



Edmund Rice Centre

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

<p>ERC JUSTICE UPDATES March 2019 No.7</p>
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Dear All,

Welcome to the 7th Edition of ERC Justice Updates your regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on all sorts of matters relating to social and environmental justice.

REMEMBER WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

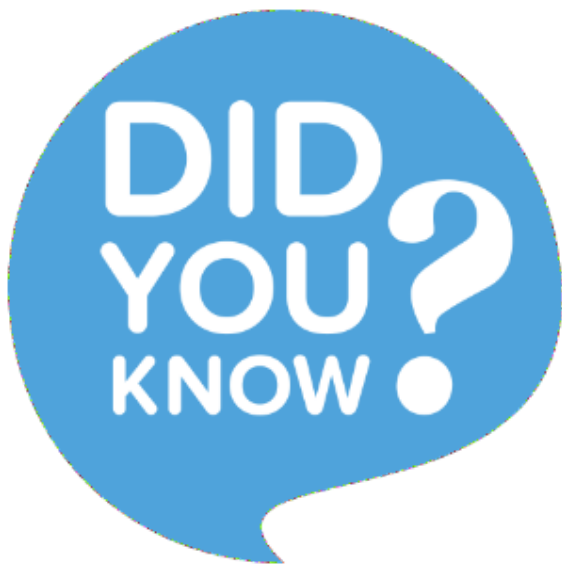
Thanks so much for your wonderful feedback, it is really appreciated. Please do send us your feedback or any information you think would be good to include in further updates.

Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

Regards

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney



- On Monday March 11th, The Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island for 2046 days.
- Ian Rintoul (Refugee Action Coalition) The last remaining children on Nauru left on February 27th. 19 Refugees including 4 children left for the USA. This means that children were detained on Nauru for a total of 2017 days in all.
- Good news: Late in 2018 the Federal Government passed the Modern Slavery Act, which will ask big companies to report on their efforts to introduce slavery-free goods and services.

Action: Watch the Pope's video at: <https://acrath.org.au/pope-francis-invites-prayer-for-human-trafficking-victims/>

- **Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) report 'Indefinite Despair released in December 2018:** In 11 months on Nauru MSF provided 285 initial mental health assessments and 1,847 follow-up sessions. 73% were refugees or asylum seekers, 22% were Nauruan nationals. 5% foreign workers or had unknown status.
- **Of Refugee Asylum Seeker patients on Nauru (MSF) reported:** 60% had suicidal thoughts 30% had attempted suicide. Almost 62% were diagnosed with moderate to severe depression. 12 adult and child patients 6% were diagnosed with resignation syndrome., a rare

psychiatric condition where patients enter a comatose state and require medical care to keep them alive.

Full Report:

https://www.msf.org.au/sites/default/files/attachments/indefinite_despair_4.pdf

- **Australian Reconciliation Barometer recently released Report: Found that 90% of Australians in the general community believe the relationship between themselves and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is important. This relationship is one of the central tenets of reconciliation. Significantly too, 95% of Australians believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should have a say in matters that affect them.**



A warm welcome to Pacific Calling Partnership new Co-ordinator Corinne Fisher

After 15 years at the Edmund Rice Centre, I am now stepping back and changing roles. Instead of coordinating the Pacific Calling Partnership, I will be joining Vincent and Ellie as a part time support team member.

A big welcome to Corinne Fisher who is taking over the coordinator's role. I am excited to be handing over to such a warm, generous and capable person. Corinne has been here just a few weeks and I can already see what a brilliant, dedicated and multi-talented team leader she will be.

My pleasure in changing roles is not only because I can see that Corinne will lead PCP to new heights in working with our Pacific Island partners such as TuCAN and KiriCAN but also because I am looking forward to having more time and energy for my grandchildren, my 100 year old mother in law my family and friends and my husband and myself.

A big thank you to the PCP team especially Maria Tiimon Chi-Fang and including every volunteer and intern that has worked with us over the years and to all NGOs, community organisations, religious congregations and church groups, governments and individuals. I look forward to playing a much smaller role in the ongoing work of PCP in enabling the voice of the Pacific to get out there.

Jill Finnane

Mauri, Talofa and a warm hello to all PCP supporters!

I am thrilled to be starting in the role of PCP Coordinator. In the space of just a few weeks, it is clear to me what a knowledgeable, professional and dedicated team the PCP has built at the Edmund Rice Centre.

Before taking on the role of PCP Coordinator, I spent 20 years working on public policy and advocacy in the environmental and social justice fields, both in Government and within the NGO sector. During this time, some of the projects I was privileged to work on included the first NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy, *Lane Cove Bush Kids* (a community-led initiative to encourage parents and their children to spend time in nature) and most recently, the grassroots campaign to stop destructive land clearing legislation from coming into effect in NSW.

What attracted me to my current role is the genuine grassroots nature of the PCP and the highly respected work of the Edmund Rice Centre. Justice, kindness and compassion - core values at the Edmund Rice Centre - have been driving forces for me both professionally and personally, and they will continue to be a strong foundation for my work as PCP Coordinator.

In a way, I feel that my whole career has led me to the Edmund Rice Centre because seeking social and environmental justice has been very important to me. Two quotes come to mind:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world;

indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

and

"It always seems impossible until it's done." Nelson Mandela

Next week, I will take my first trip to Tuvalu with PCP Project Officer Vincent Sicari and look forward to reporting back.

Last but not least, on behalf of the PCP team I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Jill for her foundational work on the PCP over the past 15 years. What a contribution! It is wonderful to have Jill remain in the team and pass on her considerable PCP knowledge and experience to me.

Warm regards

Corinne Fisher

Coordinator Pacific Calling Partnership



Edmund Rice Centre Supports School Strike 4 Climate Rally

The Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education Centre (ERC) stands in solidarity with the organisers and participants of the School Strike 4 Climate Rally on 15 March 2019.

ERC Director Phil Glendenning said: "Climate change impacts are being felt now and the science is clear: this is a crisis that is going to get much worse unless industrialised countries like Australia take immediate and strong action. In the absence of such action, children and young people are entitled to express their

concerns and protect their future."

In Sydney, the School Strike for Climate rally will take place in Townhall Square on Friday 15 March 2019 at 12 noon.

"Schools have a responsibility to educate students about what is happening in the world around them. It is reasonable for these informed students to then make a choice to act on their concerns. As such, the ERC encourages all schools to view the rally as an important learning opportunity and enable students to attend" said Mr Glendenning.

Read more:

https://www.erc.org.au/edmund_rice_centre_supports_school_strike_4_climate_rally



Media Release – Afghanistan Now Panel Discussion

Tuesday 26 February 2019 at 5-7pm

The Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education held a panel discussion titled "Afghanistan Now" on Tuesday 26 Feb 2019. The panel discussed the overall situation of Afghanistan by focusing on the deterioration of security, human rights violations, ethnic and religious minority abuses, political and economic instability and refugee crises.

The primary aim of the panel was to raise awareness about human rights, minority issues, refugee rights and sectarian violence in Afghanistan, and to propose practical solutions to the Australian Government and non-governmental stakeholders to take into consideration these issues in dealing with the Afghan Government and non-governmental actors.

There were four experienced panellists and guest speakers sitting on the panel who all have extensive knowledge of Afghanistan's socio-political, security and economic situation and have been working actively on human rights, minority issues, refugee empowerment and political development in Afghanistan over the past 15 years.

- Phil Glendenning (Director of Edmund Rice Centre and President of Refugee Council of Australia and Director of Edmund Rice Centre)
- Farhad Arian (Program Coordinator – Research and Policy at Edmund Rice

Centre)

- Martin Reusch (International Human Rights Activist)
- Hedayat Oryan (Human Rights Activist and Director of Social Enterprise Nick Tiling Services)

Read more:

https://www.erc.org.au/media_release_afghanistan_now_panel_discussion

Aboriginal women lead fight against violence

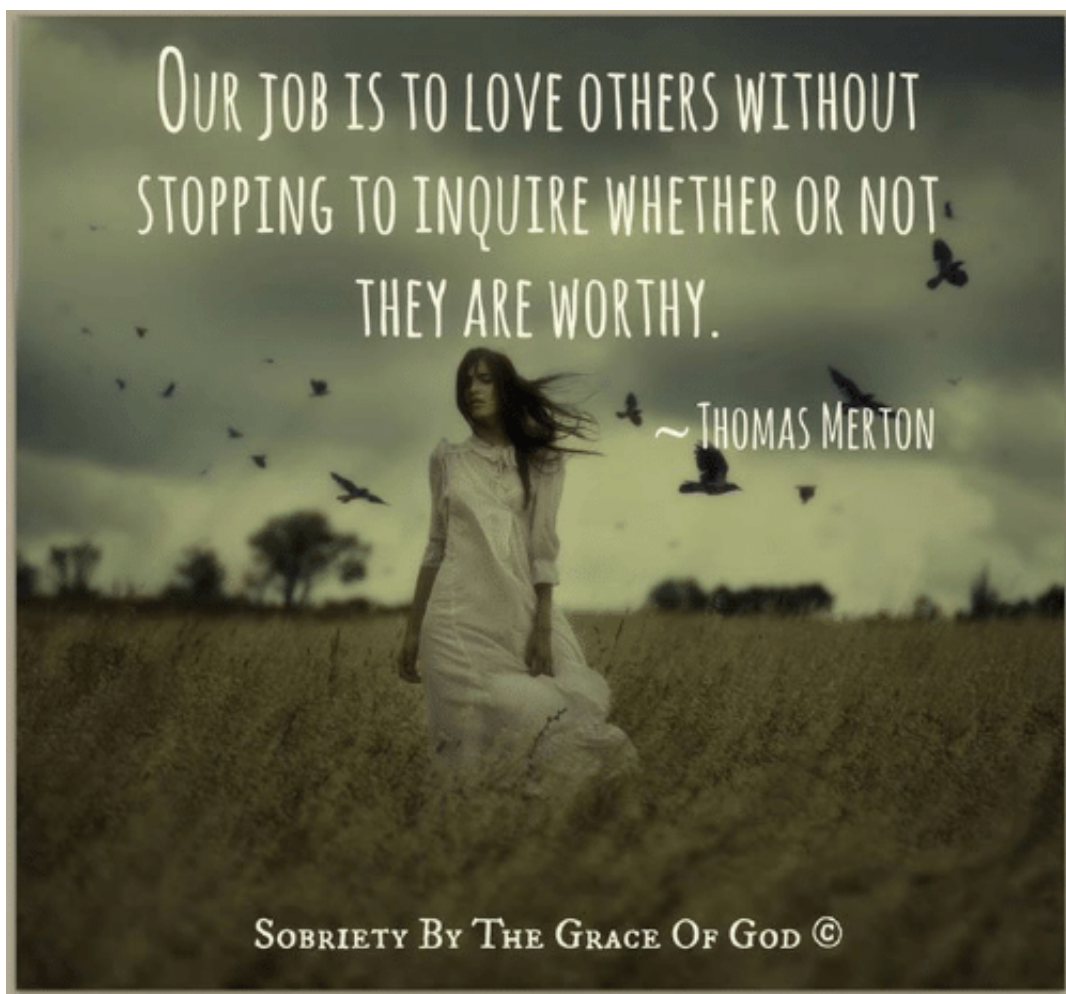
Celeste Liddle, Eureka Street, Vol 29 No.3 19th February 2019

On 6 February, four [brave Aboriginal women](#) shared their experiences of being victims of sexual assault and harassment on the ABC's 7:30 Report. These shocking stories and the strength of these women was made even more plain by the fact that the alleged perpetrator of this violence against all four women is the current head of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS), Wayne Muir. Muir (pictured) has denied all accusations but, nonetheless, was [stood down by](#) the board of directors of VALS in the wake of this report.

It is, however, a sad state of affairs when a group of women are forced to go public like this in order to be heard because they have been systemically failed over an extraordinary 30 year period, by their workplaces, by their communities, and by the legal system. On watching the report I couldn't help but feel that the exact same processes which had elevated this alleged perpetrator had silenced these women, and this was a shameful state of affairs.

When the report broke, I saw many Aboriginal women take to social media to share it and register their own shock and outrage. Indeed, many of them challenged others in the Indigenous community, particularly men, to stand up and be counted. It's so important they did this, for how can we ever win the fight against racism and colonisation in this country when Aboriginal women's rights to safety and autonomy are not respected? When our rights must always come secondary to those meant to march alongside us in the struggle?

Read more: <https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/aboriginal-women-lead-fight-against-violence>



Our job is to love others without
stopping to inquire whether or
not they are worthy. ~ Thomas
Merton



Stateless refugee facing indefinite detention

Shira Sebban, Eureka Street, Vol. 29. No.4 22nd February 2019

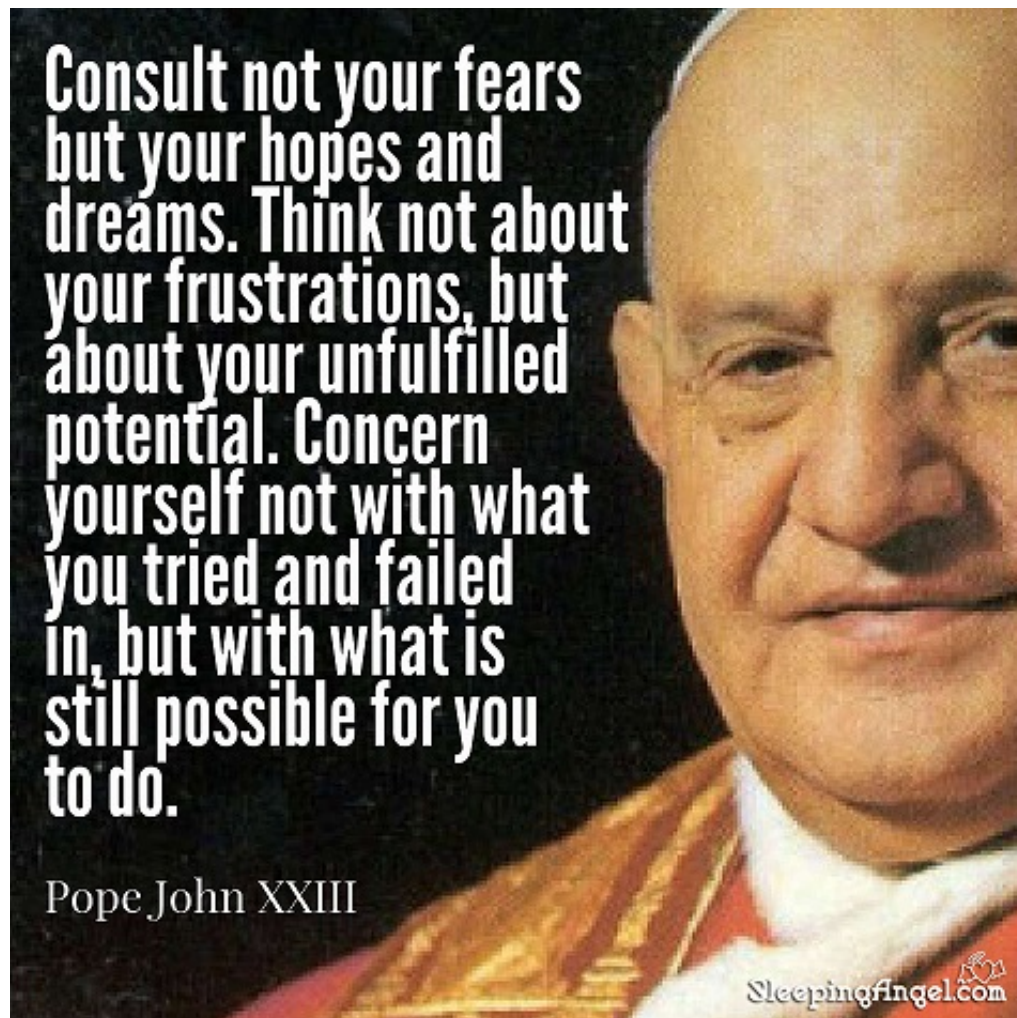
The Australian government has accepted that a stateless refugee — detained since arriving as a child in 2013 — faces indefinite detention, after taking over two years to reject his visa application.

Despite facing no criminal charges, Ahmad Shalikhani, 21, was refused by Immigration Minister David Coleman, due to a risk he would 'engage in criminal conduct in Australia', thus deeming him to have failed the character test under the Migration Act.

Shalikhani's legal team will appeal the decision. 'It is unacceptable that someone who arrived as a child, and has various cognitive difficulties, should be subjected to detention for this long, and that the government could consider indefinite detention for him,' said director of Human Rights for All, Alison Battison.

According to Coleman's statement dated 3 January 2019: 'In light of the serious nature of the potential harm, I have found that Mr Shalikhani represents an

unacceptable risk to individuals in the Australian community'. This outweighed other considerations including 'Australia's international non-refoulement obligations, the prospects of indefinite detention of Mr Shalikhhan and its possible effect on his mental health, and the impact of a refusal decision on his family'. Read more: <https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/stateless-refugee-facing-indefinite-detention>



REFLECTIONS

The important thing is not to think much, but to love much.

Teresa of Avila

'The need of the moment is not one religion but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of different religions.' Ghandi wrote, 'All faiths constitute a revelation of the Truth, but all are imperfect, are liable to error. Reverence for other faiths need not blind us to their faults' (in Fischer 2004, p. 417).

Ghandi

wish pure love and soft peace
upon the ones

who've been unkind to you
and keep moving forward
- this will free you both

rupi kaur 2017 'the sun and her flowers'

"Until we learn to love others as ourselves, it's difficult to blame broken people who desperately try to affirm themselves when no one else will."

Richard Rohr; *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life.*

"The original languages didn't even have he and she. They didn't have concepts of masculine and feminine. People were people. And the whole idea was that we were in a circle together, not in a hierarchy together."

Gloria Steinem

"There is a collective force rising up on the earth today, an energy of the reborn feminine... This is a time of monumental shift, from the male dominance of human consciousness back to a balanced relationship between masculine and feminine."

Marianne Williamson

LITANY TO THE COSMOS

Marian Oxenburgh

Creator of the Cosmos We are a people at the cross roads of who we are and who we are supposed to be. We have created you in our own image and have made you out to be an angry God who will only love those who are squeaky clean and follow a certain religion.

We have failed to see the glory of your creation and instead, have worn blinkers making our view a narrow one.

We have lost the vision of Yeshua and instead have created a Church of power and might, of big buildings and fancy vestments, of hierarchy and titles. Of men with special powers who have created dogmas and canon laws to keep people in their place and who have banished those who dare question them.

And all done in the name of God.

And yet, and yet, within each of us there is your light dwelling in our hearts, it is your free gift to us and all we have to do is recognize it and once we do, our horizons expand, our life has meaning, we laugh again and act with kindness and thoughtfulness to others. We are no longer isolated but acknowledge that we too are made from star dust and belong to the cosmos.

Creator of the Cosmos, our world is just one part of millions and millions of galaxies and stars. Too many for us to comprehend and that itself is a mystery.

And may we be content to live that mystery with all our hearts.

Amen

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

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