



**Edmund Rice Centre**

**Awareness. Advocacy. Action**

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# **ERC JUSTICE UPDATES**

## **August 2019 No.12**

Dear All,

Welcome to the 12th 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!**

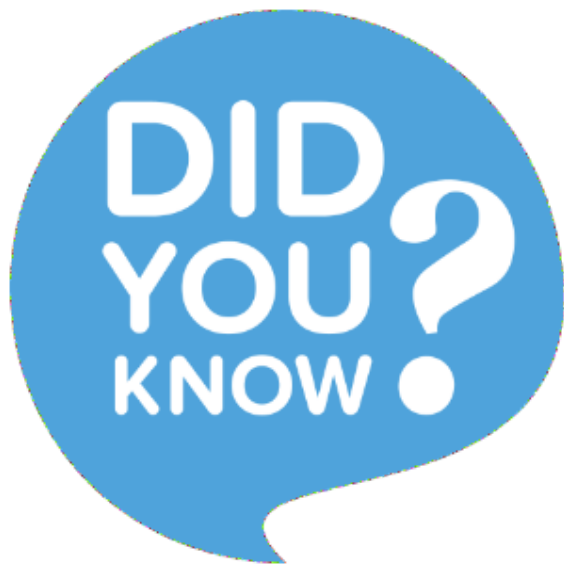
Thanks so much for your wonderful feedback, it is really appreciated. Please do send us your feedback or any information you think would be good to include in further updates.

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 Friday August the 23<sup>rd</sup>, The Australian Government will have detained men and women on Nauru & Manus Island for 2120 days.**

- **UNHCR Commissioner for Refugees:** 70.8 million people are displaced in world today. 25.9 are formally classed as refugees - half of these are minors.
- **UNHCR Commissioner for Refugees:** Of 5.68 million who had fled Syria by 31/1/19 3.64 million went to Turkey; nearly 1 million to Lebanon and 671,551 went to Jordan where two-thirds of population is already made up of **Palestinian refugees**. (Clarion Kaldor , Miriam Cosic, The Saturday Paper Aug.10-16)
- **Jane McAdam, Prof. of International Refugee Law, Kaldor Centre, UNSW.** Australia accepts fewer than 20,000 refugees a year. "What Australia takes in a year is what Greece was taking in a day." (Clarion Kaldor , Miriam Cosic, The Saturday Paper Aug.10-16)

- Deloitte Access Economics: [There are roughly 722,00 on Newstart - Singles receive \\$278/week or less than \\$40/day. Their standard of living has gone backwards.](#)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics reports: [The largest contributor to a rise of 1.9% in Living Cost Indexes is the cost of transport \(up by 4.5%\).](#)



## The Torment of Powerlessness

Danny Gilbert \*, [https:// www.linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com), August 5, 2019. Speech from Yothu Yindi Foundation - Garma Festival on 3 August 2019.

### \* Danny Gilbert: A GREAT FRIEND AND SUPPORTER OF ERC FOR MANY YEARS

I start by acknowledging the Gumatj people of the Yolngu nation and I pay respects to their elders past and present.

It's a great honour to be invited to speak here this evening. I'm going to talk about constitutional recognition and the enabling of a voice for Indigenous Australians. And about how this can relieve the "torment of powerlessness", so poignantly expressed in The Uluru Statement from the Heart. I will explain why constitutional recognition is entirely in keeping with our Constitution as it is. And why it is so important to who we are as a nation.

For more than 30 years, I have been gifted with the friendship and trust of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These friendships began in the 1980s in Sydney's Redfern. Redfern was a tough, confronting place. The

problems seemed intractable, beyond remedy. It was emblematic of the tragic failures of the past and the inertia of the present. But Redfern was also a crucible of Indigenous activism. There was a voice there – if only Australia could hear it.

I was in my early 30s. The plight of inner-city Aboriginal people sparked my memories of growing up on Wiradjuri Country in the Western Riverina of New South Wales. I remembered very poor Aboriginal families. I remembered the shacks many of them called home. We looked away. They were outcasts, second class citizens, and seemed to be permanently so. When I was in my late teens my father casually mentioned, for the first and last time, that he had black cousins. One of them was Kevin Gilbert, the Aboriginal activist, artist and writer. I never met him or any of his siblings. They had no existence in my white non-Indigenous family. This was my own experience of what WE Stanner called “the great Australian silence”.

Read more:

[https://www.linkedin.com/content-guest/article/torment-powerlessness-danny-gilbert?fbclid=IwAR0rF5FvpNffK9a-BHMCMMKhJGf5-fRvyg1VD\\_O1SGxCP4Z794agj8p8uunw](https://www.linkedin.com/content-guest/article/torment-powerlessness-danny-gilbert?fbclid=IwAR0rF5FvpNffK9a-BHMCMMKhJGf5-fRvyg1VD_O1SGxCP4Z794agj8p8uunw)



**Nyamba Buru Yawuru Ltd. Broome, WA**

## **First Nations Resilience Project**

Resilience is described as the capacity of an individual or community to withstand and recover from adverse change. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, resilience is not just about individuals adapting to change or recovering from the impact of adverse change but is concerned with tradition and culture, cultural and community relationships, and connection to land. These elements enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities to flourish. In that regard resilience extends to cultural revitalisation



and recovery based on reclaiming spirituality, knowledges and practices and collective identity. Further in understanding Indigenous resilience and the impact of adverse circumstances it is necessary to understand the historical relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples particularly the social, political, cultural and economic constraints placed on them throughout history. This can lead to a broader understanding of the Indigenous social, political, cultural and economic situation resulting in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples creating and developing their own ways of achieving cultural revival and self-determination.

The Edmund Rice Centre has worked with Aboriginal communities across Australia to document stories of resilience as it relates to the ability of Aboriginal people and communities to rebuild and strengthen themselves and their communities through their own knowledge, practices and agency.

Link to: Resilience stories/Sources of Resilience/Full Report

[:https://www.erc.org.au/first\\_nations\\_resilience](https://www.erc.org.au/first_nations_resilience)



**Newly Arrived Syrian and Iraqi Refugees Learn About Services in SW Sydney 2019 Community Services Expo, Tuesday August 6th**

On Tuesday August 6th, Edmund Rice Centre (ERC) conducted another successful Community Services Expo at Patrician Brothers College in Fairfield in partnership with the College and Sydney Catholic Schools.

“The 2019 Community Services Expo was designed to assist the integration of new refugees and humanitarian entrants in south-western Sydney (including the Fairfield, Liverpool, Bankstown and Cumberland LGAs), by helping them access available settlement services and programs”, ERC Coordinator for the event, Farhad Arian said

“This year’s Expo provided an opportunity for newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants to learn about settlement services, employment support programs, volunteer/internship opportunities, business support initiatives, education assistance, vocational trainings, child-care support, legal awareness services, family support programs and cultural awareness sessions, offered by government and non-governmental service providers”.

145 people attended the this year’s Expo, including refugee communities from diverse backgrounds, 8 community leaders and representatives of 28 service providers to present their services and programs to the participants.

“This event provided an excellent opportunity for the refugee communities to learn about available programs, meet new people from the wider community, build their professional community networks and have some nice food and drinks together”, Mr Arian said. “Service providers also had an opportunity to meet representatives of other services, become and seek practical ways of collaborations in future for effective service delivery”.

The 2019 Expo was a very successful event which ERC will repeat each year to assist recently arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants as part of its Refugee Support Programs.

For further information, please contact Farhad Arian or Phil Glendenning at ERC on 02 8762 4200 or email at [erc@erc.org.au](mailto:erc@erc.org.au)

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Behrouz Boochani takes a selfie with one of the locals on Manus Island . Photograph: Jonas Gratzner/The Guardian

## **Behrouz Boochani wins National Biography award – and accepts via WhatsApp from Manus**

*Judges call Kurdish Iranian writer and refugee's memoir an 'astonishing act of witness'*

*Guardian staff, Mon 12 Aug 2019*

The Kurdish Iranian writer Behrouz Boochani has continued his sweep of the Australian literary prize landscape, winning the \$25,000 National Biography award on Monday – yet another award the refugee was unable to accept in person, as he enters his sixth year of detention on Manus Island.

Boochani's autobiography *No Friend but the Mountains* tells of his journey from Indonesia to Australia by boat, and his subsequent imprisonment on Manus Island by the Australian government, which continues to refuse him entry.

The journalist and activist who fled Iran in 2013 under fear of persecution composed the book one text message at the time from Manus. It was translated from Persian by his friend Omid Tofighian.

*No Friend but the Mountains* has already won \$125,000 at the Victorian premier's literary awards, the country's richest literary prize; \$10,000 at the New South Wales premier's literary awards; and non-fiction book of the year at the Australian Book Industry awards.

At the National Biography award, which was presented on Monday morning at the State Library of NSW, the judges' praised Boochani's book as "profoundly important, an astonishing act of witness and testament to the lifesaving power of



writing as resistance”.

Boochani appeared at the awards ceremony via WhatsApp. “I don’t want to talk about literature, I would [just] like to say that I think the literature community as a part of civil society of Australia are part of our resistance in front of this system, and I think it is very valuable, and I do appreciate everyone for recognising my work,” he said.

Read more:

[https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/12/behrouz-boochani-wins-25000-national-biography-award-and-accepts-via-whatsapp-from-manus?utm\\_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWFuVG9kYXIBVVMtMTkwODEy&utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&CMP=GT AU\\_email](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/12/behrouz-boochani-wins-25000-national-biography-award-and-accepts-via-whatsapp-from-manus?utm_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWFuVG9kYXIBVVMtMTkwODEy&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&CMP=GT AU_email)



Children symbolically representing climate change greet Prime Minister Scott Morrison as he arrives for the Pacific Islands Forum (AAP)

### **The Pacific Islands Forum**

Pacific Calling Partnership reports that the Director of the Edmund Rice



Centre, Phil Glendenning, attended this year's Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) together with Dr. Simon Bradshaw of Oxfam Australia and Claire Anterea of the Kiribati Climate Action Network (KiriCAN). This year's meeting was held in Funafuti, the capital of Tuvalu, and hosted by the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Mr Enele Sopoaga. Held in Funafuti, Tuvalu 13th - 16th August, again highlighted the challenges facing the region especially in relation to what has been described as "the existential issue" of climate change.

The urgency of the matter for the world as a whole was recently highlighted by the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which painted a dire picture of a future world impacted by rising seas and other climate related natural disasters. The paper emphasised that limiting warming to 1.5°C would require "unprecedented" action by the world community and would require immediate action for deep cuts to greenhouse gas emissions. The leaders of the Pacific Islands have repeatedly said that they regard climate change as "the single greatest threat" to the well-being of their people and have sought assurances from the Australian government that they will do everything in their power to provide the leadership the region so desperately requires.

#### *Phil Glendenning's - Reflections*

I have been attending these international meetings and forums for over 20 years now, and I have never felt as sad, embarrassed, and disillusioned as I did last week in Funafuti, Tuvalu.

Pacific leaders have long recognised climate change as an existential threat to the region, and the tableau of Pacific children sitting in a moat of seawater as leaders arrived at the forum left little doubt about what the top priority would be at this year's forum.

Their demands have been clear and consistent, as have the stakes. To survive, the Pacific needs global warming to be capped at 1.5°C, a ban on new coal mines, and rapid reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

But from the lead up to the forum to its awful aftermath, Australia has made it clear at every turn that this was never going to happen.

From reshuffling the aid budget to pledge \$500 million to help increase disaster resilience to weakening language on emissions reduction commitments and refusing to endorse a ban on new coal, to callously using Pacific workers' livelihoods in Australia to justify inaction, Australia's behaviour has been abysmal.

It is no surprise, then, that frustrated Pacific leaders—some of whom were reduced to tears during the negotiations—have said that Australia's conduct at the PIF was not good for the relationship between the island nations and Australia.

Former President of Kiribati, Anote Tong, even labelled Australia as a potential "worst of two evils" in a recent interview and pondered, "What is the benefit of

keeping that relationship going?”.

.....

The only way for us to repair ties with the region is to heed their pleas for survival, and their call to action. Australia must not open up new coal mines, and accelerate its efforts to reduce emissions.

We need a credible climate policy, and given the proven financial, health and environmental benefits of renewable energy, politicians should stop hiding behind flimsy political and electoral excuses.

***Ultimately, we cannot forsake our deep historic, cultural, and kinship ties with the Pacific. They are our neighbours, our friends, and our family. We must act now, or mourn the loss of something precious and irreplaceable.***

### **The Global Climate Strike**

The Edmund Rice Centre, including Pacific Calling Partnership, will be shut on Friday 20 September 2019 in solidarity with the young people at School Strike 4 Climate who have organised the Global Climate Strike. This will enable our staff to attend the strike in Sydney CBD.

You may have heard of this movement, founded by Greta Thunberg, a young Swedish student, who has been at the forefront of the fight to preserve a liveable planet for coming generations. This is a global event and there will be rallies across Australia, including all major cities. We encourage all our supporters to join us. Let us know if you wish to join our group or if you would like to travel with us to Sydney (location to be confirmed).



## EVENT

### **Report Launch & Panel: Settlement Experience of Syrian and Iraqi Refugees: Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward**

Join the Edmund Rice Centre for the launch of a new report on the settlement experiences of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Australia.

#### **About the Report**

The purpose of the study is to learn about the gap between what is currently provided by way of settlement support and what is needed to achieve positive wellbeing outcomes for refugees. The study aims to enhance policy development, settlement service provision and consequently the settlement experience of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, and to foster a better understanding of these new arrivals living in Australia. The report includes concrete recommendations for further investigation and policy improvement in refugee settlement. It is hoped that these recommendations will be used to improve services to refugees, and to inform relevant stakeholders, including Government, the community sector and the wider community.

Please note that the report launch will also include a brief panel and Q&A discussion. Networking, drinks and light refreshments follow the discussion.

WHEN: August 29, 2019 at 5pm - 6:30pm

WHERE: Gilbert + Tobin Law Firm



Level 35 Tower Two 200 Barangaroo Avenue

Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia

CONTACT: Farhad Arian · FArian@edmundrice.org · 02 8762 4200

Full details & acceptance:

[https://www.erc.org.au/settlement\\_experience\\_of\\_syrian\\_and\\_iraqi\\_refugees\\_opportunities\\_challenges\\_and\\_the\\_way\\_forward](https://www.erc.org.au/settlement_experience_of_syrian_and_iraqi_refugees_opportunities_challenges_and_the_way_forward)

## JUST COMMENTS

### *Meritocracy-.....How Fair is the 'Fair Go'*

'Meritocracy', first coined in 1958, is a social system where advancement in society is based on one's abilities and merits rather than on the basis of family, wealth or social background. Coupled with capitalism and egalitarian values, it has allowed people from low status groups to dream of improving their social status, economic class, and place in the hierarchy. The impression is that everyone can succeed if they develop the necessary abilities. Meritocracy and equality of opportunity are championed by all kinds of politicians to achieve a fair society. People want to believe they live in a 'fair' society where hard work can achieve anything, regardless of their social position at birth. This is simply not true.

#### **Download:**

[https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/erc/pages/1613/attachments/original/1559011320/Just\\_Comment\\_Vol\\_21\\_2-19\\_Meritocracy\\_WEB.pdf?1559011320](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/erc/pages/1613/attachments/original/1559011320/Just_Comment_Vol_21_2-19_Meritocracy_WEB.pdf?1559011320)

### *Marshall Islands - a tragic confluence of nuclear testing and climate change*

#### *A chosen people*

In 1946, after a Sunday church service, the people of Enewetak Atoll (also known as Bikini Atoll) were told they are a chosen people, like the Israelites, who would deliver humanity from future wars as the US perfected the atomic bomb. Within weeks after the people being relocated, the first tests began.

The so-called 'promised land' was a destroyed land.

#### **Download:**

[https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/erc/pages/1616/attachments/original/1563408731/Just\\_Comment\\_Vol\\_21\\_3-19\\_Marshall\\_Islands.pdf?1563408731](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/erc/pages/1616/attachments/original/1563408731/Just_Comment_Vol_21_3-19_Marshall_Islands.pdf?1563408731)



### ANOINTED

*I'm coming to meet you  
I'm coming to see you  
what stories will I find?  
Will I find an island  
or a tomb?*

*To get to this tomb take a canoe.  
Take a canoe through miles of scattered sun.  
Swallow endless swirling sea.  
Gulp down radioactive lagoon.  
Do not bring flowers, or speeches.  
There will be no white stones to scatter around this grave.  
There will be no songs to sing.*

*How shall we remember you?*

*Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner  
Marshallese poet,  
educator and activist*

Link to video: <https://vimeo.com/264867214>

### REFLECTIONS

**Why do we struggle?**

**Two reasons:**

**we struggle because we love and not because we hate,  
we struggle because our faith in God is alive, not dead.**

***Marta Torres, freedom-fighter and peace activist***

I am black of skin among whites,  
And I am proud,  
Proud of race and proud of skin.  
I am broken and poor,  
Dressed in rags from white man's back,  
But I do not think I am ashamed.  
Spears could not contend with guns and we were mastered,  
But there are things they could not plunder and destroy.  
We were conquered but never subservient,  
We were compelled but never servile.  
Do not think I cringe as white men cringe to whites,  
I am proud,  
Though human and poor and without a home...  
So was Christ.  
*Oodgeroo of the tribe of Noonucal [Australia]*

*God of justice,  
we have communed with you  
and heard the word of love:  
We are known and accepted.  
Empower us to live out our charge  
to spread that word unashamedly and fearlessly.  
Give us strength when we confront the reality  
that spreading the word of your love and peace  
does not always create a peaceable  
and loving reaction in those we speak to.  
(Source unknown)*



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.

**Our mailing address is:**

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