



Edmund Rice Centre
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

March 2020 No.18

Dear All,

Welcome to the 18th Edition of ERC Justice Updates your regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on all sorts of matters relating to human rights, first nations and environmental justice.

REMEMBER WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

As we look back upon the start to 2020 from the fire season which commenced in October last year followed by floods and storms in January and the devastating drought which for some has reached between 5-7 years with no rain; one must wonder where our country and our world is heading.

On top of this the increasing violence - in particular the gender based incidents which have been front and centre of our news also adds to ones sense of what can one do to improve things.

Humility leads me to do anything I can do in any situation without having to do everything in every situation.' Sister Joan Chittister

Thanks so much for your feedback, it is really appreciated. Please see a new section we are starting this month: *Feedback Comments*. So do send us your suggestions, comments both positive and negative or indeed any information you think would be good to include in further updates.

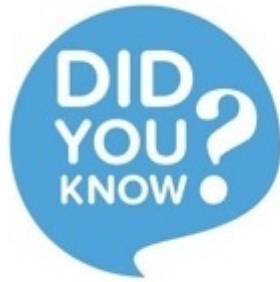
Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

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

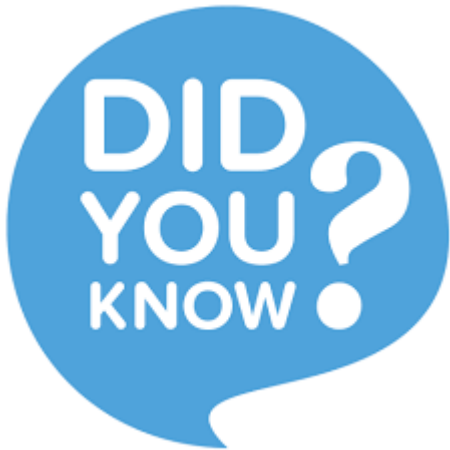
Peace

Marita

**Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney**



On Monday 9th March 2020, the Australian government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2319 days.



In February 2020 A Report entitled: *'The 2020 Poverty in Australia Overview'* was released. This report was a collaboration by UNSW Sydney's Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) and the Australian Council of Social services (ACOSS).

- 3.24 million people in Australia (13.6% of the population)
- 774,000 children under the age of 15 (17.7% of all children in Australia) live below the poverty line
- More than one in eight adults and one in six children live below the poverty line in Australia
- The average poverty gap (the gap between the poverty line and the incomes of people in poverty) is \$282 a week.

- Our survey of people on Newstart found more than 8 in 10 regularly skip meals and more than half have less than \$15 a day left after housing costs.
- Among the lowest 20% of working-age households by income, average housing costs grew by 42% from 2005 to 2017 (compared with an average rise in housing costs of 15% for the middle 20%).
- Newstart, Youth Allowance and Rent Assistance have not increased in real terms in 25 years.
- ACOSS is calling for a \$95 per week increase to Newstart and Youth Allowance; a \$20 per week increase to Rent assistance (as a first step) and for these payments to be regularly indexed to wages, as is the case for the Age Pension.

On Friday February 20, the staff of Edmund Rice Centre gathered to celebrate the 90th birthday of Brother Dan Stewart, whose vision led to the establishment of the Centre in 1996. A mass was celebrated in honor of Brother Dan. In his homily, Fr. Claude Mostowik msc, a long-term ERC staff member, reflected on Dan's life and his legacy in the work of Edmund Rice Centre:

Dan Stewart cfc

Edmund Rice Centre February 21, 2020

Readings for today are very appropriate. It does not always that the readings of the day work out for a special occasion such as this. James (2:19) in one of the readings (not used at this Mass) calls us to put our faith, if it is to be alive, into practice by doing justice and mercy. According to Jesus, it is not words or rituals, but walking the way of the cross. Walking the way of the cross is not about wishful thinking or having visions but putting our passions and values into concrete. For Jesus walking the way of the cross meant walking a countercultural and subversive way. He made public affirmations that women's lives mattered. Samaritan lives mattered. Gentile lives mattered. Sinners lives mattered. The poor mattered. Blind people's lives mattered. Lepers' lives mattered. Widows' lives mattered. Orphans' lives mattered, and strangers' lives mattered—people who were regularly victimised by society. Today's declaration that Black Lives Matter is simply declaring a timeless truth exemplified by Jesus. Kosuke Koyama, Japanese theologian: 'What is love if it remains invisible and intangible? ... Grace cannot function in a world of invisibility. Yet, in our world, the rulers try to make invisible 'the alien, the orphan... the hungry, thirsty.... Sick and imprisoned'. This is violence.... The gospel insists on visibility – the emaciated bodies of starved children must remain visible to the world. There is a connection between invisibility and violence. People, because of the dignity of the image of God they embody, must remain seen. Faith, hope and love are not vital except in 'what is seen'.... Religion seems to raise up the invisible and despise what is visible. But it is the 'see, hear, touch' gospel that can nurture the hope which is free from deception.

When Christendom, as opposed to Christianity, caters to the powerful masses rather than the forgotten minorities, Jesus' message loses its power. Jesus did the exact opposite of many modern churches. He was not afraid to go against cultural norms, and those who follow him into the kingdom of God are inefficiently obsessed with including everyone. This is why Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will leave the ninety-nine sheep in order to search for the one.

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It seems that these words capture what the Edmund Rice Centre has been about through the vision of Dan Stewart, Jude Butcher and made increasingly concrete through people like Phil Glendenning and Steve Cram where the focus on human rights and justice issues was always a priority. But I would suggest, it was not just the human rights and justice making but the friendships formed with the people we encountered who were seeking a voice, assistance, security. What strikes me as most important is that we have been challenged over and over again to see life from the bottom up, from the viewpoint of those who suffer in any way – especially of people whose voices have been dulled. This was the vision and life of Edmund Rice and it continues. Few who come here have been able to escape the challenge of the cross, which calls us to remember that few are guilty but all are responsible, and see that it is through this making real of justice through solidarity, talking together and listening, friendship and advocacy, that we can make a new world possible.

Brother Philip Pinto in 2002 whilst Congregational Leader of the Christian Brothers spoke at a school in New York in 2002. What he said had implications for all of us here at the Centre: Fidelity to the memory of Edmund Rice calls for two things: a re-commitment to those on the margins of society and a renewed appreciation of humanity's multi-cultural heritage.

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This centre has challenged and continues to challenge popular beliefs and dominant cultural values to ask the difficult questions, to look at life from the standpoint of the real experts: the minority person, the victim, the outcast, and the stranger - and give hope to those who have little hope.

And so we seek to present a new way of living:

We show wisdom by trusting people; we handle leadership by serving, we tackle offenders by forgiving, we deal with money by sharing, we relate to strangers and enemies by loving, we handle violence by suffering, we live life by choosing. And we repent for any sins of the past not by feeling bad, but by thinking differently! This is the challenge we face as we celebrate and thank God for our past.

In the gospel today, Jesus is talking to the frightened followers locked up in many upper

rooms, afraid to burst out, afraid to be disturbed by the new, afraid to disturb others, or do nothing by being cynical and thus exempting themselves from involvement. Jesus calls us to stand up and be counted. As Philip Pinto said, and Jesus before him, it is a dangerous and risky. It is not fashionable. People within our organisations and outside will accuse us of rocking the boat and subverting the system. But we do it because we know that it is life-giving. This child spawned from the loins of Dan Stewart and those who shared his vision and implement that vision, has taken up human rights issues at home, around the nation and overseas. It has involved itself in ecological justice with the peoples of the Pacific. It has opened doors to people seeking freedom in Iran and Iraq and Syria. It has fearlessly confronted the media, politicians and international organisations. And we have done it together, in partnership with other like-minded organisations. What else is there?

Claude Mostowik msc

Read more: https://www.erc.org.au/dan_stewart



"The depth of your articles and the areas they touch on speaks of great research and also of the many disadvantaged people in our world. The poems certainly never go astray.

Every success to your team in their vital work. Once Christian Brothers only taught in schools now that we work for the marginalised we are coming to grips with our charism."

Br. Kevin Laws cfc



'Noongar people have always had the ability to hold an audience captivated.' Hecate, an adaptation of Shakespeare's Macbeth, is performed entirely in Noongar. Photograph: Wendy Slee/Perth festival

Noongar words and philosophy are the true hero in our Macbeth adaptation Hecate

The way we communicate, signal, celebrate, sing and cry our language has always been, and will always be, powerful

Kylie Bracknell for IndigenousX, The Guardian, 14th Feb 2020

Hecate, an adaptation of Shakespeare's Macbeth, is performed entirely in Noongar.

'Noongar people have always had the ability to hold an audience captivated.' Hecate, an adaptation of Shakespeare's Macbeth, is performed entirely in Noongar. Photograph: Wendy Slee/Perth festival

We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep. – William Shakespeare

Life is indeed little. England's bard must have sat beside many rivers and sacred places with wise souls to speak and write the way he did. His words emulate the teachings of my deman (grandparents) and mentors. They taught me that each time we see a falling star we know a new life is forming from an old soul, eventually returning to the sky when that life is "rounded" by sleep, and that all things in life are circular. I think of myself as a life extension of an old soul that has been loaned to me. I have always longed to be in the company of people older than me and wiser than me – to learn, to grow and to be inspired by their life's performance.

There are so many stories that need to be told and remembered. We all want to go forward. We need to respect the elements. – Roma Yibiyung Winmar

Hecate is often erased from Shakespeare's Macbeth. Now she's centre stage – in Noongar language

We Noongar of the south-west of Western Australia constitute one of Australia's largest Aboriginal cultural blocs, both in terms of population and a vast estate of lands and waters which includes Perth, Albany and Esperance. We share a common ancestral language with various regional dialects. As the first Aboriginal group in Western Australia to experience sustained foreign contact and British invasion, Noongar bore the brunt of land theft, frontier violence, and the dislocation from homelands and family resulting from successive government policies of segregation and assimilation.

Despite staggering odds, we Noongar find ways to continue to sing and speak the way our ancestors did. Noongar language is all around us in the names of local towns, suburbs, flora and fauna. Over 30,000 people identify as Noongar, and while Australian census data suggests that less than 2% of them speak the language at home, this number has grown exponentially in every census since 1996 as a result of continued efforts since the 1980s.

One of the most fulfilling things I have ever done in my life was sit with my grandmothers to learn our ancient Noongar language. The time spent with them and my everlasting connection with language is dear to my heart. Nine years ago, my cousin and modern theatre visionary Kyle J Morrison revealed his dream idea to develop a full Shakespeare work in Noongar language. Although initially surprised by the audacity of the idea, I jumped at the chance to collaborate and pay homage to the survival of our language.

Read more: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/14/noongar-words-and-philosophy-are-the-true-hero-in-our-macbeth-adaptation-hecate?utm_term=RWRpdG9yaWFsX0d1YXJkaWFuVG9kYXIBVVMtMjAwMjE2&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS



Embracing First Nations voices in the Church

John Lochowiak, Eureka Street, Vol 30, No.4, 24th February 2020

Pope Francis' 'Querida Amazonia' (Beloved Amazonia) has been warmly received by many members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic community. The tone of the exhortation is reflective of the position that underpins our vision for the Church in Australia — a Church that is open to the gifts of First Nations Catholics, honest to the past and embracing of a new way of thinking that utilizes the principle of subsidiarity.

It will take some time to digest and fully understand the implications of 'Beloved Amazonia', but the synod and accompanying document are all leading us to a pivotal time in the global Catholic Church and particularly the Australian Catholic Church. The Church in our Great Southern Land is currently undertaking a plenary process that carries the hopes and dreams of the 130,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics.

Many had expected 'Beloved Amazonia' to include a definitive statement on the issue of accepting married men into the priesthood to address the needs of remote Amazonian Indigenous communities, drawing obvious parallels to the needs of our communities in Australia. Instead the Pontiff espoused 'a specific and courageous response is required of the Church' to meet the needs of Catholics. Some have seen this statement as an attempt to obviate further difficult discussions, however, those of us involved in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) feel it is reflective of the need to take a wider perspective and consider options and avenues that have not yet been fully explored.

As an aside, a point that is often lost in these discussions is to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of the priests and religious that are currently working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban, regional and remote settings. Everyday these priests work tirelessly in communities with very

little respite. They are owed a debt of gratitude.

Undoubtably, having Aboriginal clergy would embody Catholic Social Teaching's Principle of Subsidiarity, a teaching that NATSICC and the Catholic Church subscribes to and strives to bring to life. Subsidiarity advocates that those closest to the community and the issues faced should be empowered to make decisions and become leaders. In doing so we embrace the value and the transcendent worth that comes from God in each and every individual. But it cannot be seen as the only way to empower our people.

Read More:

https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/embracing-first-nations-voices-in-the-church?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday%2025%20February%202020&utm_content=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday%2025%20February%202020+CID_64bd94b25e4bb47ba9c1caf0fada3754&utm_source=Jescom%20Newsletters&utm_term=READ%20MORE



Jaivet Ealom is now a political science and economics student at the University of Toronto with a promising future.

Just a few years earlier he was a stateless fugitive. Photo: Cole Burston

'The only one who made it out': Incredible Manus Island escape revealed

Matthew Knott, Sydney Morning Herald, 22nd February 2020

Toronto, Canada: Jaivet Ealom understands if you struggle to believe his story. At times, he can hardly believe it himself.

Ealom, 27, is a political economy student at the University of Toronto with a soft voice and a lively mind. Most of his classmates know him as a Rohingya refugee who fled Myanmar.

Jaivet Ealom is now a political science and economics student at the University of Toronto with a promising future. Just a few years earlier he was a stateless fugitive.

What few of them know is that he escaped Australia's offshore detention centre in Manus Island by posing as an interpreter. Or that he lived as a fugitive in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, where he obtained a passport by pretending to be a local. Or that he arrived in Toronto broke and alone, and was forced to sleep in a homeless shelter.

Had Ealom been caught during his daring and secretive cross-country journey, he risked being fined and imprisoned. Instead – after teaching himself a new language, altering his appearance and mastering global visa rules – he found freedom in the most unexpected of places.

Ealom is the first known asylum seeker to be resettled in a third country after successfully escaping from Australia's offshore detention system. He has never told his story publicly, until now.

"I thought I would be stuck there for the rest of my life," he says of his three-and-a-half years on Manus Island. He was detained on Christmas Island for six months before that.

Read More:

<https://amp.smh.com.au/world/north-america/the-only-one-who-made-it-out-incredible-manus-island-escape-revealed-20200220-p542hh.html>

A Catholic case for open borders

Nathan Schneider, America Magazine, March 05, 2020

In the early 1960s, the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson wondered, “Is it a coincidence that the problem of identity holds a certain fascination at a time when man is closer than ever to becoming one human kind?”

By the “problem of identity” he meant the peculiar tendency for some groups of human beings to draw lines around themselves, to declare themselves superior to all others, as if they were a species of their own. Sure, this tendency is age-old. But why, he asked, does it become so fervent precisely when the general trajectory points toward a wider circle of humanity? Why did his native Germany burst into a genocidal rage during a time of such cultural and scientific ferment? Why, he might ask today, does the rise of the internet’s “global village” make us feel so polarized and divided? Why does the recognition of a planetary climate crisis accompany a proliferation of hardened, militarized border walls?

A war against the young—those whose prime years are still at the mercy of those in power—is being waged with these walls. The world’s refugee population is larger than it has ever been, and climate change promises to make it grow. Younger people voted

against Brexit and against Donald J. Trump, who opened his presidential campaign by insulting Mexican immigrants. The young evidently see more to be gained from an interwoven world and see it as less of a choice; they know they could be the next climate refugees.

This fall, at the invitation of Pope Francis, young people from around the world will gather in Assisi, Italy, to share ideas about how they might “give a soul to the economy of tomorrow.” The very premise of such a gathering offers a reminder that an economy with a soul will depend on the right of mobility. How many people with something to contribute to this meeting have scant hope of getting there? The pope shined a light on Italy’s especially deadly borders when he took his first papal trip, in 2013, to the island of Lampedusa, where many thousands of drowned travelers from impoverished and war-torn countries have washed ashore.

Read More:https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2020/03/05/catholic-case-open-borders?utm_source=Newsletters&utm_campaign=1afa81a6e9-DAILY_CAMPAIGN_2020_03_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0fe8ed70be-1afa81a6e9-58532033



The Pacific Calling Partnership have been forwarded this message and Press Release from the former Prime Minister of Tuvalu Enele Sopoaga.

Talofa Friends,

The Pacific is under siege by ugly weather, strong winds and huge surges. A lot of loss of lands and property.

At the same time we are advised by NOAA of the highest concentration of CO2 at 416 Ppm which is totally unacceptable.

The Opposition Group of Tuvalu have issued the following press statement. Some actions have to be done urgently

Enele S SOPOAGA MP, OBE

Leader of the Opposition

Office of the Opposition Group of Tuvalu

**OFFICE OF THE OPPOSITION GROUP OF TUVALU
VAIAKU, TUVALU**

PRESS RELEASE**14 February 2020**

The Opposition Group of Tuvalu are deeply concerned by the recent revelation of the levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentration of 416 parts per million (Ppm) in the atmosphere. According to NOAA observations, 416 Ppm CO₂ concentration is the highest ever record of daily average ever recorded in human history.

Leading up to COP21 in Paris, Pacific Leaders and Youth made a strong call to keep to 360 CO₂ Ppm to stay alive.

The Opposition Group of Tuvalu strong believes that in line with the IPCC Special Report on 1.5' C, the current concentration of CO₂ at 416 Ppm, unless properly and urgently addressed through actions of mitigation (GHG emissions reduction) and adaptation, could spell serious and catastrophic consequences for SIDS like Tuvalu. Time is running out.

The Opposition Group of Tuvalu strongly urges the international climate change community and Governments, in particular Governments in SIDS and the Pacific, to shift to top gear the call for urgent global efforts against climate change.

Pacific leaders must loudly amplify this call.



Every time we turn our heads
the other way when we see the
law flouted, when we tolerate
what we know to be wrong,
when we close our eyes and ears
to the corrupt because we are too
busy or too frightened, when we
fail to speak up and speak out,
we strike a blow against freedom,
decency and justice.

~ Robert F. Kennedy

Fires, floods and the season of Lent are inextricably linked

Sr. Patty Fawkner SGS, the Good Oil, February 2020

For the sake of humanity and our planet, we cannot allow personally, communally, nationally or globally, to return to situation normal, writes Patty Fawkner.

It was early February 1984. The Grade 5 teacher came into the staff room harrumphing: "I'm trying to teach the kids about Lent and all they can talk about are last year's fires". I was the "newbie" Principal having arrived at the Port Fairy school in south western Victoria, a year after the 1983 Victorian and South Australian catastrophic Ash

Wednesday fires. The Western District had been hit hard and the locals who'd lost stock and property were still finding their feet and sense of equilibrium.

I didn't share the teacher's frustration. It occurred to me then and now, that deadly fires and the season of Lent are inextricably linked.

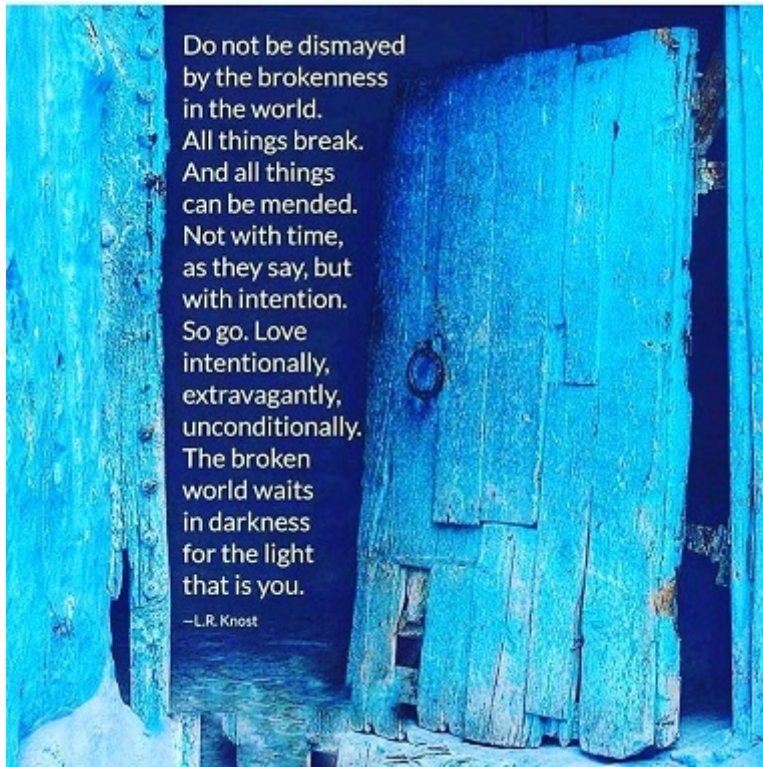
"Lent" is an Old English word meaning Spring. In some languages it means forty and in the Philippines, it means precious great days. St Benedict offers some wisdom for how we might "celebrate" these precious great days.

For Benedict, Lent is a journey of conversion from sin to love. The Greek word for sin is hamartia, an archery term for missing the mark. As a country we have missed the mark. We have sinned in our individual and communal contribution to a warming planet which, despite political obfuscation, we cannot deny is a major contributing factor to the current devastation caused by drought, fire and now flood.

Ilia Delio, the Franciscan Sister theologian specialising in science and religion, describes sin as an individual rejecting the communion for which we are created. "Sin is the refusal to accept responsibility for those to whom we are connected," be that a member of our family, community, a work colleague etc.

Not only do we sin when we disconnect from our human community. Pope Francis describes sin as "our wilful ignorance of the holiness of our planet, and for anything we do to hurt or diminish the planet in any way". Francis is unequivocal. It is sinful to diminish the planet in any way.

Read more: <https://www.goodsams.org.au/article/fires-floods-and-the-season-of-lent-are-inextricably-linked/>



REFLECTIONS



Renewal

Clouds present, yet sun rising.
Light-life of nature, people inviting
Renewal's energy so deep within.
A reassuring, enabling, renewing presence.
Opening self, myself anew.

Jude Butcher February 17, 2020. Poem written in response to a NSW Health

photographic competition focussing on Renewal. The photo and this poem drew inspiration from my being present and still at Bronte Beach on Christmas Morning 2019.



Gift of Wisdom

Stillness and darkness of the night
Holding wisdom, for a new tomorrow.

Enter the dawn, new light emerging
Holding wisdom's gift for a new day.

Dawn – engaging, inviting,
Watching, listening, attentively embracing.

Mercy's gift from the meeting of darkness and light.
Light from the night, inviting, welcoming, revealing.

Voices, perspectives of wisdom, from inside silence.
Hope deep within, seeking gift of wisdom for a new day.

Jude Butcher February 23. Inspired by the dawn with its invitation to be attentive to each meeting of the darkness of the night with the rising light of the new day.

A wisdom within nature and life. A gift and focus for reflection in seasons such as Lent and Rajab.

Br Jude Butcher cfc AM PhD

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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