



**Edmund Rice Centre**  
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

## **ERC JUSTICE UPDATES**

### **November 2019 No.15**

Dear All,

Welcome to the 15th 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.

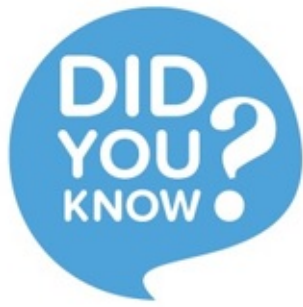
Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Regards

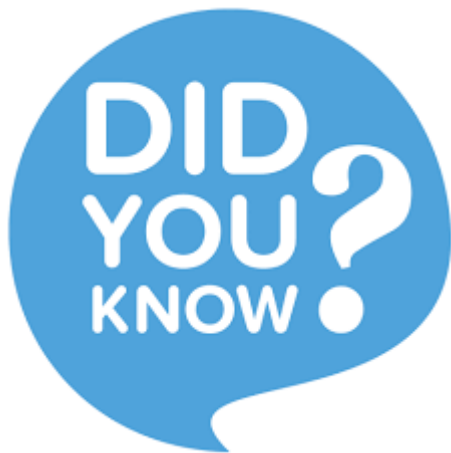
***Marita***

**Communications Project Officer,  
Marita McInerney**



**Behrouz Boochani** took 2,269 days or 54,456 hours to fight for his freedom from detention on Manus Island. The Australian Government detained him because he came by boat to seek asylum in Australia.

**On Friday November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019** The Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2211 days.



Earlier this year Islamophobia Register Australia released Part II of a Report which was a continuation of the first Report published in 2017. Report II offers a multi-faceted analysis of verified incidents reported by victims, proxies and witnesses in a 2 year period of 2016-2017 and established a consensus that Islamophobia is an uncontested phenomenon in Australia.

- 72% of victims were women in both online & offline cases
- 73% of perpetrators are largely men.
- 92% of female victims were targeted alone both by solo and multiple perpetrators
- 60% of islamaphobic incidents reported occurred in guarded or patrolled areas
- 53% of children surveyed were targets or witnesses of anti-Muslim hate
- Compared to previous report, offline cases that were reported to Police increased from 16% to 22%. Police only attended half of the time.
- Of the 202 offline cases 72% were interpersonal while 28% were not directed at individuals, but generically at all Muslims - such as graffiti and stickers

- **50% of cases by type were hate speech whilst 25% were physical attacks or vandalism**



## **Director of the Edmund Rice Centre, Phil Glendenning's Open Letter to the Prime Minister**

**As a result of the unprecedented nature of the bush fires that are being experienced throughout Australia, together with the extraordinary political debate that has been provoked by the fires, the Director of the Edmund Rice Centre, Phil Glendenning, has written an Open Letter to the Prime Minister.**

### **OPEN LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER SCOTT MORRISON**

**14th November 2019**

**Dear Prime Minister,**

**I write on behalf of the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education to express our deepest concern at Australia's unpreparedness for the bushfire catastrophe we are now facing.**

**There is now no doubt that the intensity of these bushfires is associated with climate change and its impacts. This association is [clearly acknowledged](#) by Bureau of Meteorology scientists such as Dr Andrew Dowdy.**

**In the face of the catastrophic nature of these bushfires, it is of the utmost importance that this link is acknowledged and that adequate action to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions be urgently taken. It is clear that Australian communities have not been adequately prepared to deal with the current and future impacts of the climate crisis.**

**In April 2018, more than 20 former fire and emergency chiefs from multiple states and territories stated that Australia is ["unprepared for](#)**

[worsening natural disasters from climate change and governments are putting lives at risk.](#)

**The Edmund Rice Centre stands alongside the most vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and communities, including our neighbours in the Pacific, many of whom will suffer the gravest consequences as a result of the impacts of climate change. Like the people living in Pacific Islands, rural Australians have access to fewer resources to deal with such catastrophes.**

**As an organisation that promotes human rights, social justice and eco justice, we appeal to you and your government to communicate to all Australians the enormity of the challenge we are facing as a country and as a world community. We ask you to provide the leadership that this challenge so desperately needs.**

**Sincerely,**

**Phil Glendenning**

**Director**

**Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education.**



Indigenous fire practitioner Victor Steffensen teaches a traditional burning methods to landowners. (Facebook: Cicada Woman)

## Indigenous leaders say Australia's bushfire crisis shows approach to land management failing

***Marian Faa, ABC News, 14th November 2019***

Indigenous leaders, who have been warning about a bushfire crisis for years, are calling for a radical change to how land is managed as Australia faces some of its worst bushfire conditions on record.

### ***Key points:***

Indigenous leaders are calling for a new workforce of 'fire practitioners' to implement traditional burning practices across Australia

Traditional burning techniques involve regular, controlled burns that reduce fuel load and decrease risk of bushfires

Researchers say burning methods that date back thousands of years must be adapted to today's landscape

When Indigenous fire practitioner Victor Steffensen walked outside his house in far north Queensland this week he felt a sense of dread.

"I look into the sky and I see the misty haze coming up from down south all through the landscape," he said.

"You can see the ashes on the air, landing on the trees up here and it's like a mourning for the country.

"When we walk outside and we get that sort of feeling ... we know something is wrong."

A year ago, while conducting workshops in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales, Mr Steffensen predicted the crisis that has now killed three people and destroyed at least 25 homes.

"I was looking at it and thinking 'this is a timebomb, it's going to go off'," he said.

### ***Fear of fire at the heart of 'mismanagement'***

Mr Steffensen has been teaching traditional Indigenous burning practices for the past two decades.

Read More:

[https://www.abc.net.au › traditional-owners-predicted-bush fire-disaster](https://www.abc.net.au › traditional-owners-predicted-bush-fire-disaster)



“People would say, ‘I was taken away, too’, but that was sort of as far as it went. You thought it must have happened to a few people, but it was an accepted thing, so I stayed quiet.”KRISTOFFER PAULSEN

## **'Music is the medicine': Archie Roach on how song saved his soul**

*Konrad Marshall, Good weekend , SMH, 2nd November 2019*

***This singer-songwriter, poet, former alcoholic and long-time activist has revealed much of his remarkable life story through music. But Archie Roach, now 63 and ailing, has plenty more to tell – this time on the page, not stage.***

“People would say, ‘I was taken away, too’, but that was sort of as far as it went. You thought it must have happened to a few people, but it was an accepted thing, so I stayed quiet.”

Archie Roach closes his eyes and bows his head, and knits his fingers together as if in prayer, and I realise he’s not here any more. He’s no longer with me at his dining table, in his white brick cottage near the coastal town of Warrnambool, four hours west of Melbourne, where the sky is cool grey and his nectarine tree blossom is hot pink.

Roach is in his own mind, inside a boiling hot tin shed in far north Queensland, and he’s a young man again, experiencing a seminal moment closer to the beginning of his lifelong itinerant journey of self-discovery than to its end. As he falls more deeply into his trance, I notice the looseness in his skin, his basset-hound cheeks and the steady rocking of his smooth, bald scalp, like the bottom of a big, brown egg.

Roach, 63, is maybe 18 in this memory from the Atherton Tablelands, which begins on an Indigenous settlement, sitting in the dust, drinking beer. A few trucks roll in, he says, and blackfellas in Akubras and cowboy boots and



chequered shirts get out. They're horsemen from the stations around Cape York. They have guitars and they sing into the night, then an old, snowy-haired bloke arrives. The men put down their drinks. They stand.

"Old fella started talkin' language," says Roach, eyes still closed. "I'd never heard Aboriginal language – never in my life. Nobody spoke it in Melbourne or Sydney. But he just rattled it off. And then the young fellas, those ringers, they went inside the shed and took off their hats and their boots and their shirts. And they're standin' 'round just in their jeans. The old fella said a few other words and they come out with some boomerangs and clap sticks, and the old fella said one word that I remember: warrma."

Roach didn't know it then, but warrma means corroboree. And the sounds they made then are the sounds he sings out now in his lounge room: "Eeeeeh, hup! Chick-chick-chick, aaaaahhhh!"

His head sways into that rollicking past now, and his eyeballs frolic under soft, waxy eyelids. "I was just standing there. Stunned. They danced and they danced!" he says, big eyes opening. "They danced pretty much through the night. That's when I asked the old fella, 'What's all this? We don't do this down south where I come from.' "

No? the old fella replied. Why not? Roach didn't know why not. They just ... didn't.

"I'm sorry about that, my boy," the old man said. "You fellas are different. The white men came to your country long before they came up here. They wanted the green, wet country first. We were able to keep stuff. You fellas couldn't keep anything."

Roach had left home at 15, ended up in Sydney at 16, seen Adelaide at 17 and visited that hot shed outside Cairns not long after, before heading south again, home to Melbourne. His skin was blacker from his time on the road, under the sun, and his soul was, too – his insides warmer and darker from his cultural reckoning. "Why don't we dance?" he asked his friends. "Why don't we talk language? Why don't we go out and hunt?" They looked at him funny. Just shut up, Archie Roach.

"It changed me. It started a new search for me. It was a turning point," Roach says, nodding. "It was as if there was more to all this life than meets the eye. More that I don't know about. More to learn. As if there's more to me."

Read more: <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/music/music-is-medicine-archie-roach-on-how-song-saved-his-soul-20191028-p534xk.html>



Portraits of the El Salvador martyrs by Mary Pimmel

## El Salvador reality upends justice romance

**Andrew Hamilton, Eureka Street, Vol. 29 No.22, 6th November 2019**

Thirty years ago, on 16 November 1989, the Salvadorean Armed Forces murdered two women and six Jesuits at the Universidad Centroamericana El Salvador (UCA). The killings took place in the Jesuit community house. The housekeeper and her daughter were killed to ensure no witnesses survived. The event had a great impact on Jesuits around the world. It made barbarity personal. For me it was a significant stage on the journey from fascination with the romance and the rhetoric of the struggle for justice to recognition of the hard, unyielding daily reality that it involved.

I heard the news when attending a Jesuit Refugee Service meeting in Thailand. Jon Sobrino, a prominent Jesuit theologian from El Salvador who had been lecturing in Thailand at the time, came to the meeting to join us in mourning his dead companions. On the front page of the Bangkok Post was a photograph of one of the murdered Jesuits killed by his desk. Jon stopped to look, and said slowly that the bible and typewriter pictured were his.

Unspoken was the recognition that the bullets were also meant for him. Another Jesuit coming to the city for the weekend had stayed in his room.

Two years later I spent six months in El Salvador, reading theology and visiting local Catholic communities. I was attracted to El Salvador by the theology of Sobrino and other Latin American writers. It interpreted the Gospel and its promise through the life of the local poor who lived in an oppressive society.

Read More: <https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/el-salvador-reality-upends-justice-romance?>



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## A visit among the men of Manus

*Carolina Gottardo, Eureka Street, vol 29, No.23 18 November 2019*

I recently visited Port Moresby as part of a delegation of Catholic leaders. We travelled there to witness the situation of the refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island, to communicate and demonstrate solidarity with them, and to promise to act with them as fellow human beings deserving dignity and respect.

Carolina Gottardo (right) pictured with Behrouz Boochani in Port Moresby. I have worked with refugees and migrants for more than 20 years in different countries. I have been part of many serious and confronting human rights struggles. Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, the organisation I lead, works with many families and men transferred from Manus Island and Nauru for medical treatment. I am familiar with some of their challenges, including their ongoing struggles with destitution and homelessness in the Australian community.

Nonetheless, I was not expecting what I saw and what I heard in PNG, and it deeply touched me. The ongoing resilience of these men against the odds also inspired me.

I saw young men with their lives ahead of them — except that many of those lives have been taken away by unfair and unnecessary policies that still continue to haunt them after seven long years of suffering, pain and slow

torture.

I also saw amazingly inspiring and deeply political men who see each other as brothers and who often care more for each other than themselves. For instance, most of the men told us how the priority is to focus on the harrowing situation that their brothers in Bomana Immigration Centre are facing.

A man showed me photos of his teenage daughter and son with a mixture of pride and sadness. He has not seen them for seven years. Others mentioned that they have not talked with their families for almost six months because they do not want to make them suffer. Their families no longer believe they have been detained without doing anything wrong. This is how deeply offshore processing has impacted the men. Other men amazed me with the skills they have learnt in those long days in detention on Manus, including proficient use of languages

I found so many of these young men profoundly inspiring. They may not all be Christians, but they were examples to us Christian visitors of what it means to live the Gospels. They have turned the other cheek and have decided to look after each other in the face of harrowing adversity. They remind us of what it means to love our neighbour.

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The many men that I had the honour to meet are fellow human beings who want nothing more than a chance to rebuild their lives in peace and safety. If we can begin to recognise that, perhaps we can all open our hearts a bit more. The ends certainly do not justify the means.

Read More: [www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/a-visit-among-the-men-of-manus](http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/a-visit-among-the-men-of-manus)



Mass for the World Day of the Poor in St. Peter's Basilica. Credit: Daniel Ibanez/CNA.

## **Pope Francis: The poor, unborn, and elderly are neglected in the frenzy of modern life**

*Courtney Mares, Catholic News Agency, 17th November 2019*

On the World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis said that the poor and most vulnerable can be left behind in the frenetic haste and self-centeredness of the modern world.

***“How beautiful it would be if the poor could occupy in our hearts the place they have in the heart of God,” Pope Francis said in his homily Nov. 17.***

“In the frenzy of running, of achieving everything right now, anyone left behind is viewed as a nuisance. And considered disposable. How many elderly, unborn, disabled and poor persons are considered useless,” he said in St. Peter’s Basilica.

Pope Francis celebrated Mass for the 3rd annual World Day of the Poor with the theme “the hope of the poor will never be disappointed.”

“Amid so many penultimate and passing realities, the Lord wants to remind us today of what is ultimate, what will remain forever. It is love, for ‘God is love,’” he said.

Pope Francis warned that there is a great temptation in today’s world to try to know and to do everything “right now” that can cause one to lose sight of what is most important: “We no longer find time for God or for our brother and sister living next door.”

“How often do we let ourselves be seduced by a frantic desire to know everything right now, by the itch of curiosity, by the latest sensational or scandalous news, by lurid stories, by the screaming those who shout loudest and angriest, by those who tell us it is ‘now or never,’” Pope Francis said.

“To us, these are front page news, but the Lord puts them on the second page,” he said. “That which will never pass away remains on the front page: the living God, infinitely greater than any temple we build for him, and the human person, our neighbor, who is worth more than all the news reports of the world.”

The pope explained that the antidote to frantic haste is the Christian virtue of perseverance.

“Perseverance entails moving forward each day with our eyes fixed on what does not pass away: the Lord and our neighbor,” he said. “Let us ask that each of us, and all of us as Church, may persevere in the good and not lose sight of what really counts.”

Following the Mass and Angelus prayer, Pope Francis will share a free lunch with nearly 1,500 poor people invited to dine in the Paul VI Hall and nearby colleges. A medical clinic set up in St. Peter’s Square also offered free medical services to those in need in the week preceding the World Day of the Poor.

Pope Francis made a surprise visit to the medical clinic Nov. 15 and announced the creation of a new 4-story homeless shelter right off the St. Peter’s Square colonnade, which he called “the Palace of the Poor.”

The homeless shelter, staffed by the Sant’Egidio community, will have two floors of dormitories that can sleep 50 men and women, a kitchen to provide breakfast and dinner, and a recreation area for fellowship, educational

programs, and psychological counseling.

“The poor person who begs for my love leads me straight to God,” Pope Francis said.

Read More: [www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-the-poor-unborn-and-elderly-are-neglected-in-the-frenzy-of-modern-life-77805](http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-the-poor-unborn-and-elderly-are-neglected-in-the-frenzy-of-modern-life-77805)





Malatesi Tulufano

## ***IN-COUNTRY TRAINING IN KIRIBATI***

On August 3 and 4, 2019 the PCP held a workshop on climate change, leadership and advocacy in Kiribati, at the Marist Brothers' Maneaba. Maria Tiimon Chi-Fang and Teruabine Anna Nuariki ran the two day-long workshop, which involved a lot of sharing in smaller and a bigger group. There were 10 participants who were all so keen to learn not just about climate change, advocacy and leadership but also about how they could get more involved in any action at the grassroots level.

**The objectives of our workshop were:**



1. Becoming a climate leader
2. Learning about the effects of climate change on Pacific Islands and adaptation
3. Sharing their stories and linking them with culture
4. Making effective presentations
5. Working with the media
6. Choosing and planning a practical project

Day 1 started with participants choosing a picture prepared by Jill and Maria on how they felt about climate change and the workshop. Each participant chose different pictures that represented their feelings about the workshop and knowledge of climate change. The participants then shared their expectations and feelings based on the picture they had chosen.

During the sharing all participants said that their knowledge of climate change was limited but that they were aware that rising sea level, erosion and the continuous changing weather patterns were caused by climate change. Participants also shared that they were looking forward to our workshop and hoped that at the end of it, they would know more about the impacts of climate change and gain greater leadership and advocacy skills.

On day 2, the participants spent 20 minutes going through day 1 and shared to the whole group what they had learnt. Maria and Anna observed that there was more confidence in each participant in sharing their reflections with one another. Their homework for day 2 was to prepare a presentation/story on climate change. This story included:

- a) A Brief introduction
- b) Their personal story about climate change
- c) Time and location (when, where, how)
- d) The participant's key messages

One of the stories, that of Malatesi Tulufano, was quite powerful:

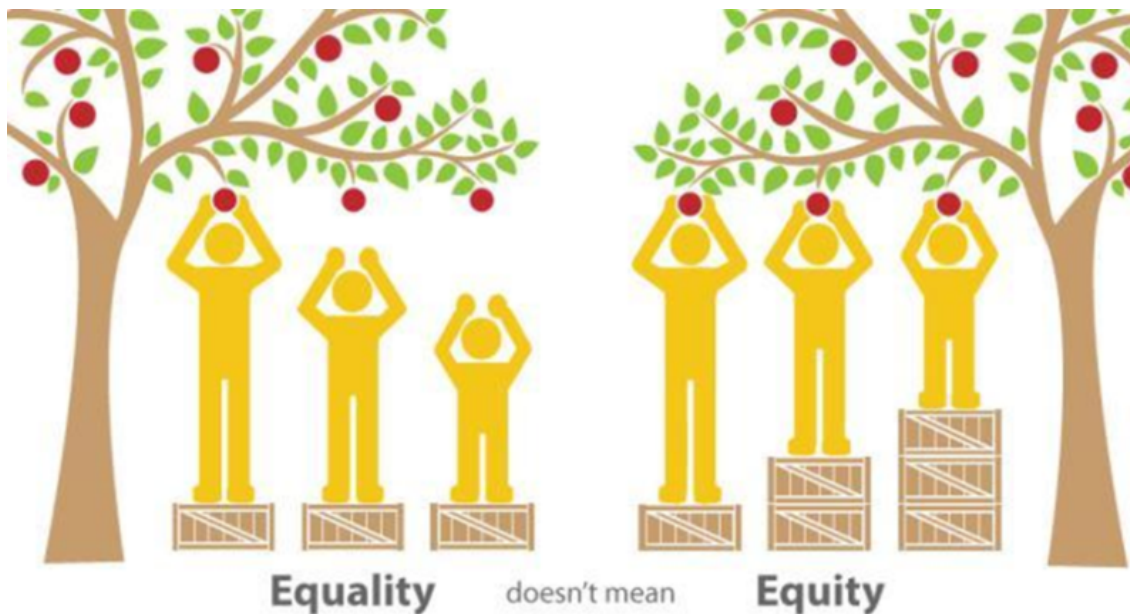
*"My name is Maletasi Tulafono I am 31 years of age married and have three children. Climate change has a great impact on my life and my family. Recently at the beginning of 2019, from January to May, Kiribati experienced heavy rain with a storm surge which we had never experienced before. Our well water was flooded and contaminated and since then we cannot use it anymore. My children were the most affected ones and they had diarrhoea and I was very concerned as I know there were a lot of babies and children lost their lives as a result of diarrhoea. My family are considering to move out from where we live, but that is the sad thing because we do not want to leave our home. We love*

*our family, friends and our neighbours who have become part of our lives and family. For me climate change is a result and caused by human activities. I love my children and I am and will continue to fight for their future and my culture that I valued most. Let us join hands together and fight for this climate change."*

After this session, there were more lessons and practical activities on telling effective stories and how to face the media.

This workshop was lucky to have the participation of a journalist from Melbourne (Francesca) who was staying with the Marist Brothers where the workshop was hosted. Francesca voluntarily attended our workshop and offered to give a session on social media and media to participants. At the end of the workshop Francesca also interviewed the participants on camera.

Later, participants divided into groups to discuss and plan their practical projects around climate action and adaptation. They decided to have two groups led by local climate leaders Teruabine Anna Nuariki , Terakunene Kambati and Maretati. The first group project will focus on planting mangroves and cleaning up South Tarawa from Bonriki to Betio. The second group project will focus on expressing feelings through poetry on issues that people are facing due to climate change. These poems can then be used at future community workshops and climate-related events.



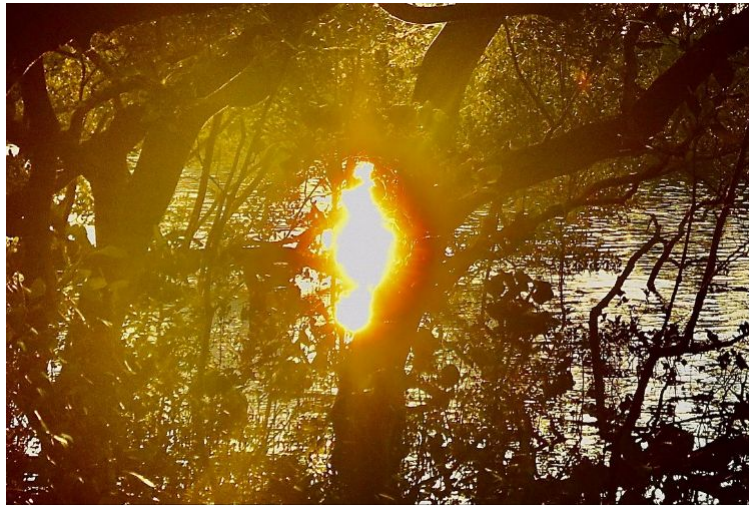
## REFLECTIONS

## **Mercy**

### ***Invitation to Presence, Conversations, Journeying***

**Within creation, the world, and ourselves lies a deep, often unidentified hunger for mercy. Heed the invitation to attend and respond to this our shared hunger for mercy.**

## **Mercy**



***Mercy holding darkness-light.***

***Door of forgiveness***

***Journeying to hope, life, love.***

***Door ever open.***

***Gift ever present.***

***Jude Butcher 2018***

## **Charter for Compassion**

**The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.**

**It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic**

**rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.**

**We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.**

**We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries.**

**Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.**

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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