the ways success will be measured.

The agreements could hold great benefit for the development of a community. However, without a significant contribution from the Government the new framework is unlikely to address the underlying needs of communities. The agreements could place Indigenous communities in a position where they must bargain for certain rights they are already entitled to as citizens. They could result in more piecemeal and possibly paternalistic responses to Indigenous need. (For a critique of SRAs visit ANTaR's website: http://www.antar.org.au/shared_resp_agreemts.html)

A CHURCH RESPONSE

Recognising the significance of these reforms, three national Church agencies jointly responded to the Government's proposed changes. They based their response on key principles of Catholic social teaching.

(<http://www.catholicwelfare.com.au/publications/Submissions.htm>)

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, Catholic Welfare Australia and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council called for substantial commitments from the Government that would shift the reforms beyond the imposition of mutual obligations and work tests, to provide lasting solutions to high levels of Indigenous unemployment and need.

The agencies called for all levels of government and business to invest significant funding and resources in disadvantaged and economically vulnerable Indigenous communities for the generation of sustainable employment. Such a commitment in partnership with local communities would be part of the Government's commitment in Shared Responsibility Agreements and would be the greatest assistance that could be given in increasing the number of non-CDEP jobs.

The agencies urged the Government to use its own measurement of Indigenous need – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003 – to identify potential areas of investment and job creation in remote communities (e.g. in housing, health, education and other community services).

The agencies also emphasised the need to increase the quality of training provided to participants of the program and to provide incentives supporting the completion of secondary school and post-school studies. They also warned against proposals to link CDEP with mainstream job search agencies and the Work for the Dole program which, of themselves, will do little to increase the employment prospects of individuals in remote communities.

FOLLOWING THE CONSULTATIONS

Following public consultations, the Government firmed up its plans for the reform of the CDEP.

It will increase the partnership of CDEP organisations with Job Network providers and have CDEP participants register with the job search agencies. CDEP organisations will meet performance indicators related to Shared Responsibility Agreements and the generation of employment opportunities. The "no work, no pay" principle will be enforced and there will be stricter time-limits placed on the use of CDEP wages as wage subsidies.

Recognising that a significant number of 15-17 year olds leave school to join CDEP, the Government will negotiate with CDEP organisations some strategies to ensure this group complete accredited training to improve their employability.

The lack of any substantial strategy for job generation in remote Indigenous communities is very disappointing. There is no impetus for government or business to invest substantially in job creation that would reduce 'welfare dependence' and assist CDEP organisations achieve non-CDEP job placements in remote communities.

Instead there seems to be resignation that any results from CDEP activity or the requirements written into Shared Responsibility Agreements would not be great in regions where opportunities for a basic standard of living are reduced.

The Minister has said, "We will be working with the Indigenous communities to ensure that CDEP is much more efficient than it is now and that wherever possible, it can lead to more jobs for Indigenous people."

But, the Minister added, "We recognise that in the more remote locations, that won't be as possible or feasible as it might be in urban centres, and so the community development aspect of the program will still remain important."
(<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200504/s1351746.htm>)

The obligation seems to be much greater for the Indigenous party to the Shared Responsibility Agreement. If it is within the means of an Indigenous community, family or individual to create a job and hold onto it, they are obliged to do so.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

To become aware of important events promoting reconciliation, visit the following websites for information, prayer and action for our Indigenous brothers and sisters:

Liturgical and other resources for 2005 Week of Prayer for Reconciliation are available from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission at: <http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/resources/liturgies>

The theme of this year's National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June), "Take the next step", urges us to think about how we can help to turn around the continuing disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. (<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconaction/nrw.html>)

The theme of NAIDOC Week (3 – 10 July) is "Our future begins with solidarity". We are invited to celebrate Indigenous culture and build bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. (<http://www.naidoc.org.au/>)

- John Ferguson (*National Executive Officer*)

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

(orders Tel: 02 9956 5811 or download an order form from the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/PDF/TEMPLATE-ORDERFORM.pdf>)

PASTORAL LETTER: THE MINIMUM WAGE IN AN AGE OF PROSPERITY AND WEALTH

The Pastoral Letter issued by Bishop Christopher Saunders for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker is available and can be downloaded from the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

SERIES PAPER: TRADE JUSTICE

Catholic Social Justice Series No. 54 – Sr Suzette Clarke rsc and Dr Patricia Ranald consider the imposition of unjust trade agreements, indiscriminate trade liberalisation and privatisation on many poor communities, particularly in the third world, and emphasises the rights of all adequate access to food, a livelihood, water, health and education. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage) (postage rates listed below)

JOINT SUBMISSION – "RESPONSE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT & WORKPLACE RELATIONS 'BUILDING ON SUCCESS: CDEP DISCUSSION PAPER 2005'"

In February 2005 the Hon Kevin Andrews, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations released a Departmental discussion paper proposing wide-ranging reforms to the Community Development Employment program which

assists many Indigenous individuals and communities without work. Three national Church organisations – the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, Catholic Welfare Australia and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council – joined forces to lodge a submission responding to the Government's proposals. This submission can be found at:

http://www.catholicwelfare.com.au/publications/Submissions/CDEP%20Final_2005.pdf

Following the short consultation period the Government released its blueprint for changes to the program in 2005-06 and into the future. This paper, Building on Success CDEP - Future Directions can be accessed at:

<http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Category/SchemesInitiatives/IndigenousProgs/BuildingonSuccessCDEP-FutureDirections.htm>

SERIES PAPER: ENDING HUNGER – HOW FAR CAN WE GO?

Catholic Social Justice Series No.53 – Fr Bruce Duncan CSsR reveals how easily attainable is the central goal of the Millennium Development Goals, endorsed at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, to reduce the extent of hunger and the most acute poverty by half by 2015. The document praises the leading role of Australia in responding to the tragedy of the Indian Ocean tsunami and calls on Government to increase its commitment to these goals. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage) (postage rates listed below)

DISCUSSION GUIDE – WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE 2005.

The title of the Pope John Paul II's 2005 Message is 'Do not be Overcome by Evil but Overcome Evil with Good'. This Discussion Guide provides a brief summary of the message, some questions for consideration or discussion, and additional resources. Website paper available at: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

(Postage rates for Catholic Social Justice Series Papers: 1 copy \$1; 2-3 copies \$1.45; 4-5 copies \$2.45)

CURRENT ISSUES/RESOURCES

MEDIA RELEASE – "CATHOLIC BISHOPS CALL FOR GENEROUSITY IN TIMOR SEA TALKS" – 12 May 2005

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, meeting in Sydney as the Timor Sea negotiations between Australia and East Timor resumed, appealed to the Australian Government to be generous in its negotiations. The Bishops said, "East Timor has been a close friend of Australia in the past and Australia generously responded to this friendship in recent years when the nation sought independence. It is important that this generosity should continue in present negotiations on oil and gas resources, so that this small neighbouring country may continue to pursue the development it so urgently needs".

(<http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bishops/2005120510.htm>)

RECONCILIATION KIT – "RECONCILIATION: TAKE THE NEXT STEP"

A valuable resource has been produced for Reconciliation Week. This 2005 Journey of Healing and Reconciliation Kit is most suited to Church and community groups. It is ideal for adult discussion groups. Wherever possible involvement with local Indigenous community members will make the use of the kit more effective and a way of continuing our journey together. Website addresses are included for further reading. This resource has been produced by the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane in collaboration with Murri Ministry, Edmund Rice Indigenous Ministries Unit and the Social Justice Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba.
(<http://www.uq.net.au/cjpc/healingresources.pdf>)

ISSUES PAPER – "THE REALITY OF INCOME INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA"

The Society of St Vincent de Paul has released the first in a new Social Policy Issues series dealing with income inequality. Contrary to recent assertions made by the Government and certain researchers, the paper uses ABS data to show that income inequality in Australia is growing. Assertions that income inequality is moderating are based on the use of averages and percentages, which disguise an unequal growth in income reflected in absolute terms, especially at the lower levels.
(<http://www.vinnies.org.au/index.cfm?state=national§ion=socialj&id=689>)

ANTI-POVERTY WEEK 2005

The organisers of the annual Anti-Poverty Week (16-18 October) are encouraging individuals and organisations to plan now for activities in October 2005. The Week focuses on poverty around the world, including Australia. Its main aims are to:

- strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship;
- encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems.

Last year, more than 100 organisations organised activities, with a total participation of more than 4000 people around the country.

Everyone is encouraged to organise activities during the Week or join in some being organised by other people. The activities can be large or small, and activities at local levels are especially welcome. The website

<http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au> includes basic fact sheets, promotional material and links to sources of information and ideas about ways of reducing poverty and hardship. To notify planned activities, or obtain further information, please contact us at 1300 797 290 or apw@antipovertyweek.org.au

HR&EOC REPORTS – INDIGENOUS SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORT AND NATIVE TITLE REPORT

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mr Tom Calma recently released the Social Justice Report 2004 which outlines the key challenges raised by the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS) and the transfer of all Indigenous specific programs to mainstream government departments, through to the movement to new arrangements for administering Indigenous programs and developing Indigenous policy. It also reviews support

programs for Indigenous women exiting prison. The Native Title Report 2004 considers options for promoting economic and social development through the native title system. (refer: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/)

INFORMATION KIT: "INDIGENOUS HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA"

The Fred Hollows Foundation is raising awareness about the health emergency faced by Indigenous communities throughout Australia. The thoroughly researched and accessible briefing papers provide accurate, relevant information on the current status of Indigenous health and its underlying causes. (refer: <http://www.hollows.org/content/TextOnly.aspx?s=146>)

NATSIEC PRAYER DIARY

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Council has produced a resource to support ecumenical prayer and partnerships between Indigenous Australians and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The Prayer Diary includes possible readings, prayer concerns for each day and reflections, marking where appropriate key dates in the Indigenous calendar. (refer: http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/theology/prayer_diary)

JUNE NOTICES

MAY 20 – JUNE 5: THEATRE, "THE WAGES OF SPIN." A new theatre show looking at the war on Iraq, and the militarisation of politics and culture. From version 1.0, the team behind CMI, based on the 'children overboard' senate inquiry transcript. Playing in Sydney at Performance Space, 199 Cleveland St, Redfern. Wed. – Sat. 8.00pm, Sun. 5.00pm. \$25 (\$15 concession). Bookings on (02) 9698 7235 or visit: <http://www.performancespace.com.au>

MAY 31 – JUNE 1: SYMPOSIUM, "20:20 VISION; FACING HEALTH CHALLENGES OF THE NEXT 20 YEARS". The first symposium of the 2005 Charles Darwin Symposium Series will be convened by Menzies School of Health Research and will focus on future challenges in Indigenous and tropical health. Hosted by Dr Norman Swan, producer, journalist and broadcaster, ABC. Free entry includes all speakers, lunch, morning and afternoon teas. 8.30 am - 5pm, Mal Nairn Auditorium, Casarina Campus, Charles Darwin University, Darwin. To register phone 8946 6529 (refer: http://www.antar.org.au/_events.html)

JUNE 1: SEMINAR, "ETHICAL AND CLINICAL ISSUES IN WORKING WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION." This Refugee Health Research Centre seminar delivered by Guy Coffee of the Victoria Foundation for Survivors of Torture. 5.00 – 6.00pm, 6 Gardiner St, Brunswick, Melbourne. (refer: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/conferences.html>)

JUNE 2: FORUM, "WHAT ARE THE ISSUES FOR REFUGEE YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR AREA?" A one day YAPA Western Sydney Forum to assist in gathering information about issues in western Sydney and provide information to the sector. The day will include: a guest speaker from the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues; the showcasing of 3 services that are doing great work with refugee young people in western Sydney; and, facilitated group discussions to assist in networking and the identification of issues. 9.00 am to 3.00 pm, The Parramatta Heritage Centre, 346A Church Street, Parramatta. RSVP: 25 May 2005 – call ext. 3, (02) 9319 1100 or 1800 627 323

JUNE 2: LAUNCH, "2005 RECONCILIATION RESOURCE CELEBRATION LAUNCH". Linda Burney MP, former AECG President, will be launching the "Around the Kitchen Table" Reconciliation Resource. 6.00pm, Chrissie Cotter Gallery, Pidock Street, Camperdown, Sydney. Women's Reconciliation Network. Please email frennie@tpg.com.au or phone (02)9909 0203. (refer: http://www.antar.org.au/_events.html)

JUNE 2: LECTURE, "RECONCILIATION, A PERSONAL VIEW." Well-known actor Jack Thompson will deliver the ANU Annual Reconciliation Lecture. The event is co-hosted by the ANU and Reconciliation Australia. 6.00pm Great Hall of Parliament, Parliament House of Australia. RSVP: rsvpthompson@law.anu.edu.au or call (02) 6125 6708. (refer: <http://www.active.org.au/canberra/calendar/?day=2&month=6>)

JUNE 3: SEMINAR, "THINGS FALL APART: WHAT IS WORK DOING TO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY?" This seminar brings together leading experts in the fields of ethics, family, work and social research to examine the effects of an increasing workload on society. What are the costs and the effects of such an increase? How many hours should we work? What does this mean for families? How will communities deal with the demands of increased working hours? How is it impacting on healthcare providers and carers? What are the alternatives? 8.45am – 3.30pm, Australian Museum Theatre, College Street, Sydney. Registration details can be found at: http://council.labor.net.au/events/20050505_395.html

JUNE 4: RALLY, "DO YOU REMEMBER 4 JUNE 1989?" On the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre a public rally is being held to mourn the young lives of those who have died for daring to seek liberty and freedom. From 12.00pm in Martin Place, Sydney to Chinatown. (refer: <http://www.active.org.au/sydney/calendar/?display=zoom&event=2824>)

JUNE 5: CONFERENCE, "BEYOND DIALOGUE: INTERFAITH COOPERATION IN ACTION". Addressing the 4th International Inter-Religious Abraham Conference will be Rev Dr Francis Tiso of the US Catholic Bishops' Conference. The main conference panel includes Cardinal George Pell, Rabbi John Levi and Sheikh Fehmi Naji El-Imam. 10.00am – 4.30pm, The University of Sydney, Main Quadrangle McLauren Hall. \$25 (\$15 concession holders). Register online at <http://www.affinity.org.au> or by phone: (02)9 702 0789.

JUNE 7: PUBLIC FORUM, "AFTER ATSIIC? FUTURES FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS IN GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE." The Federal Government abolished ATSIIC in June last year. For nearly 15 years, ATSIIC had provided a framework and focus for Indigenous representation. The Regional Councils established under ATSIIC, which provide an important link between Indigenous communities and government, will be disbanded on 30 June this year. This forum looks forward to new possibilities -- how should the interests of Australia's First Peoples be represented in the future? 5:45 pm to 7:15 pm, The Vestibule, Sydney Town Hall, 483 George Street, Sydney. (refer: <http://www.law.unsw.edu.au/centres/ilc/>; <http://www.antar.org.au/after%20atsic%20070605.pdf>)

JUNE 8: SEMINAR, "LIFTING THE VEIL ON ISRAELI APARTHEID." The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies presents a seminar by visiting academic and human rights activist Dr. Uri Davis. 12.00pm, Eastern Avenue Lecture Theatre, The University of Sydney, RSVP reign.haub@arts.usyd.edu.au or phone 9351 7686. (refer: <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/centres/cpacs/seminars.htm>)

JUNE 9: EVENING FORUM, "POLICY, POLITICS AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE MENTAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN AUSTRALIA." SAVE – Australia Inc in association with Sydney Mechanic's School of Arts, Edmund Rice Centre for Justice & Community Education, and Rights Australia Inc invites you to this special evening forum with guest speakers presenting on issues of mental health and mandatory detention. 6.00 – 9.00pm, Mitchell Theatre, Sydney Mechanics School of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney. \$50 waged, \$30 unwaged. Advance booking essential by 5 June. (refer: http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/events/20050524_1102.html)

June 10: Rally, "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!!!" One year on from the deadline set by the Human Rights Commissioner for all children to be released from detention centres and children are still being locked up. On the day three year old Naomi Leong was released from Villawood, Baby Michael Tran was born in immigration detention. 68 innocent children in Australia and 6 in Nauru continue to be locked up indefinitely. Come to Martin Place Amphitheatre, Sydney, Friday June 10 – midday to 2pm. Speakers include: Sister Susan Connolly, Dianne Hiles, Dr Louise Newman, ChilOut Ambassadors and Christine Rau. (refer: <http://www.chilout.org/events/index.html>)

JUNE 14: EVENT, "THE MEETING PLACE: THE CHURCH IS NOT A DEMOCRACY BUT ..." Interviewed by Maxine McKew, eminent church commentator and papal historian Dr Paul Collins will explore the opportunities and challenges facing the church at the dawn of a new papacy. 7.30 - 9.15 pm, Kamarai-gal Room, North Sydney Leagues Club, 12 Abbott Street, Cammeray, NSW. Limited seats available – bookings essential. RSVP: 02 9356 3888 or by email: reception@uniya.org (refer: <http://www.uniya.org/>)

JUNE 16 – 17: NATIONAL CONFERENCE, "RESEARCHING REFUGEE HEALTH." This first National Conference of the Refugee Health Research Centre (RHRC) aims to build capacity in refugee health research with a particular focus on building bridges between the academic and community sectors. The Conference will be held at John Scott Meeting House, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria (on the outskirts of Melbourne). Registrations of interest are now being accepted by phone 03) 9479 5874 (refer: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc/conferences.html>)

JUNE 16: PUBLIC ADDRESS, "THE TIMORESE ECONOMY: WHERE IS IT GOING?" The Hon Mari Alkatiri, Prime Minister of Timor-Leste will provide the keynote address at the official opening of the 'Cooperating with Timor-Leste' Conference. 5.30pm (tbc), Iwaki Auditorium, ABC Centre, Cnr Sturt St and Sothbanck Bvd, Southbank, Melbourne. (refer: http://www.vu.edu.au/Research/ICEPA/Events_News_Media_Awards/Conferences/Cooperating_with_East_Timor/)

JUNE 17 – 18: CONFERENCE: "COOPERATING WITH TIMOR-LESTE: IDEAS FOR GOOD DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE." How do East Timorese view the future of their country? How are Australian governments, federal, state and local, working with the East Timorese? How can Australian aid agencies, unions, churches, service clubs, educators, and local groups work collaboratively in Timor-Leste? This conference will explore how Australians can help the East Timorese consolidate their independence through effective dialogue and cooperation. It will examine what is involved in good practice for collaboration in a wide range of fields. Venue: Victoria University Conference Centre, Level 12, 300 Flinders St, Melbourne. For cost and registration details call (03) 9919 7885 or visit: <http://devnet.anu.edu.au/>

JUNE 17 PUBLIC FORUM, "THE PLIGHT OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN AND OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSE." Fr Patrick Byrne, SVD, Secretary General of the Vatican's Pontifical Society of Missionary Childhood will address this public forum that will affirm our concern for the suffering children of the world and give practical pointers to how we can make a difference. The forum is organised by the Catholic Mission Office in Perth and Bunbury in conjunction with 'The Record'. 7-9 pm, Catholic Pastoral Centre of Our Lady of the Mission, 40A Mary Street, Highgate, Perth.

JUNE 19: RALLY, "JUSTICE FOR REFUGEES." Melbourne rally & march to demand permanent protection for all refugees and an end to mandatory detention. Marching to join anti-racist community festival at Fitzroy Town Hall. World music, world food. From 12.00pm, Melbourne Museum, Cnr. Nicholson & Gertrude St. Carlton. (refer: http://www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org/template.php3?area=news&content=20050505_293)

JUNE 25: EVENT, "THE FESTIVAL OF FAITH." The Festival of Faith is being organized by the Knights of the Southern Cross (NSW). The all day event at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, is an opportunity for Catholic men, women and children from around Sydney to come together and share their experiences and work in making our world a better place in which to live with each other and the com-

munity. It is a unique opportunity for groups and individuals to showcase their activities and contributions and let others know what they do, and, in turn, learn about the hugely diverse activities of the many parts of the Catholic Church in Sydney. (refer: <http://www.ksc.asn.au/>)

JUNE 26: "JUBILEE SUNDAY". On this day, Australians are invited to engage in prayer and action for the cancellation of unpayable and unjust debt of countries trapped in the debt-poverty cycle. (refer: <http://www.jubileeaustralia.org>; <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>)

(email news of your forthcoming social justice event by the last week of each month to: admin@acsjc.org.au)

MAY NEWS MONITOR

JOSEPHITES REGRET AUSTRALIANS' 'FEAR OF DIFFERENCE': The Sisters of St Joseph quoted the words of the late Pope John Paul II in a statement that questioned the human cost of border-protection policies that they assert "many Australians are not willing to pay".

CATHOLIC BODY SEEKS MEETING OVER WORKPLACE LAWS: The Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations (ACCER) sought a meeting with the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations to outline its concerns with the government's proposed workplace laws.

VINNIES SAYS POOR ARE LOSING: The gap between rich and poor is growing, despite government claims to the contrary, the St Vincent de Paul Society found.

CATHOLICS LOBBY SAYS DETENTION ALTERNATIVES "WON'T COME SOON ENOUGH": The Australian Political Ministry Network (PolMin) welcomed moves by Federal Liberal MP Petro Georgiou to introduce two private members bills to release long term detainees and women and children from immigration detention and grant permanent protection to refugees.

DIOCESE SAYS HEALING REQUIRES BETTER OUTCOMES FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN: The social justice office of the Queensland Diocese of Toowoomba issued a statement for the National Day of Reconciliation, focusing on the plight of Indigenous children.

FAREWELL TO REDFERN'S FR TED KENNEDY: Aboriginal activist and Catholic priest Fr Ted Kennedy was farewelled by a large number of mourners at a funeral service conducted in light rain under a tarpaulin at The Block public space in Sydney's Redfern.

CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE TO DELIVER VINNIES' OZANAM LECTURE: The head of the Children First Foundation, who was inspired by watching a documentary at school to work with Mother Teresa, delivered the eighth annual Ozanam Lecture for the St Vincent de Paul Society in Melbourne on Thursday evening.

CHURCH WELCOMES GOVT RETHINK ON TIMORESE ASYLUM CASES:

Bishop Joseph Grech welcomed the decision by Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone to reconsider the cases of about 50 East Timorese asylum seekers who had been threatened with deportation.

CAUTIOUS WELCOME FOR GOVT ABOUT-FACE ON TIMORESE: Advocate on behalf of East Timorese in Australia, Sr Susan Connelly, welcomed the Immigration Minister's change of heart on her decision to immediately deport 50 East Timorese asylum seekers who have been living in Australia for more than a decade.

BISHOPS HEAR FROM CHURCH ACTION GROUP ON CHILDREN INQUIRY:

Australia's Bishops have endorsed a series of recommendations set out in the first report of the Action Group they established to respond to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care.

LAUNCH OF RECONCILIATION WEEK RESOURCE: A collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff from a number of Catholic agencies in the Brisbane Archdiocese and the Toowoomba Diocese resulted in the production of a resource kit for the National Day of Healing next Thursday, and next week's National Reconciliation Week.

PELL URGES IMMIGRATION POLICY REVIEW: The Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, said that the case of an Australian woman who was wrongfully deported shows that the Federal Government's immigration policy is too tough.

COMMISSION URGES SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL DAY OF HEALING: Brisbane's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission encouraged Catholics to participate in the National Day of Healing (formerly National Sorry Day) on Thursday 26 May.

CALL FOR GOVT ACTION ON DETAINEE MENTAL HEALTH: Catholic Health Australia lent its support to a call to the Prime Minister by Australia's peak mental health professional groups to restate his Government's commitment to the National Standards for Mental Health Services and to implement them at all detention centres.

BISHOPS CALL FOR GENEROSITY IN TIMOR SEA TALKS: The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, meeting in Sydney, appealed to the Australian Government to be generous in its negotiations with East Timor, following the resumption in Brisbane of talks between East Timor and Australia on the development of oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea.

BRAZILIAN CATHOLIC ACTIVIST URGES CHURCH TO FORGET ABOUT POWER: Chico (Francisco) Whitaker, who is visiting Australia for the New Pentecost Forum, said that the "main mission of the church in a democracy" is to serve society", and not make a bid for political power in its own right.

PRIEST FINDS DEPORTED AUSTRALIAN IN PHILIPPINES HOSPICE: An Australian priest working in a diocese east of Manila revealed the location of a wrongly deported woman whom Australian authorities believed was "missing".

COLUMBAN CALL TO OBSERVE WORLD DEBT DAY: Monday 16 May, World Debt Day, commemorated the day in 1998 when 70,000 people formed a human chain around the G8 summit in Birmingham, England, to call for debt justice for poor countries and greater accountability for past Cold War and irresponsible loans.

FEDERAL BUDGET BOOSTS FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: Catholic Welfare Australia welcomed the Federal Budget announcement of a range of family friendly initiatives, but said that new Job Network initiatives to assist the long-term unemployed may be overshadowed by the new regime to automatically suspend welfare payments.

CATHOLIC HEALTH SEES MISSED BUDGET OPPORTUNITY FOR AGED CARE: Catholic Health Australia CEO Francis Sullivan said he believed that the "bursting budget surplus" gave the Government a "unique opportunity to move aged care services in Australia onto a more sustainable and professional footing", but it opted instead for tax cuts for wealthy and younger Australians.

CATHOLIC ADVOCATE URGES BETTER IMMIGRATION POLICY SCRUTINY: Phil Glendenning of the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education said that the execution of Australia's refugee determination policies needs to be more closely monitored.

VATICAN CALL TO UPHOLD NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION: Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See's permanent observer to the United Nations, called on signatories to uphold the integrity of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

CATHOLIC WELFARE SAYS MUTUAL OBLIGATION A "TWO-WAY STREET": Ahead of the Federal Budget, Catholic Welfare Australia commented on the anticipated "suite of measures" to encourage people to join the workforce, suggesting that society cannot use the rhetoric of mutual obligation to hide from its responsibility to provide the disadvantaged with real opportunities for employment.

POPE SAYS MEDIA CAN CHOOSE PEACE OR VIOLENCE: Pope Benedict XVI's World Communications Day message included a call for the media to take responsibility for the communication they deliver to the world.

JOSEPHITE ACCUSES GOVT ON DEPORTATION TIMING: Josephite Sr Susan Connelly told the Catholic Weekly that she believes the decision to deport 50 East Timorese refugees who have lived in Australia for a decade, was timed to deflect attention from Australia's negotiations with East Timor over oil and gas resources.

VINNIES SOUNDS ALARM ON INSURANCE PREMIUMS: The St Vincent de Paul Society was forced to close services, including shelters for mothers and children, because of legal liability risks and rising insurance premiums.

DETENTION STUFF-UPS NO SURPRISE TO EDMUND RICE RESEARCHERS: "When Australia deports people, it has not got a clue of what happens to them," said Phil Glendenning of the Edmund Rice Centre for Social Justice, following the revelation of the deportation of an Australian citizen whom the Department of Immigration believed was an illegal immigrant.

VINNIES' INCREDULOUS REACTION TO NSW PUBLIC HOUSING PLAN: Acting President of the St Vincent de Paul Society (NSW/ACT) gave the thumbs-down to the state's greatest public housing shake-up in 50 years, arguing that it is going to leave many of its most vulnerable citizens "completely shaken".

CATHOLIC WELFARE STANDS UP FOR LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED: Catholic Welfare Australia joined a consortium of welfare groups that are opposing the Federal Government's plans to punish so-called "dolebludgers" with harsher penalties.

- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at <http://www.cathnews.com/news/505>

JUNE SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR - ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

All forms of life, plant, animal and human, are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent. Human well-being and the integrity of the earth depend on a healthy ecological base for both. All elements of the environment have intrinsic value, and are to be respected for their own sake, and not merely for their usefulness to humans.

Australian society, with the rest of the Western world, is based on an economy that depends on an ever-increasing consumption of resources. This is environmentally unsustainable.

As the driest of the inhabited continents, Australia faces particular problems, with serious social, economic, health and ecological implications:

- * rising salinity in both rural and urban environments
- * pollution of river systems
- * unequal access to water in the agricultural industry
- * urban stormwater runoff and re-use
- * decreasing quality of drinking water
- * threatened biodiversity and water environments.

WATER CONSUMPTION

- * poor areas without taps use 2 to 5 litres per person per day
- * poor areas with taps use 20 to 70 litres per person per day
- * rich countries use an average of 400 litres per person per day
- * Sydney uses 412 litres per person per day, the second highest consumption in the world
- * 50% of the potential water yield per day is lost through logging of water catchments
- * Each day, 3 billion litres of water are lost through ocean outfall dumping.

ENERGY USE

- * Sydney people use 3 million plastic shopping bags a day – to make 1 bag takes as much energy as would be required to drive a car 11 metres
- * making new steel cans from recycled cans saves 75% of the energy used to make them from iron ore and coal
- * making paper from recycled paper saves 80% of the energy needed to make paper from wood chips, and uses as little as 1% of the water.

WEBSITES

- Catholic Earthcare <http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net>
- The Earth Charter <http://www.earthcharter.org>
- Columban Mission Society <http://www.columban.com>

JUNE 5 - WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

World Environment Day was established by the United Nations in 1972:

- * to stimulate worldwide awareness of the environment and enhance political attention and action
- * to deepen public awareness of the need to preserve and enhance the natural environment
- * to empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development
- * to promote an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues
- * to advocate partnership which will ensure that all nations and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.

JUNE 17 - WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

The aim of this day is to raise awareness about the need to tackle global environmental deterioration, in particular by combatting the degradation of drylands, which cover up to one quarter of the world's land surface. Two billion people in 110 countries reside in the world's drylands.

Desertification and drought together represent an enormous obstacle to sustainable development and a threat to the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of men, women and children across Asia, Africa and Latin America. People have had to abandon their lands when drought has rendered farming unsustainable, forest fires have devastated millions of acres of land, and massive sandstorms have ravaged vast areas.

PRAYER

Creator of the universe, we pray in gratitude and praise.

You were there at the beginning of all things,
shaping our world and preparing it for us.

You have provided the mountains and the trees, the waters and the earth.

Help us to be caretakers of your gifts, protecting the land from abuse,
and ready to share with all in need.

Show us how to use our science and technology
in creative, not destructive ways.

Deepen our awareness of our connectedness with all your creation,
so that future generations will also enjoy every blessing. Amen.

- Michael Gormly SSC ACSJC Prayer Card

REFLECTION

It is necessary, therefore, to stimulate and sustain 'ecological conversion' which in these last decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe towards which they have been heading... What is necessary, then, is not only 'physical' ecology, which seeks to protect the habitat of all living creatures, but also 'human' ecology, which makes their existence more dignified, protecting the radical well-being of life in all its manifestations and preparing for future generations an environment which brings them closer to the design of the Creator. Only in this way will humanity return to walk in the garden of creation.

- Pope John Paul II

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council Leo XIII House, 19 MacKenzie Street, PO Box 1615, North Sydney NSW 2059. Tel: (02) 9956 5811, Fax: (02) 9954 0056, Email: admin@acsjc.org.au Website: <http://socialjustice.catholic.org.au> ** ACSJC Briefing is sent by email at the beginning of each month (except January). To subscribe or unsubscribe, go to the front page of the website Comments and contributions are also welcome.