



Edmund Rice Centre

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

May 2020 No.22

"The things I thought were so important - because of the effort I put into them - have turned out to be of small value, and the things I never thought about, the things I was never able to either measure or to expect, were the things that mattered." Thomas Merton

Dear All,

Welcome to the 22nd 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.

Well, as we sit and contemplate in our comfortable settings and ponder what will be next in 2020 and what our world holds for everybody in the future - it important to perhaps think & feel:

What matters most is what each moment brings

Jean Pierre de Caussade

In this time of great upheaval & change Justice Updates will be coming to you every fortnight - please send us anything you would like included. Your suggestions, comments both positive and negative or indeed any information you think would be good to include, it is all much appreciated.

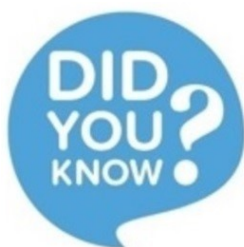
Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

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

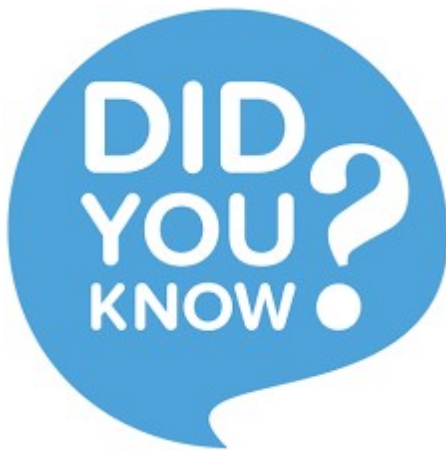
Peace

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney



On Friday 15th may 2020, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru and Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2475 days.



In a Gratten Institute working paper on April 20th entitled '*Estimating the COVID - 19 employment shock*' the authors estimate:

- **Between 14% & 26% of the Australian Workforce 1.9million - 3.4 million people could be out of work in the next few weeks**
- **More than half the hospitality industry could be off work due to COVID -19 in the near future**
- **Lower income workers are twice as likely to be unemployed as high-income workers**
- **Jobkeeper wage subsidy will obscure much of the impact of the substantial rise in unemployment in coming months**
- **Expect unemployment rate to rise to 10-15%**

Economic challenge of COVID -19 underscores the importance of getting the virus under control. Resolving the public health crisis is a critical first step on any path to sustained economic recovery. Policy makers have rightly taken unprecetented steps to enaable households to weather this storm. But given the size of the economic shock from COVID -19, more support will be needed in time.

Leading medical epidemiologist warns of major public health risk in excluding groups from COVID-19 response

www.refugeecouncil.org.au, 9th May 2020

A leading medical epidemiologist has today warned of the public health risks if the Australian government does not extend its COVID-19 response measures to include vulnerable groups that are currently excluded.

“In crowded settings where physical distancing and personal hygiene are difficult, the virus has spread rapidly. This is demonstrated by rapidly escalating

outbreaks among migrant workers in Singapore, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. In all of these countries, migrant workers have been housed in crowded dormitories with inadequate access to clean water and sanitation,” medical epidemiologist and principal research fellow at Melbourne’s Burnet Institute, Professor Michael Toole AM said.

“To effectively suppress community transmission of the coronavirus in Australia, key elements of the response need to be accessible by vulnerable populations(...). These may include those who have not been eligible for government benefits and thus cannot afford decent housing, food and access to health care.

Australia must do all it can to ensure that vulnerable people such as those lacking permanent resident status are not disadvantaged by their inability to adhere to recommended public health measures like physical distancing and hand-washing.

Professor Toole’s warning comes as over 180 organisations have collectively called on the government to extend its COVID-19 response to over a million people currently excluded – and avoid a major risk to public health in the process.

The open letter, sent today to Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and Minister for Families and Social Services Anne Ruston, is signed by a cross-section of civil society including NGOs, unions, faith-based organisations, legal services providers and more. The letter calls on the government to fill gaps in its COVID-19 support package, which currently leave over a million people on temporary and bridging visas without access to financial, legal or medical support.

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/leading-medical-epidemiologist-warns-of-major-public-health-risk-in-excluding-groups-from-covid-19-response/>



Yirmal on stage and performing. Yirmal has toured internationally but has spent his time during the coronavirus pandemic at home in Arnhem Land. (Supplied: Yolngu Radio)

Arnhem Land artists launch online concert series amid coronavirus lockdowns

Chelsea Heaney, ABC News, 26th April 2020

Locked down in strict biosecurity zones, thousands of kilometres from Australia's major cities and towns, north-east Arnhem Land is being put on show like never before through a unique series of concerts.

Key points:

- The first performance in a concert series was livestreamed last night from north east Arnhem Land
- Organisers say the concerts are a way to stay creative during lockdown, and share their music with wider audiences
- Remote communities across the NT have strict travel conditions for incoming and outgoing travellers due to COVID-19

Yolngu musicians have launched an online performance series, starting this weekend, joining in the worldwide trend of artists in lockdown performing from home.

Singer-songwriter Yirmal Marika is among the four acts performing from the

shores of the Gove Peninsula over the next month.

He said online audiences could expect to get a genuine feel of the country that birthed the culture and music that would be on show.

"I hear so much feedback that people really enjoy, and they feel the spirit of this part of the country in Arnhem Land that I sing about," he said.

"Other [performers] are living in their own regions and areas of land, and they govern that area.

"They sing about that country and they share."

"We can share stories through contemporary music and every tone hits each individual person's heart, because we are telling the truth of the land."

Staying creative amid crisis

The performance series was conceived as a way to keep the rich local music scene of north east Arnhem Land thriving while pandemic precautions were in place.

Travel to and from remote parts of the Northern Territory is being tightly controlled under efforts to protect communities from the spread of COVID-19.

The executive producer of the concert series and manager of Yolngu Radio, Nicholas O'Riley, said the performances were a creative outlet.

"It gives these bands an opportunity to keep playing, keep being creative and keep writing music," he said.

"And [it also helps] getting their music out to a whole new audience."

Mr O'Riley said communities in north-east Arnhem Land had been concerned about the impacts of coronavirus.

"A lot of the elders have real concerns. They are asking a lot of questions, and the right questions too, about how this is being handled," he said.

"A lot of the community have gone back out to homelands and out bush and it is great for people to go back out on country."

Read More:

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-26/coronavirus-concert-streamed-from-arnhem-land/12180484?utm_medium=spredfast&utm_content=sf233215165&utm_campaign=fb_abc_news&utm_source=m.facebook.com&sf233215165=1&fbclid=IwAR0qfYawapMuPQzSN2yDwurMP99v609InAKIUasMn4OtMqSvDcq6gABkwXw



“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.” -Arundhati Roy

The following is the opening of an article by Arundhati Roy from which the message in this meme is the main focus.

'The Pandemic is a Portal'

The novelist on how coronavirus threatens India — and what the country, and the world, should do next

Arundhati Roy, Financial Times

April 3, 2020 – Who can use the term “gone viral” now without shuddering a little? Who can look at anything any more — a door handle, a cardboard carton, a bag of vegetables — without imagining it swarming with those unseeable, undead, unliving blobs dotted with suction pads waiting to fasten themselves on to our lungs?

Who can think of kissing a stranger, jumping on to a bus or sending their child

to school without feeling real fear? Who can think of ordinary pleasure and not assess its risk? Who among us is not a quack epidemiologist, virologist, statistician and prophet? Which scientist or doctor is not secretly praying for a miracle? Which priest is not — secretly, at least — submitting to science?

And even while the virus proliferates, who could not be thrilled by the swell of birdsong in cities, peacocks dancing at traffic crossings and the silence in the skies?

The number of cases worldwide this week crept over a million. More than 50,000 people have died already. Projections suggest that number will swell to hundreds of thousands, perhaps more. The virus has moved freely along the pathways of trade and international capital, and the terrible illness it has brought in its wake has locked humans down in their countries, their cities and their homes.

Read full article: http://ouleft.sp-mesolite.tilted.net/?p=2979&fbclid=IwAR1q6DYAG0f62Q1xq44g-XOeOpUGhVXz_M11jWCR35JDFgGasz_v09KYhkE



The formidable School Strike 4 Climate movement is forging ahead despite the lockdown - using the opportunity to come together online and show solidarity with everyone impacted by the climate and Covid-19 crises with an interactive livestream on

Friday May 15 at 4pm.

Event overview

This will be a family-friendly interactive livestream with Q&As, Polls, sign making, live performances and more! Listen to impacted communities, people affected first and worst by the multiple crises, hear what climate justice looks like and how we can move forward to build a better future together.

Key resources:

Facebook event: <http://www.facebook.com/events/248085129931982> - click 'attending' & invite all your friends on facebook!

Website to RSVP: <http://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/may15> - RSVP and message friends to get them to do the same.

Posters + Graphics: <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1e2tZ9TUUGva02W9csKyEI5Vig-UJHshN> - use these to promote May 15 on Instagram, facebook and more.

The event is open EVERYONE - students and adult supporters - and they'd love your help promoting the event.



An Australian funded Covid-19 support package arrives in Solomon Islands last month (DFAT/Flickr)

Creating a Pacific bubble

Joe Rafalowicz, The Interpreter, Lowy Institute, 7th May 2020

Australia's special ties with Pacific Islands and New Zealand offer a chance to ensure mutual safety and prosperity.

The success in containing the Covid-19 pandemic in both Australia and New Zealand has led to a novel idea – the opening up of trans-Tasman travel as long as each country is able to keep infections under control. It would be a ray of hope and normalcy, and an economic plus for both parties. While so far no Pacific countries are included in the “bubble”, Minister for International Development Alex Hawke has indicated they could well be next – provided they continue to successfully manage the pandemic.

Early signs are positive. Vanuatu and Solomon Islands have had no infections at all, while Fiji had just 18 cases, with no new infections in the last two weeks. New Caledonia has not had a new case in several weeks. Tonga has had no cases, is even looking at re-opening night clubs.

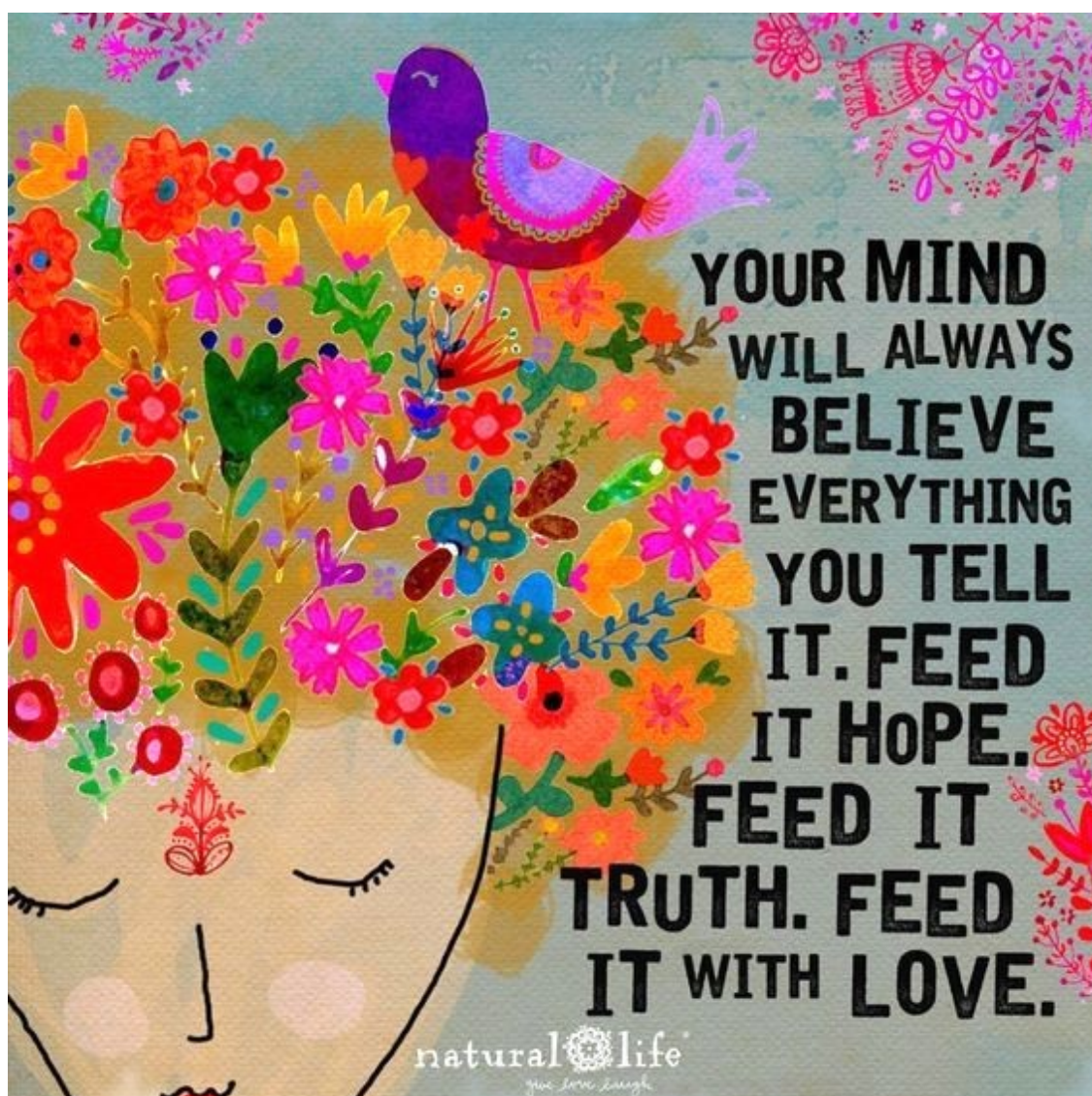
The benefits of a regional bubble extending to the Pacific go beyond increasing

the number of sunny holiday spots available to Australian tourists. A relaxation on travel restrictions would have an enormous impact on the lives of children in the region. Australia considers the Pacific “our family” – and its Pacific Step-up strategy has largely been about entering a new chapter in the relationship with these neighbours. Here is an opportunity to do just that.

Countries in the Pacific are seizing this moment to increase regional cooperation. The Pacific Islands Forum, of which Australia is a member, has invoked the Biketawa Declaration to respond to the crisis, the same collective response instrument that was used when Australian and New Zealand peacekeepers were deployed to Solomon Islands. The Forum has compared the response to Covid-19 to the Tuvaluan concept of “te fale-pili” – meaning houses which are close to one another have a moral responsibility to protect each other in times of hardship. The region is ready to step up, and is asking Australia and New Zealand to join them in doing so.

Fiji has one of the lowest rates of extreme poverty in the Pacific yet its prosperity is built almost entirely on tourism – 10% of households have at least one person working in the tourism industry. According to the ANZ bank, Fiji may lose nearly 602,000 visitors by air this year, a 67% drop translating into a GDP contraction of around 12%, putting about 75,000 jobs at risk. Vanuatu, too, is expected to experience a contraction in GDP, in part due to a loss of up to 21,000 tourism jobs, and will likely experience a major recession, compounding the impact of Tropical Cyclone Harold.

Read More: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/creating-pacific-bubble>



Who is that knocking?

George Woods, medium.com, 1st May 2020

Something is knocking. Entities with forgotten names roam beyond our walls, and hammer on the roof for attention. Some of us are watching at the windows, waiting. Some huddle, or hoard. Some had forgotten there was an outside at all.

I attended a strategy meeting a few years ago about coal and climate change. During the meeting, we were asked to imagine the pillars that support the fossil fuel industry, as a visual aid to understanding where efforts to replace fossil fuels in our economy and society should be focused. I couldn't do it and tried to articulate why. The exercise was upside-down to me: politics, finance and ideas don't hold up the fossil fuel industry in our society: it is fossil fuels that hold up our politics, finance and our ideas. Burning ancient carbon is the concrete slab,

the load-bearing pillars and a series of massive joists holding together through their inertia the complex of our world. This is why we have not taken effective action on climate change. The whole house is built on causing it.

As a once-in-a-century pandemic rattles the windows, our misconception of where we stand in relation to fossil fuels, climate change and world around us is overturned. We come to understand that safety and comfort are illusions, elaborate stage-sets built and maintained for some of us by the rest of us. The coronavirus pandemic is expected to lead to a 4 percent reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions. This is still less than the 6 percent annual reduction that could reasonably be expected to prevent global warming exceeding 1.5 degrees. Suddenly the abstract notion of steep emissions reductions is sharply outlined in its seeming impossibility, its otherworldliness.

Other abstractions are also becoming more real to us. Foundations which had been buried or obscured are made visible. Nurses, doctors, cleaners, teachers, shop-keepers, food growers. These are the occupations we need. Behind them lie crucial feed-lines: trucks delivering food to markets, manufacturers making toilet paper and tinned tomatoes, garbos picking up rubbish and taking it away, crews that run and maintain power stations, power lines, water mains, sewage systems, communications.

Like the water supply and like high voltage “base-load” power, this activity has been maintained at maximum pressure to ensure it flows without interruption into the part of the house where “ordinary people” live in the illusion of permanence and security. Money has been organised at high pressure, too, in interlocking networks of obligation that demand constant flow. There is “baseload” commercial activity that allows no period of slackness. In my innocence, I imagined an airport was a place, and it could simply wait, empty, idle, if planes stopped arriving and leaving. I imagined sport was an event, and it could be paused and held over. The pandemic shows that there can be no idleness, no sleep, no quietude because a pause in pressure precipitates collapse that threatens to cascade. One person’s rent is another’s mortgage repayment, which the bank in turn has promised to someone else again. The inter-dependence runs more deeply than I can fathom, chains of indebted companies, futures, shares, securitisation, contracts. Among these, debt has, for the last half a century, become the mechanism that has bound people, businesses and governments in obligations to continue the baseload flow of

money, like a fire that must be fed and fed to keep us warm.

Read more: <https://medium.com/@georgewoods79/who-is-that-knocking-d3f5726861d>





Pope Francis leaves the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican March 18, 2020, after a livestream of his weekly general audience. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

An Interview with Pope Francis

‘A Time of Great Uncertainty’

Austen Ivereigh, Commonweal, April 8th, 2020

Toward the end of March I suggested to Pope Francis that this might be a good moment to address the English-speaking world: the pandemic that had so affected Italy and Spain was now reaching the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. Without promising anything, he asked me to send some questions. I picked six themes, each one with a series of questions he could answer or not as he saw fit. A week later, I received a communication that he had recorded some reflections in response to the questions. The interview was conducted in Spanish; the translation is my own. —Austen Ivereigh

The first question was about how Pope Francis was experiencing the pandemic and lockdown, both in the Santa Marta residence and the Vatican administration (‘the curia’) more widely, both practically and spiritually.

Pope Francis: The Curia is trying to carry on its work, and to live normally, organizing in shifts so that not everyone is present at the same time. It’s been well thought out. We are sticking to the measures ordered by the health

authorities. Here in the Santa Marta residence we now have two shifts for meals, which helps a lot to alleviate the impact. Everyone works in his office or from his room, using technology. Everyone is working; there are no idlers here. How am I living this spiritually? I'm praying more, because I feel I should. And I think of people. That's what concerns me: people. Thinking of people anoints me, it does me good, it takes me out of my self-preoccupation. Of course I have my areas of selfishness. On Tuesdays, my confessor comes, and I take care of things there.

I'm thinking of my responsibilities now, and what will come afterwards. What will be my service as Bishop of Rome, as head of the church, in the aftermath? That aftermath has already begun to be revealed as tragic and painful, which is why we must be thinking about it now. The Vatican's Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development has been working on this, and meeting with me.

My major concern—at least what comes through my prayer—is how to accompany and be closer to the people of God. Hence the livestreaming of the 7 a.m. Mass [I celebrate each morning] which many people follow and appreciate, as well as the addresses I've given, and the March 27 event in St. Peter's Square. Hence, too, the step-up in activities of the office of papal charities, attending to the sick and hungry. I'm living this as a time of great uncertainty. It's a time for inventing, for creativity.

In my second question, I referred to a nineteenth-century novel very dear to Pope Francis which he has mentioned recently: Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* (The Betrothed). The novel's drama centers on the Milan plague of 1630. There are various priestly characters: the cowardly curé Don Abbondio, the holy cardinal archbishop Borromeo, and the Capuchin friars who serve the *lazzaretto*, a kind of field hospital where the infected are rigorously separated from the healthy. In the light of the novel, how did Pope Francis see the mission of the church in the context of COVID-19?

Pope Francis: Cardinal Federigo [Borromeo] really is a hero of the Milan plague. Yet in one of the chapters he goes to greet a village but with the window of his carriage closed to protect himself. This did not go down well with the people. The people of God need their pastor to be close to them, not to overprotect himself. The people of God need their pastors to be self-sacrificing, like the Capuchins, who stayed close.

The creativity of the Christian needs to show forth in opening up new horizons, opening windows, opening transcendence toward God and toward people, and

in creating new ways of being at home. It's not easy to be confined to your house. What comes to my mind is a verse from the Aeneid in the midst of defeat: the counsel is not to give up, but save yourself for better times, for in those times remembering what has happened will help us. Take care of yourselves for a future that will come. And remembering in that future what has happened will do you good.

Take care of the now, for the sake of tomorrow. Always creatively, with a simple creativity, capable of inventing something new each day. Inside the home that's not hard to discover, but don't run away, don't take refuge in escapism, which in this time is of no use to you.

Read more: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/time-great-uncertainty>



REFLECTION

Mercy Alive

Gazing with awe, art and life inspiring.

Mercy alive within creation and world.

Welcoming diversity's richness known and unknown.

Creatively meeting within Mercy's unseen beauty.

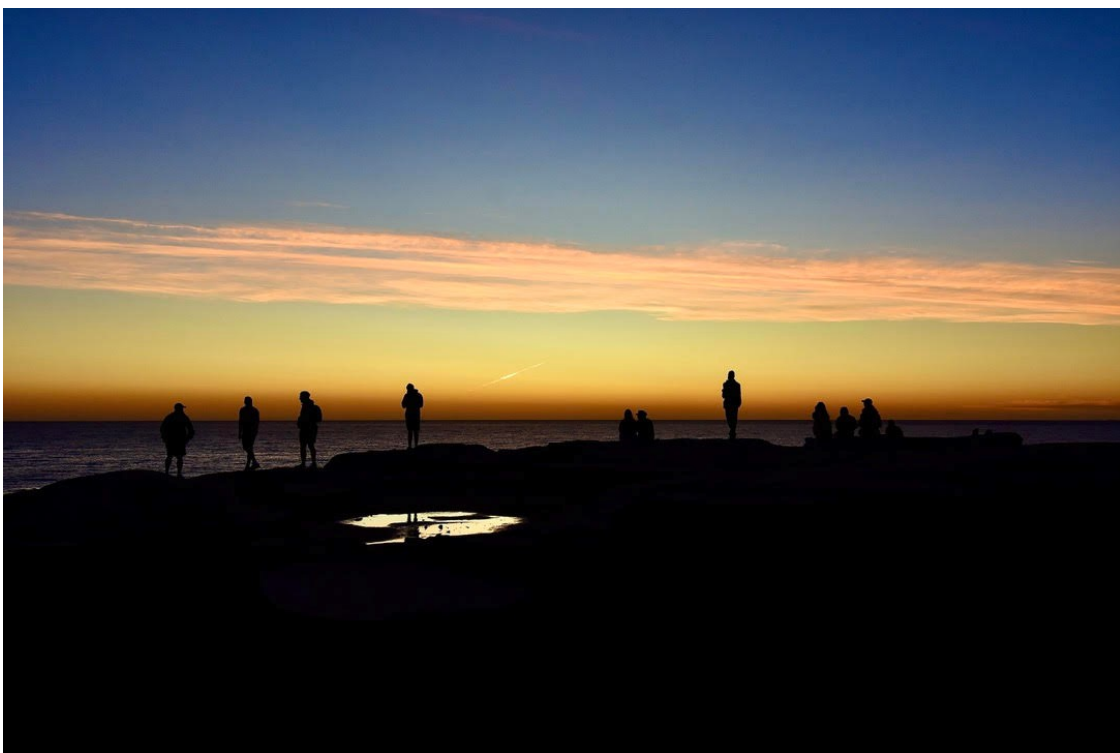
Mercy alive within our moods, phases and nature's seasons.

Welcome openness and energy within rich sharing of beauty and gifts.

Mercy offering unexpected hope,

accompanying all with openness to things now seen.

Jude Butcher 24 April 2020. Poetic response to pastel painting "Mercy" by David Thomas.



Gift of Dawn

Dawn's commanding beauty, silent and still,

Urges all to welcome this day.

Dawn entices one to enter this stillness -

Nature's beauty, peace, hope opening for all.

Anxious memories lie quieter now,

People alive to nature's gifts on this longingly awaited Dawn.

Jude Butcher 5 May, 2020. Poetic reflection from being present at dawn the day after ANZAC Day and while waiting for the Post Coronavirus Dawn. The dawn scene is from the northern headland above Mahon Pool Maroubra Beach 26 April, 2020.)

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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