



Edmund Rice Centre

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

August 2020 No.28

Dear All,

Welcome to the 28th 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.

In this time of global uncertainty and crisis that everyone is living in, Pope Francis in the preface to his recently released book 'Communion and Hope' tells us:

"The crisis, has shown us that, especially in times of need, we depend on our solidarity with others. In a new way, it is inviting us to place our lives at the service of others. It should make us aware of global injustice and wake us up to the cry of the poor and of our gravely diseased planet."

The risk of contagion from a virus, added the Pope, should teach us how the "contagion" of love passes from one heart to another. *Pope Francis*

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.

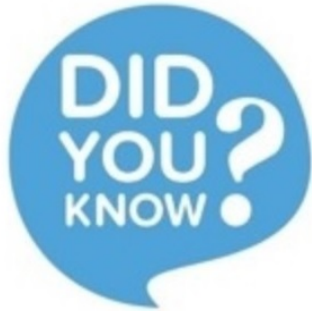
Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Peace

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that there is an article in this publication with an image of a deceased person.



On Friday 7th of August 2020, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru and Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2548 days.



A recent Report commissioned by the Refugee Council of Australia entitled: 'COVID-19 and humanitarian migrants on temporary visas: assessing the public costs' by John van Kooy found:

- The 'coronavirus recession' has led to increased unemployment, underemployment, and financial stress for many Australians
- Economic crises can lead to damaging effects on workers' financial security, mental and physical health, well being and social relationships
- Because many refugees and asylum seekers are employed on low-income and insecure jobs, they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of a recession
- This paper estimates that nearly 19,000 refugees and asylum seekers on temporary visas will lose their jobs because of the current economic downturn
- Unemployment rates among bridging, safe haven enterprise and temporary protection visa holders are projected to rise from approximately 19.3% to 41.8%

- For those that remain unemployed , weekly wages could fall by an average of \$90 per week, with 92% of workers earning less than the minimum wage
- Refugees and asylum seekers who become unemployed, leave the labour force or live below the poverty line are at high risk of poor health and homelessness
- Increased hospital admissions for mental health conditions, heart attack or stroke, injury and drug overdose, self-harm and other socioeconomic factors could cost State and Territory governments an additional \$23.4 million per year
- The homelessness rate among refugees and asylum seekers on temporary visas is projected to rise to around 12%, which will cost governments and additional \$181 million per year in health, justice, social and other services
- As an example of the local impacts of coronavirus on this cohort, the Cumberland LGA could see an additional 2,587 refugees and asylum seekers on temporary visas lose their jobs- 767 of which are likely to become homeless
- With a refugee and asylum seeker population experiencing high levels of unemployment, rental affordability stress and socioeconomic disadvantage, the City of Cumberland is at high risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission

Read full report: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/COVID-19-van-Kooy-.pdf>



John Ah Kit at a horse skills training facility at Lajamanu in the Northern Territory in 2002. Pat Dodson has delivered the eulogy to his friend. Photograph: Rod McGuirk/AAP

'My personal light on the hill': Pat Dodson's eulogy to John Ah Kit

Patrick Dodson, The Guardian, 22nd July 2020

The first Aboriginal minister in the Northern Territory parliament has died. This is a shortened version of the Labor senator's tribute to him

When announcing the death of our great friend, Jack Ah Kit, his immediate family said “this is a life that should be the focus of celebration and commemoration” – and that is indeed why we are here today.

In remembering and celebrating, we are thinking of the many, many stories that made up his life – some that we shared with him; some that we heard tell of; some that we witnessed.

The importance of stories to Jack – and indeed to all Aboriginal people – was perhaps best summed up in his own words, in his first ministerial statement to the Legislative Assembly:

Sitting around the camp fire, yarning with the old people and watching the faces of kids in the fire light reminded me of my own childhood and of how the lives of Aboriginal people are inextricably linked with each other through family and community.

In an important sense, these links are forged by the social interaction that is symbolised by the way us mob – Aboriginal people – gather together around the camp fire.

I remember those camp fires and they are my personal light on the hill. The light on the hill, the family fire in the camp, that will show the path forward and, in my darkest moments, that is the image I return to.

Of course those words – “light on the hill” – go back to the words of Ben Chifley back in 1949, as Labor prime minister. Indeed, the words go back further to biblical times and the Sermon on the Mount.

But for Jack there was something very personal in this idea, this vision, which he always carried with him.

He brought that vision to his job as director, as the boss was then called, of the Northern Land Council. That job stood him in good stead for his later career as a member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

Those years when Jack headed up the NLC were heady times in Aboriginal politics.

The Northern Territory Land Rights Act – commonwealth legislation – was under threat, even under the newly elected Hawke Labor government which

was threatening to water down the veto power of traditional owners over mining and other developments

And, then there was the promise of national land rights legislation to fight for.

At the time, both those causes had Jack shuttling back and forth to Canberra to lobby any federal politician he could buttonhole.

Jack and his cohort were so notorious around the corridors of Old Parliament House that they became known as “the flying wedge” – although, he could never be called the thin end of that.

As director of the Central Land Council at the time, I joined Jack on those forays. They were hard and long days. But Jack would always help get us through with his sense of humour as we gathered our forces each night.

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Then of course there's his time as a member of parliament here in the Northern Territory. It was a vicious and racist campaign run by the then CLP government seeking to divide Aboriginal people into “traditional” Aboriginal people and “yellafellas”.

It's worth quoting a section of Jack's [inaugural speech](#) to the Legislative Assembly as he recalled his time on the campaign trail:

This was the use of the disgusting tactic of creating the idea of 'real' Aboriginals. By this, they mean that the only real Aboriginals are the so-called full-bloods who live in the bush. The rest are not 'real' Aboriginal people. They are half-castes and yellafellas.

“For better or worse, ‘yellafella’ refers to skin colour, not whether you are this thing called a ‘traditional man’. How do you think those men and women of mixed descent from throughout the territory, who are full and active participants in traditional ceremonies, feel about the member opposite and his terms of abuse? ...

Does this mean that, if a particular electorate was saying that it did not want a Catholic, [the CLP] would run an anti-Catholic campaign or, if the electorate was saying it did not want a Vietnamese, or Chinese or Greek or Cypriot as its representative, he would mount campaigns against those ethnic groups? Of course not. That would be immoral, shameful and contemptible. However, that is precisely what the parliamentary leader of the Country Liberal party has

condoned, promoted and sanctioned.

Let us not have the racist sins of the fathers visited on our children.

Indeed, those final words from Jack echo to this day, especially in these times of #BlackLivesMatter and beyond.

Throughout his childhood here in Darwin, he revelled in his Chinese and Aboriginal heritages.

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Jack always enjoyed the conviviality of a few drinks with his friends, family and co-workers. Whether it was Westies in Alice Springs; Sportys in Tennant, or the beer garden at Kirby's in Katherine he would hold court, tell yarns and join in the singing.

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Over his life he was a brother, father, a husband, an uncle, a cousin, a brother-in-law and a grandfather to so many of us.

Deeply embedded in this was his love of community and of country, something I witnessed many times sitting around the campfire.

And a special tribute to his wife, Gail, for putting up with the little ratbag – though obviously not so little in his adult years! As everyone knows, he adored you, and depended on you in all his life's work.

And to Darren, Ngaree and Jonathan, and in memory of Patricia and Bardi, know that the stories you share with your father are stories worth holding on to.

And so, to all of you who have come to mark Jack's life, let these, and the many other stories that surround his time on earth, live on.

In the words of Archie Roach: "This story's right, this story's true. I would not tell lies to you."

May they become the light on the hill for all of us – even through the dark moments.

Thank you.

• Pat Dodson is a Labor senator. This is an abbreviated version of his eulogy to John Ah Kit on 22 July 2020

Read Full article: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jul/22/my-personal-light-on-the-hill-pat-dodsons-eulogy-to-john-ah-kit>



Main image: Town of Kimba (Photo credit: Kim Mavromatis)

Much at stake for Barngarla Country

Michele Madigan , Eureka Street, Vol. 30, No. 28th July 2020

In the present world wide climate of Black Lives Matter when some governments/states are changing significant processes for the betterment of all, how is our own country fronting up when it comes to competing interests regarding land and culture? ‘Quite badly’ is the assessment that comes to mind in examining Barngarla Peoples’ recent reply to the Department of Resources, the federal department charged by government with the establishment of the national radioactive waste dump/facility (NRWMF).

Their letter of reply, [publicly released](#) July 23rd lays it down:

‘As you would likely be aware the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (Human Rights Committee) has confirmed, in their Human Rights Scrutiny Report — Report 4 of April 2020, that the proposal to place a NRWMF at Napandee is a violation of the Barngarla People’s Human Rights. This is clearly the case, given just some of the matters below...?’

The letter goes on to list how, as Traditional Owners, they were refused the right to vote, forcing them to organise their own official ballot with its unanimous ‘no’ vote which was then ‘entirely ignored by the Minister.’

Shamefully, the Barngarla further identify the final determination of government to crush First Nations and any other group seeking to use the democratic processes of the nation: ‘Those terrible failures in process would have been subject to judicial oversight had the Minister made a declaration under

section 14 of the existing National Radioactive Waste Management Act 2012 (Cth). However, being fully aware of this, the Minister is now seeking to remove the Barngarla People's legal rights to judicial review by using Parliament to legislate the location directly.'

Yes, the gloves are certainly off in the long running saga of the federal government's latest effort to offload the nation's nuclear waste — this time on Barngarla Country.

Read More:

https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/much-at-stake-for-barngarla-country?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday%2028%20July%202020&utm_content=Eureka%20Street%20Daily%20-%20Tuesday%2028%20July%202020+CID_a705bb9962677d9379d61686e520c4ca&utm_source=Jescom%20Newsletters&utm_term=READ%20MORE



Mick Tsikas/AAP

New 'Closing the Gap' targets will cover attachment to land and culture

Michelle Grattan, The Conversation, July 30th, 2020

The government will unveil 16 targets for Indigenous advancement, including ensuring the maintenance of strong relationships with land and culture, when Scott Morrison announces on Thursday a new national agreement on "Closing the Gap".

Negotiated with Indigenous representatives as a partnership, the agreement sets out four priority reforms aimed at changing how governments work with

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The reforms would:

- build and strengthen structures to empower Indigenous people to share decision-making with governments

- build Indigenous community-controlled sectors to deliver services to support closing the gap

- transform mainstream government organisations to improve accountability and better respond to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's needs

- improve and share access to data and information to enable Indigenous communities to make informed decisions.

The agreement has been signed by all states and territories and the Indigenous Coalition of Peaks. The Morrison government believes it will lead to more success in closing the gap because of the shared drafting and the commitment by Indigenous representatives.

The 16 targets cover improving health, education, housing, employment and economic participation, lowering incarceration rates, ensuring the safety of families and households, and promoting social and emotional wellbeing.

They also include ensuring Indigenous people “maintain distinctive relationships with lands and waters” and that cultures and languages are strong.

The specifics of the targets will be spelt out on Thursday.

Four other targets – on family violence, access to information, community infrastructure and inland waters – are to be developed over the next year.

The old “Closing the Gap” plan, initiated by the Rudd government, had only mixed results, with progress on many of its targets falling short.

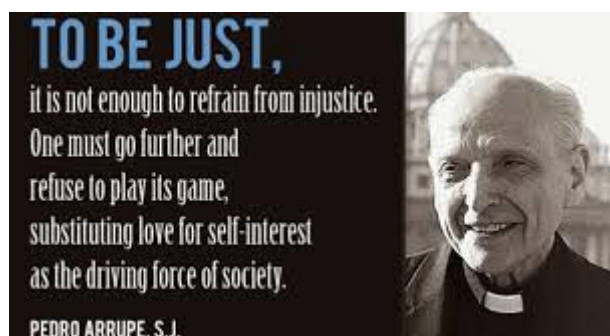
Morrison said the agreement was “a new chapter” in efforts to close the gap - “one built on mutual trust, shared responsibility, dignity and respect.

"The gaps we are now seeking to close are the gaps that have now been defined by the representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is as it should be. This creates a shared commitment and a shared

responsibility,” Morrison said.

“This is the first time a national agreement designed to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been negotiated directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

Read More: https://theconversation.com/new-closing-the-gap-targets-will-cover-attachment-to-land-and-culture-143636?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20July%2030%202020%20-%201691216317&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20July%2030%202020%20-%201691216317+CID_581fd30290da64a8393fbbbd0425a1bf&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=New%20Closing%20the%20Gap%20targets%20will%20cover%20attachment%20to%20land%20and%20culture



Speaking out for criminalised women

Tabitha Lean & Debbie Kilroy, The Saturday Paper, 25th-31st July, 2020

When I came out of prison, I noticed there was a concerted censoring of my voice every single time I wanted to speak out about my experiences within the criminal punishment system. This came at me in many ways – aggressively, subtly and, at times, very publicly.

Most obviously, and I dare say predictably, the system didn't like me publicly raising its violence and brutality. Like every abusive relationship, it thrives on silence. This ranges from setting stringent conditions that prevent us from speaking up or out, to saying we have to get permission before participating in forums or discreetly punishing us for speaking truth to power.

Then there were the criminologists who wanted to trade off my stories and

experiences for their own gain. I was never referenced in the articles they built off my stories, or acknowledged for my intellectual contribution to their critical analysis of the structural and violent oppression of prisons. There were the academics, too, and some members of the media, who would welcome my lived-experience voice, conditionally. Conditions that they set arbitrarily for me, without even telling me – and just like that I was before a panel of judges again, watching them adjudicate my worth and humanity. The legitimacy and elevation of my voice seemed to be solely dependent on a couple of things.

The inclusion of my voice was dependent on my desistance, because the voices of those in the system are only useful if we are “reformed”, “corrected” and, in my case, no longer the “savage” that the colony imagined. My opportunity to speak was entirely dependent on the type and nature of my offending. And the perceived “legitimacy” of my contribution was absolutely dependent on my ability to articulate my view or position objectively, because apparently my subjectivity was filthy and messy and, worse, rendered my views useless.

So, let’s get this straight. Yes, I was in prison for two years. I have also done a total of two years in home detention and will be tethered to the criminal “justice” system for several more. I have made mistakes, some of them truly despicable. I am an Aboriginal woman, a single mother and now a convicted criminal – the trifecta of your Aboriginal “problem”, hey?

Do the crime, do the time...

Here’s the thing. I am 44 years old. My “offending” spanned two years, according to police records. This means I have lived 42 very full and very worthwhile years. In those 42 years, I have had a distinguished career – multiple careers, in fact. I have achieved an honours degree and started a master’s program. I have been a volunteer in countless organisations. I have raised three exceptional human beings who are also known as my kids. I am a daughter, an aunty, a niece, a mother, a granddaughter. I paint and I write. I love, and I love fiercely – ask any of my friends or family. I am a proud Aboriginal woman, and honour and treasure my Elders. So, you see, I am so much more than those two years of regrettable choices, and the now very permanent criminal record. My conviction is a part of me, but not all that I am. Yet, every time I sit with you, you assume I am offering myself up for your judgement.

I am not.

We have a right to contribute to the discourse about the criminal “justice” system, policing and prisons – because we are experts in our own oppression and can bring unique and valuable insights to the table.

https://theconversation.com/new-closing-the-gap-targets-will-cover-attachment-to-land-and-culture-143636?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20July%2030%202020%20-%201691216317&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20July%2030%202020%20-%201691216317+CID_581fd30290da64a8393fbbbd0425a1bf&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=New%20Closing%20the%20Gap%20targets%20will%20cover%20attachment%20to%20land%20and%20culture



The year 2020 falls on the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima – 6th August & Nagasaki on 9th August, the end of the Second World War, and the founding of the United Nations.

The Australian Catholic Office for Social Justice has prepared a prayer to help the Australian Catholic community to mark the *Ten Days for Peace* in solidarity with the Church in Japan. Based on the peace prayer of St Francis and the words of Pope Francis, it focuses on nuclear disarmament and active peace-building. We invite you to make this prayer and to share it with others, especially from 6 to 15 August.

A Prayer for Nuclear Disarmament

Lord of all creation, make us instruments of your peace.

Let us learn the lessons of the past, and put an end to nuclear weapons.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love.

May our love for each other and for all of your creation

leave no place for making or owning weapons of mass destruction.

Where there is injury, let us be bearers of your healing and pardon.

***May we create paths to dialogue, understanding and reconciliation.
Where there is doubt, let us foster faith in you.
May we let the weapons fall from our hands and know that you are God.
Where there is despair, let us hold up hope.
May our lives reflect your love in the face of violence,
knowing that love is stronger than death.
Where there is darkness, let us be bearers of your light.
May our choices show that peace is possible.
Where there is sadness, let us bring the joy of the Gospel.
Amen.***

The *Ten Days for Peace* which the Catholic Church in Japan celebrates each year was the response of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan to [Pope John Paul II's appeal at Hiroshima on 25 February 1981](#). It was the first time that a Pope had visited Hiroshima. Pope Francis also visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki in November 2019. At the Hiroshima Peace Memorial [he declared](#) that the use of atomic energy for the purposes of war is immoral, and that the possession of nuclear weapons is also immoral. Speaking at the Atomic Hypocentre Park in Nagasaki he said:

“Here in this city which witnessed the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of a nuclear attack, our attempts to speak out against the arms race will never be enough. The arms race wastes precious resources that could be better used to benefit the integral development of peoples and to protect the natural environment. In a world where millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, the money that is squandered and the fortunes made through the manufacture, upgrading, maintenance and sale of ever more destructive weapons, are an affront crying out to heaven.”

[Pope Francis, Address at the Atomic Hypocentre Park, Nagasaki, 24 November 2019.](#)

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the [first nuclear explosion](#) and the atomic bombing of [Hiroshima](#) and [Nagasaki](#). The consequences of these events continue to be experienced in the lives of survivors such as the [hibakusha](#) in Japan and communities downwind of the tests in New Mexico, known as [‘downwinders’](#).

Further nuclear tests, including in Australia and the Pacific, have also left tragic legacies of human suffering and ecological destruction. Today the possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons continue to pose a danger to human life, and to the whole of creation. The *Ten Days of Peace* are a good time to pray for our own conversion and to act for peace.

*Dr Sandie Cornish
Publications and Research Officer
Office for Social Justice*



Behrouz Boochani, the Kurdish Iranian exile and journalist who spent years detained on Manus Island, has been granted refugee status in New Zealand Photograph: David Fanner/The Guardian

Behrouz Boochani granted refugee status in New Zealand

Exclusive: Journalist who became the voice of the victims of Australia's punitive detention system granted a visa after seven-year ordeal

Ben Doherty, The Guardian, 24th July 2020

[Behrouz Boochani](#), the Kurdish Iranian exile and journalist who became the voice of those incarcerated on Manus Island, has had his refugee status formally recognised by New Zealand, and granted a visa to live there.

He said he finally felt secure “knowing that I have a future”.

“I am very happy to have some certainty about my future, I feel relieved and secure finally,” he told the Guardian from Christchurch.

“But, at the same time, I cannot fully celebrate this because so many people who were incarcerated with me are still struggling to get freedom, still in PNG, on Nauru, in detention in Australia. And even if they are released, Australia’s policy still exists.”

Boochani was officially notified by New Zealand’s government that his claim for asylum had been accepted on Thursday, exactly seven years to the day after his arrival in Australia in 2013.

The date – 23 July – is also Boochani’s birthday. He turned 37. Over the course of six years held within Australia’s offshore processing regime in Papua New Guinea, Boochani emerged as the voice of the Manus Island detention centre

and [a tireless campaigner for the rights of those detained by Australia](#).

He has [written extensively for the Guardian](#) on life in detention and won Australia's [richest literary prize for his book](#), No Friend But the Mountains, which is being made into a film.

He secured a [temporary visa to fly to New Zealand](#) in November last year as a guest at a writers' festival, and lodged a claim for protection when he arrived.

Boochani has now been granted a one-year work visa, and can apply for permanent residency in [New Zealand](#), a pathway to citizenship. He has lived in Christchurch since leaving Papua New Guinea. He says while some New Zealand politicians have sought to politicise his asylum claim – in the context of an election there this year – his reception in his new homeland has been overwhelmingly welcoming.

Read More:

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/24/behrouz-boochani-granted-refugee-status-in-new-zealand?utm_term=c7e8957c644b79ad196eb4a838723885&utm_campaign=GuardianTodyAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email



A US military helicopter lands in Afghanistan. A Hazara interpreter who provided translation assistance to allied forces in Afghanistan and had to flee the country as a refugee, is now facing indefinite detention in Australia. Photograph: Thomas Watkins/AFP via Getty Images

Afghan interpreter who helped US-led forces faces indefinite detention in Australia

Hazara man, who fled Taliban reprisals and has been separated from his family for seven years, will languish indefinitely unless Peter Dutton grants him a visa

Ben Doherty, The Guardian, 26th July 2020

An interpreter who assisted US-led forces in Afghanistan before fleeing Taliban reprisals faces indefinite detention in Australia's immigration system unless the home affairs minister, Peter Dutton, grants him a visa.

Father of five Peter – whose real name cannot be disclosed for fear of endangering his family – is in an onshore immigration detention centre and has been separated from his family for seven years.

Australia is legally obliged to protect Peter from persecution, but he failed the government's "[character test](#)" because of a robbery committed in desperation in 2015, for which he received a suspended jail term.

Peter, a teacher and member of Afghanistan's persecuted Hazara ethnic and religious minority, lived in a contested Afghan province, near a major arterial route used by coalition forces in their war against the Taliban.

Peter "provided support services to the allied forces in Afghanistan as a translator", the federal court heard in a 2017 case on his visa application. Any connection to or perceived sympathy for the west is viewed with deep suspicion by the Taliban, and Peter – known as NKWF in court documents – was repeatedly threatened with torture and death because of the work he was doing.

He fled Afghanistan, arriving by boat in Australia, the first country where he could make a claim for protection, in November 2012.

While his claim was assessed, Peter was allowed to live in the community on a bridging visa, but without the right to work.

Unable to earn money to support himself or to send home to his family, and suffering significant anxiety about his and his family's wellbeing, he committed a robbery in 2015, holding up a taxi driver with a butter knife. The driver was not injured.

In February 2016 he pleaded guilty and was given a suspended sentence by the magistrate, but was immediately redetained by the then immigration department.

Later that year the Australian government found Peter had a "well-founded fear

of persecution”, meaning it was obliged to protect him and it would be illegal to forcibly return him to Afghanistan, a breach of Australia’s non-refoulement obligations.

But his conviction meant he failed the department’s “character test” and was therefore refused a visa and remained in detention.

Read More:

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jul/26/afghan-interpreter-who-helped-us-led-forces-faces-indefinite-detention-in-australia?utm_term=.236a1abd5899055876927b9a5f73caeb&utm_campaign=GuardianToDayAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email



Pope Francis prays during a call to pray the Our Father at the Library of the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican. Image: Vatican News.

Pope pens preface to book on hope in the Covid-19 pandemic
Pope Francis writes the preface to a new book entitled “Communion and Hope”, and encourages everyone to rediscover solidarity amid the ravages of the coronavirus pandemic.

Devin Watkins, Vatican News, 28th July 2020

In a book preface released on Tuesday, Pope Francis reflected on the lessons Christians have learned from the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Communion and Hope” was prepared by Cardinal Walter Kasper and Father George Augustin, and contains theological reflections from various authors about “witnessing the faith in times of coronavirus”.

“Like a sudden breaking storm, the coronavirus crisis has caught us all by surprise, abruptly changing on a global level our personal, public, family and working lives,” he wrote.

Many people, he lamented, have lost loved ones, as well as their jobs and financial stability. In many places, even Easter was celebrated in an unusual and solitary manner, and people were left unable to find solace in the Sacraments.

Finding roots of happiness

“This dramatic situation,” wrote Pope Francis, “highlights the vulnerable nature of our human condition, limited as it is by time and contingency.”

The pandemic has also forced us to question the roots of our happiness and to rediscover the treasure of our Christian faith, he added.

“It reminds us that we have forgotten or simply delayed attending to some of the key issues in life. It is making us evaluate what is really important and necessary, and what is of secondary or only superficial importance.”

Solidarity in times of trial

The Pope called this “a time of trial” which gives us the chance to reorient our lives toward God.

“The crisis,” he said, “has shown us that, especially in times of need, we depend on our solidarity with others. In a new way, it is inviting us to place our lives at the service of others. It should make us aware of global injustice and wake us up to the cry of the poor and of our gravely diseased planet.”

Read More: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-07/pope-francis-book-preface-faith-in-coronavirus.html>





Aftermath of Cyclone Harold in Melisi settlement Pentecost Island, Vanuatu (Ginny Stein/RedR/NMDO Vanuatu)

Vanuatu: A real test for local emergency response

Linda Kenni, Eranda Wijewickrama, Lowy Institute, The Interpreter, 23rd July 2020

With Covid-19 restrictions isolating the island country, Cyclone Harold forced a new approach to disaster management.

Rated as the country with the [highest disaster risk](#) worldwide, Vanuatu is no stranger to severe tropical cyclones. When Tropical Cyclone Pam struck the country in 2015, it affected around [166,000 people](#) and left a trail of destruction.

Similarly, Tropical Cyclone Harold, a category 5 cyclone that hit Vanuatu on 6 April this year, affected around 160,000 people. The northern provinces of Sanma, Malampa and Penama were severely impacted, with around 70% of the structures damaged in Luganville, the country's second largest city.

But the context into which Harold landed was quite different from any previous occasion. It was in the midst of a global pandemic, and the emergency response effort also had to be different.

With Covid-19 infections rising across the world, Vanuatu had declared a state of emergency on 26 March, placing restrictions on both international and inter-island travel to minimise the risk of importing and spreading the virus. As Harold approached, the country [eased social distancing measures](#) to enable people to seek shelter in evacuation centres, but it did not reduce any restrictions that would facilitate a typical international humanitarian response in a disaster of this size.

While not flawless, the Cyclone Harold response in Vanuatu proved the viability of the localisation concept, even as it highlighted the vast challenges that come with delivering a complex humanitarian response amid enormous constraints.

As a result, the country would directly experience what it means when emergency aid becomes local. “Localisation” is a concept that has been advocated in numerous papers and seminars in recent years, but its implementation has been slow to evolve.

Cyclone Harold, however, left Vanuatu little choice, and the response effort became a case of “forced localisation”. While far from perfect, the outcome clearly established that there is no going back to the old way of doing things.

Read More: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/vanuatu-takes-emergency-response-amid-covid-19>



A coronavirus testing facility in Depok, Indonesia (Image: EPA/Adi Weda)

The humanitarian hole: Australia’s foreign aid cuts see disease increase abroad

Amber Schulz, Crikey/inq, 24th July 2020

Australia's aid budget has been declining for years. Now, the COVID-19 pandemic has left our Pacific neighbours' health systems in danger of collapse, and the fallout could be massive.

When COVID-19 struck, Australia quickly restructured its foreign aid budget,

redirecting [\\$280 million](#) to assist its Indo-Pacific neighbours — some of whom were the [least pandemic-prepared](#) in the world.

But the money has come from already cash-strapped programs. No new cash has been pledged.

Australia's dwindling foreign aid has been a contentious issue for some time. Health initiatives funded by Australia risk being undone, and in the face of the pandemic the ramifications are deadlier than ever.

Australia's foreign aid is in freefall — the fallout could be massive.

Where's the aid going?

The Pacific has long been a major focus for Australia's aid strategy. The Coalition's Pacific Step-up program saw this focus narrow towards Pacific Islands, with Prime Minister Scott Morrison donning a themed shirt and hopping around climate change-affected areas.

Australian aid to the Pacific region over the past 10 years [exceeded the combined aid](#) of the next four largest donors — New Zealand, China, Japan and the United States. Papua New Guinea has received the bulk of support, receiving [\\$512 million](#) by the latest budget estimate.

But when the pandemic struck, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) realised that focusing aid in one area — and mostly in one country — wasn't such a good idea, and developed the [Partnerships for Recovery program](#), a two-year aid plan which adds Timor-Leste and Indonesia to its list of high-priority countries.

The \$280 million in restructured funds came from [initiatives](#) like the Australian Volunteers Program, scholarships programs, and sports for development programs (but the volunteer program would continue in partial capacity, a DFAT spokesperson confirmed).

Global Health Alliance Australia executive director Misha Coleman told *Inq* the cost of the pandemic was dwarfing Australia's aid response.

"The biggest danger right now is that new money being allocated to COVID-19 responses could cannibalise other programs or whole country commitments if the total aid budget is not increased," she said.

Australia has deployed health experts to a World Health Organization regional office and the Solomon Islands Ministry of Health. More than 2.6 million pieces of protective equipment (PPE) [have been provided](#) to 23 countries and territories, and more than \$100 million (more than a third from the redirected pandemic response) [has been given](#) to Pacific countries to meet basic running

costs.

The [government pledged](#) \$300 million to improve access to vaccines in the Indo-Pacific. It [also helped](#) Pacific partners organise laboratories, medical equipment, health expertise and public information campaigns, [helping ensure](#) the continued supply of essential medical and testing equipment, critical personnel, and food and essential supplies.

A spokesperson for DFAT told *Inq* future funds will be determined through the budget process. “We expect allocations will reflect the priorities outlined in the Partnerships for Recovery policy.”

Read More:

https://www.crikey.com.au/2020/07/24/foreign-aid-pacific-coronavirus/?utm_campaign=Daily&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&ins=QkJuT1ZBZEQydnI0TVZEWG9UdXU0dz09&at=Q1J1OEttWUgyQjFzUWZnZXpRUFBoQT09



Firefighters on the outskirts of Bredbo, New South Wales, in February, when wildfires devastated vast stretches of the state. Credit...Matthew Abbott for The New York Times

Australian Student Sues Government Over Financial Risks of Climate Change

A 23-year-old law student filed a class-action suit accusing Australia of failing to disclose financial risks from climate change. Experts say it is the first of its kind.

SYDNEY, Australia — Katta O'Donnell grew up with a fear of fire. As a child, she remembers burning bark falling from the air because of wildfires. This year, she worried that [the blazes sweeping across regional Australia](#), fueled by climate change, could destroy her home outside Melbourne, the same way they had turned thousands of acres into ash.

Now, Ms. O'Donnell, 23, is leading a class-action lawsuit filed on Wednesday that accuses the Australian government of failing to disclose the material risks of climate change to those investing in government bonds. The suit accuses the government and the treasury of breaching its duty by not disclosing the risks of global warming and their material impact on investors.

It is the first time, experts say, that such a climate change case has been brought against a sovereign nation.

Ms. O'Donnell is joining [a wave of young climate activists](#) who have stepped on to the world stage in recent years. The Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, for example, has spurred a global protest movement, testified before the United States Congress and [the European Parliament](#), scolded world leaders in [a fiery speech at the United Nations](#) for not doing enough and sounded that alarm at the World Economic Forum in Davos, declaring, [“Our house is still on fire.”](#)

But Ms. O'Donnell's case takes a unique tack by focusing on government bonds and the investment environment, said Jacqueline Peel, a law professor at University of Melbourne.

“My personal experience with climate change makes everything I read about climate change more tangible,” Ms. O'Donnell, a fifth-year law student at La Trobe University in Melbourne, said in a recent interview. “I want my government acting with honesty and telling the truth about climate risks.”

Simply put: Any risks to the country's economic growth, value of its currency or international relations, to name a few factors, might change the value of her investment, her suit states.

Ms. O'Donnell, backed by a team including two prominent lawyers, is not asking for damages, but wants the government to step up on its climate change policies. The suit seeks an injunction stopping the government from further marketing bonds until they add those disclosures.

Read More:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/23/world/australia/lawsuit-climate-change->

[bonds.html?campaign_id=3&emc=edit_MBAU_p_20200723&instance_id=20560&nl=morning-briefing®i_id=132157641§ion=whatElse&segment_id=34189&te=1&user_id=cfe005d35b6b49d751e71065346565f7](#)

“

We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature.

SONYA RENEE TAYLOR

REFLECTIONS

PEACE

*In the practice of tolerance,
one's enemy is the best teacher.
We can never obtain peace in the outer world
until we make peace with ourselves.*

*Where ignorance is our master,
there is no possibility of real peace.
Love and compassion are necessities,
not luxuries.
Without them humanity cannot survive.
Dalai Lama*



Mercy Beckoning

*Depth of life's, creation's pains.
Haunting, threatening presence
Darkness, mist, clouds envelope, absorb.*

*Pulsing rhythm – fountains of life
Ever expressing, ever seeking light
To illuminate the darkness and lighten the pains.*

*Rays of light
Opening, leading, inviting to life.*

*Mercy beckoning, urging all
To journey through pain, anger and doubts.
To share the gift of true hope, and life.*

***Jude Butcher July 11. Challenged by the pervasive cry of the world's pain
for us to face the darkness and lighten the pain as people of mercy, hope
and life.***



THIS NONVIOLENT LIFE

Daily Inspiration for Your Nonviolent Journey

Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service

Sunday August 2, 2020

"Anchor the eternity of love in your own soul and embed this planet with goodness. Lean toward the whispers of your own heart, discover the universal truth, and follow its dictates. Release the need to hate, to harbor division, and the enticement of revenge. Release all bitterness. Hold only love, only peace in your heart, knowing that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won. Choose confrontation wisely, but when it is your time don't be afraid to stand up, speak up, and speak out against injustice. And if you follow your truth down the road to peace and the affirmation of love, if you shine like a beacon for all to see, then the poetry of all the great dreamers and philosophers is yours to manifest in a nation, a world community, and a Beloved Community that is finally at peace with itself."

—John Lewis

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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