

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES September 2020 No.31

Dear All,

Welcome to the 31st 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.

As we all continue to struggle through 2020 and do our ultimate best to be just, compassionate & loving to all those we encounter - let us reflect on the words of the recently deceased inspirational American advocate for racial justice John Lewis:

"Walk with the wind, brothers and sisters, and let the spirit of peace and the power of everlasting love be your guide."

- John Lewis

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.

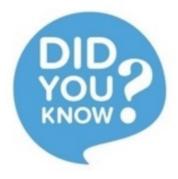
Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

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

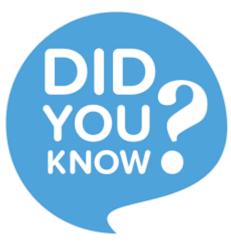
Peace

Marita

Communications Project Officer, Marita McInerney



On Friday 18th September 2020, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2590 days.



On September 9th 2020 the UN established 'The International Day to Protect Education from Attack'. The Day draws attention to:

- The plight of more than 75 million 3 to 18 year olds living in 35 crisis affected countries and to their urgent need of educational support.
- More than 22,000 students, teachers, and academics were injured, killed, or harmed in attacks on education during armed conflict or insecurity over the past five years.
- Between 2015 and 2019, 93 countries experienced at least one reported attack on education.
- Students and educators were most frequently harmed by direct attacks in Afghanistan, Cameroon, and Palestine.
- Armed forces, other state actors, and armed groups used schools and universities for military purposes in 34 countries between 2015 and 2019, including as bases, detention centers, and weapons stores.
- In the past five years, state armed forces or armed groups reportedly recruited students from schools in 17 countries. (Source: Education under attack 2020).



Holding our sacred Jagalingou Country

Wangan & Jagalingou Family Council, September 14th, 2020

Last week we struck a blow for land rights and against Adani, but we will need your support to continue to hold our sacred Jagalingou country.

As a cultural leader for my people, I led my family onto our clan estate to exercise our cultural rights, and continue our work to protect the land and make peace with our ancestors, in the face of Adani's relentless environmental assault.

After <u>direct confrontation</u> with Adani and the Queensland police, we gained <u>a hold on our ceremonial camp</u>. We brought the law to bear in our favour.

Despite everything that Adani has thrown at us, we are now present on the land near the mine site, holding our Country and defending our birthright to be in the places where our ancestors reside.

Watch our three-part story of how this unfolded over the last week...

"Ngali yamba nani – Our homelands"

Part 1. Returning to camp

Part 2. Adani's intimidation

Part 3. Adani concedes

We fight this fight not just for our family, or the whole W&J people, but for all Aboriginal people who are faced with the destruction of their cultural heritage.

We need <u>your support</u> to continue our struggle for land rights – for cultural rights.

Right now, Adani are destroying our culture and Country. While our resistance was sidelined because of the coronavirus pandemic, Adani accelerated the

destruction of our land.

But since the COVID19 restrictions were lifted in Queensland, we began our regular movements around Country. Nowhere is more threatened at this time than our homelands in Jagalingou Country, where Adani's mine of mass destruction is under construction.

The world reacted in horror when Rio Tinto blew up Juukan Gorge in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Now the same thing is about to happen in our Country.

The mine will drain the life out of our Country and destroy our dreaming and the sacred Doongmabulla springs. It will be a catastrophe every bit as destructive to our land and culture, and as hurtful to our people, as the blasting of the caves at the Juukan Gorge.

The outrageous destruction of Juukan Gorge shows that when it comes to ripping the land for minerals and making money, mining has no respect for First Nations and our cultural rights. Not even when it means the loss of 46,000 years of continuous culture and law embedded in a sacred site.

Our ancestor dreaming is our living law, as old as time and dwelling in the land.

Read/watch full story: https://wanganjagalingou.com.au/holding-our-sacred-jagalingou-country/



Traditional owner Nathan Hicks at site S08-032 in Weelamurra valley. Fortescue has sought approval to destroy several sites in the area. Photograph: Wintawari Guruma Aboriginal Corporation

More than 100 Aboriginal sacred sites – some dating before the ice age – could be destroyed by mining companies

Lorena Allam & Calla Wahlquist, The Guardian, 28th August 2020

Traditional owners reveal their fears for ancient sites, including rock shelters with painted walls and scar trees

More than 100 ancient Aboriginal sites in <u>Western Australia</u> – some of which date before the last ice age – could be destroyed by mining companies which have already obtained legal permission to do so.

Guardian Australia has spoken to traditional owners in the iron ore-rich Pilbara who reveal their fears forsacred sites, including rock shelters with painted walls and scar trees.

A federal inquiry was recently established in response to the destruction by Rio Tinto of a 46,000-year-old rock shelter at Juukan Gorge deemed to be of the highest archaeological significance in Australia.

The shelter was <u>destroyed by the iron ore giant in May</u> against the consent of traditional owners, and sparked global outrage, an <u>international shareholder</u> <u>revolt</u>, and cost Rio Tinto its gold chip status for working with Indigenous people in Australia.

Its CEO and two top executives will lose a combined A\$7m in bonuses as a result – although Australia's largest retirement fund says those penalties do not go far enough.

Now one of the foremost Indigenous academics in Australia, Prof Marcia Langton, says public attention is all that is keeping some companies from destroying many more sites.

Langton, who has had a long involvement in research on the mining industry and has advised several companies on <u>Indigenous engagement</u>, said: "All of the existing authorities to destroy remain valid."

She believes "the companies that have them are just biding their time and waiting for public attention to move to something else, and they will go ahead and destroy hundreds of sites – amongst them sites as important as Juukan Gorge".

Mining companies have been granted permission to damage 463 sites in the past 10 years. They include the cave that was used to prove the theory that the iron ore-rich Hamersley range was used as a climate refuge at the end of the last Ice Age between 18,000 and 12,000 years ago – around the same time the clay bison were sculpted in the Tuc d'Audoubert in France.

Mining firms BHP, <u>Rio Tinto</u> and Fortescue have all said, in the wake of the international backlash against the destruction of Juukan Gorge, they will not proceed without further consultation with traditional owners, but they retain the final say.

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/aug/28/more-than-100-aboriginal-sacred-sites-some-dating-before-the-ice-age-could-be-destroyed-by-mining-companies?fbclid=lwAR0_RzE2AVePKR2IOUxC1vGZhAc8GeuuGgR5j-oBLjcBIOOpkIIVC2o-D4

As the world fights to figure everything out,
I'll be holding doors for strangers,
letting people cut in front of me in traffic,
saying good morning,
keeping babies entertained in grocery lines,
stopping to talk to someone who is lonely,
being patient with sales clerks,
smiling at a passersby.
WHY?

Because I will not stand idly by and live in a world where love is invisible.

Join me in showing kindness, understanding, and judging less.

Be kind to a stranger,

give grace to friends who are having a bad day, be forgiving of yourself - today and every day

BE the change, BE the light, start today and never stop.

Audrey loves Paris



For the refugees Australia imprisons, music is liberation, life and defiance

Behrouz Boochani, The Guardian, 7th September 2020

Playing music in detention is possibly the most radical act against the violence of the prison and the system as a whole

Years ago, during one of those hot Manus Island days, a few Australian guards entered the refugee prison camp. They snatched a broken guitar from the hands of a young musician and exited with an air of invincibility and sense of victory. The young man followed them for a whole 100m stretch in the prison and begged them to return his guitar. But every time he asked one of the officers they replied in absolute terms that he should forget about his guitar. In response to the question of why the guard was taking his guitar, he received the reply: "Having a musical instrument in prison is prohibited because you might hang yourself by using the strings."

That refugee is Farhad Bandesh, a Kurdish refugee who, after over seven years, still does not know what crime he has committed and is currently imprisoned in a detention centre in Australia. Struggling to hold on to an instrument has been a part of life over the last seven years for Farhad and other musicians in the Australian-run detention centres. However, after the Papua New Guinea supreme court ruled that it was illegal to imprison refugees, possibilities opened up so that Farhad and other musicians could get some instruments into the prison. In those days they formed a band and would practise under the large tent called "Charlie compound", which was in the corner of the prison.

This band performed a number of concerts for the refugees, they were able to evoke some sense of living life, although for a short period of time and in a violent prison.

Farhad is also an artist and has had a number of exhibitions in Australia up until now, although getting hold of art materials and then getting artworks out of the detention centre was a difficult process. For a long time he was denied access to art materials – for some time he was only allowed to produce art on his own bedsheets. During these years Jenell Quinsee – an Australian activist – supported Farhad in organising exhibitions and recoding his songs. Don't Forget Me, Flee From War, and Cruel Policy are among his musical works. In July of 2019, after six years, Farhad was transferred to Australia for medical treatment under the Medevac law together with many other refugees. Until now he is still in indefinite detention and does not know what his future holds.

Another musician is Mostafa "Moz" Azimitabar. He is a young man who plays the guitar and has recorded a number of songs during these years. In 2017 he recorded the rap song called <u>All the Same</u> which is a protest song that challenges Australia's detention regime.

After that he made <u>The Birds</u> in 2018 and finally <u>Love</u> – all these songs were recorded on his mobile phone. Moz also lost his musical instrument a number of times. In his most recent struggle with immigration he requested that they allow him to leave the detention centre for a few hours to record the two new songs that he had written in a studio. He even had a letter from the mayor of Preston in Melbourne; he attached the letter to his request but it was rejected on every attempt.

Moz says: "Music is a tool for preserving my sense of personhood, it is so I don't forget that I am a human being. Music is the language with which I can communication with the Australian people in a deep and meaningful way. My message is nothing more than the fact that we should love each other."

Read More:

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/07/for-the-refugees-australia-imprisons-music-is-liberation-life-and-defiance?

CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other&fbclid=lwAR22fCl8DwOvDzSRr_FIDR1HHeAU57ltALogBGzt5lH8dfpsKQRnlq0FF74



Women facing violence need protection — and their visa status shouldn't matter

Gina Rushton, Crikey, 7th September 2020

Women affected by domestic violence should have access to all the social support they require. Visa status shouldn't get in the way of that.

The following story contains descriptions of domestic violence.

Anjali* had to make a terrifyingly quick decision in 2016 when her husband held a broken glass and threatened to kill her. She knew inviting law enforcement into their Sydney home might threaten his visa status — which her own visa was tied to — and in turn the stability of her two daughters' lives. But after almost two decades of violence she wanted safety for her and her children.

"Within two minutes [the police] came and they witnessed everything and they protected me and they arrested him," she said. "I am sure he would not spare me next time and if I were to see him now I would collapse from terror."

Anjali did not know which visa she was on as her husband had controlled the paperwork, nor that it was about to expire. So she unknowingly entered a period of unlawfulness without a valid visa.

She is now on a bridging visa with no worker's rights and her rent is only just covered by the money her teenage daughters earn at a fast-food restaurant after school.

"My poor girls are really supporting me," she said.

If not for an additional payment from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) they would face homelessness because temporary visa holders without worker's rights have no access to housing, Medicare or Centrelink, including JobKeeper

or JobSeeker.

In May international student Kamaljeet Sidhu, 27, was allegedly murdered by her husband, Baltej Lailna, against whom she had taken out an apprehended violence order (AVO) four weeks earlier.

The night before she was stabbed to death, dozens of front-line domestic violence workers from across New South Wales took part in a webinar addressing the challenges faced by women on temporary visas who were trying to escape violence during the pandemic.

Services want the federal government to allow these women to access social support no matter their visa status.

Last month the Women's Safety Council, a forum for state and federal politicians, met to discuss how to reduce violence against women and their children during the pandemic. In the <u>list of outcomes</u> it acknowledged the pandemic had "coincided with the onset or escalation of violence and abuse for women" and that women on temporary visas experiencing violence was a "priority".

But the only measure it mentioned to address that was a network of "community liaison officers" who spread information about options to access support services for visa holders. But it didn't acknowledge how slim those options are.

"There is no substance in how they plan to address the problem," said Isobel McGarity, a lawyer with the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) in Sydney.

Read More: https://www.crikey.com.au/2020/09/07/domestic-violence-australia-visa/?

utm_campaign=CrikeyWorm&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter



A group of detained asylum seekers at the Kangaroo Point Central hotel in Brisbane in August. Photograph: Darren England/AAP

Australians complain about weeks in quarantine. I've been in immigration detention for almost eight years

Mardin Arvin, The Guardian, 14th September 2020

I want to enter a long dream in which I can walk as far as my legs can carry me, to go on a long trip, with snow or rain or sunshine

She runs. She laughs. I do not hear her, I only see her smile.

I smile as I stand here looking outside the window of the <u>Melbourne</u> hotel room, smile at the sensation of living life that it gives me. The sensation of freedom.

I remove my hand from the sole glass wall in this suffocating room I live in and sit on the same chair I always sit on. This is not a regular chair. I call it the chair of torment. It seems I sit on this chair until it torments me.

The sound of the TV is loud. It is announcing something about Covid-19 and explaining that many people in Australia are tired of quarantine. A cynical smile emerges on my face.

The little girl disappears from the footpath with her mother. I cannot see them any more.

I want to ask something of those people appearing on that small rectangle TV set and talking about how they are ailed by quarantine: "Until now have you

ever been in a situation where you were confined to a hotel room for almost a year? A situation where you could only go for a walk in your room or a corridor? It is ridiculous! Perhaps they have never thought to themselves that even while they are quarantined their freedoms are what some person is dreaming of – someone like me. Someone like me cannot go out from this place I am confined in."

I have been in "quarantine" for almost eight years, not because of Covid-19 but because I asked for asylum.

To be able to live one's life is a natural right. Every human being deserves that. Freedom loses its meaning when you are denied it.

I am Mardin. I am a refugee; someone who is asking for protection. Just imagine you risked your life striving to cross the all-encompassing ocean in a boat; to journey here with all the multifarious difficulties that it involves. To arrive in Australian territory. However, you are not a "normal" human being. They incarcerate you. Why?

I have never received a reasonable answer to this question. We deserve to breathe, just like every other person, we deserve to live life.

Read More:

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-

news/commentisfree/2020/sep/14/australians-complain-about-weeks-in-quarantine-ive-been-in-immigration-detention-for-almost-eight-years?
utm_term=610272a3648b95d724520accd5b95421&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email

World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, 2020 'Creative Solidarity in Common Fragility'

2020 World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel 14th - 21st September 2020

Theme: 'Creative Solidarity in Common Fragility.'

People of faith all over the world are encouraged to demonstrate the power of prayer with action which includes the International Day of Peace on 21 September.

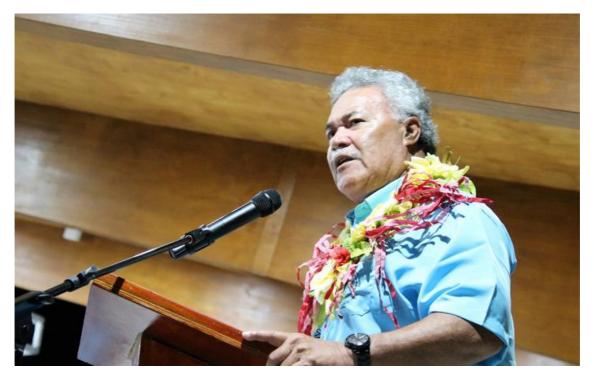
The World Council of Churches reminds us, 'that peace is always a fragile process... The impact of wars, the aftermath of violence, the hatred and the

bitterness engraved on souls, social injustices, the compromised future of two peoples and the broken message of three religions in addition to the harmful consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic only accentuate, day after day, this fragility.

'In the extremely fragile situation in Palestine and Israel, we still believe in the power of prayer because only the Spirit of God can soften hearts and change attitudes. Prayer does not mean, however, resignation on the part of the people; rather it implies a creative solidarity combining a spiritual reference point and practical action. We need to restructure our response in a compassionate advocacy process undertaken in a spirit of goodwill and impartiality that transcends identity and religious affiliation.

In this era of extreme fragility, creative solidarity is a sign of hope that, through the power of prayer and common action, we can make the restoration of peace and justice in the Holy Land both possible and a lived reality for all people of the region.'





Tuvalu's prime minister Enele Sopoaga speaking at the opening of the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Funafuti. August 2019 Photo: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Former Tuvalu PM hits out at US and Australian climate inaction Radio New Zealand, 11th September 2020

A former Prime Minister of Tuvalu and climate change activist has fired shots at Australia and the United States over their inaction regarding climate change.

Enele Sopoaga, who is still an MP, addressed this week's Virtual Island Summit, and told delegates that climate change remained a real threat for those in the Pacific.

Sopoaga also made a personal plea to Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison to move away from the use of fossil fuels.

He said despite countless declarations being signed, including at the last Pacific Islands Forum which he chaired and hosted, there was still minimal action being carried out.

"We have made our commitment to those declarations.

"There is no point in making declarations after declarations every annual summit we meet and yet we are dragging our feet on that and I continue to call on my friend, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, do the right thing."

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"We have made our commitment to those declarations.

"There is no point in making declarations after declarations every annual summit we meet and yet we are dragging our feet on that and I continue to call on my friend, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, do the right thing."

Read More:

https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/425771/former-tuvalu-pm-hits-out-at-us-and-australian-climate-inaction?

fbclid=lwAR0sFN4pOgApRptVayM5A1NhXH7LdF08G i44ZyYpPFxMsAPu5J6CwTJwY

COVID and climate action, Oceania

What: Webinar on COVID-19 & the climate challenge in Oceania
When: Monday, Sep 28, 5 pm AEST (7 pm Fiji & Aotearoa/NZ, 3 pm Perth, 12.30 pm Kolkata)

More about the topic: The impact of COVID in the Oceania region (including Australia) and how this relates to climate action; introduction to GreenFaith International and its Mission.

This webinar is part of a series, with the focus variously on Latin America, Africa, North America, South-east Asia/Indonesia. It is being hosted by GreenFaith International, a newly formed multi-faith climate action alliance of faith partners from all corners of the world. ARRCC is a Founding Partner.

The first collective action of Green Faith International will be the launch of a faith-inspired statement just prior to the G20 Summit in Saudi Arabia on Nov 21 – 22. Initially we are asking senior faith leaders to sign on, then afterwards we will invite sign-on by large numbers of people of faith. The launch of the letter will be accompanied by a Sounding the Alarm action – with Imams chanting a the Azan, drumming in Africa, sounding the Shofar by Jewish Rabbis, churches around the world tolling bells, etc. It is intended to draw attention to our message in a way that is COVID-safe.

Speakers:

Rev. James Bhagwan.

Rev. James Bhagwan is the General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, the peak ecumenical body in the Pacific, who's membership accounts for approximately 80 percent of the Pacific population, with 30 member churches and 9 national councils of churches across the region.

Thea Ormerod.

Thea Ormerod is a Catholic Christian, a semi-retired social worker, grandmother and an advocate for action to curb global warming. She has long been involved in a range of social justice issues, mainly concerning global poverty. For the last thirteen years Thea has been involved in the multi-faith climate action organisation, the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC, pronounced "ark") and is currently the President.

RSVP: register via this link or

ARRCC Home page: https://www.arrcc.org.au/covid_and_climate_action_oceania

and the Zoom link will be sent to you

Ecological conversion

Trish Hindmarsh, Pearls & Irritations, 9th September 2020

Are there shy signs of a new era emerging as humanity faces this pandemic? Could we be moving towards a more 'woke' state, leaving behind something of our 2019 'zombie' selves, heads cowed over smartphones?

We are at a pivot point in human history – every crisis is an opportunity for change. We are being pushed to re-vision, re-imagine, re-evaluate the way we humans are used to living and working on our planet earth. Could it be that we are 'waking up' to become more 'fully alive' to reality?

Can the Catholic Church be 'awakened', converted, re-energised, to take seriously its own Patron of Ecology, Francis of Assisi, who walked lightly on 'Mother Earth' as he tenderly referred to her, and embraced the poor? Can our leaders receive Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* and model, with their people, an 'ecological conversion' in dioceses, parishes and homes? Can Sunday homilies be preached on this theme? Can we join the dots? More than one million young Catholics from every corner of the earth, through the Global Catholic Climate Movement, are taking the lead in 'ecological conversion', with Pope Francis as their hands-on patron. Many millions more on the streets and online are calling their elders to account. They are very wide awake indeed

to the ecological crisis we face.

During Covid, many of us have been 'on retreat', or 'in retreat' from life as we knew it. This has been a time when we not only moved into isolation, but were confronted head-on by some of the great questions of life. For some this has led to despair; for many it has been a precious wake-up call. The world loved the story of the reporter in New Delhi who discovered one morning for the first time that the dazzling majestic Himalayas were now visible from his rooftop, a stunning backdrop in a suddenly smogfree city, literally a 'new vision'. People are yearning for a clearer, cleaner way of being in the world. How can we settle for 'the same old same old' flawed economic models and lifestyles that we now know contribute to ever more intense fire seasons, species extinction, global poverty and choking smog? It is conversion, renewal and reform time for humans!

What can we do, as people, as governments, as faith-based communities, to seize this moment?

This is a spiritual moment as much as a scientific one. Pope Francis appeals to all of humanity in *Laudato Si*, 'Let ours be a time remembered for a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life' (202).

Humanity needs such leadership – we Aussies have seen some glimpses of authentic leadership during the 2020 crises; ego and self-interest have been outwitted and outshone by fact-facing, cooperation, altruism and heroic self-sacrifice.

We need altruism and self-sacrifice to step up and become the new norms because ecologically we are facing an even greater global catastrophe than this virus. We need now not just a personal but a collective consciousness to change our way of being in relationship with the earth. This conviction is rising and rising, especially among the young. We adults cannot go back to 'business as usual', comforting as that thought may be. We need to open our hearts and minds to the God of Life and Love and humbly ask, 'Creator God, what would you have us do now?' We need to confess that we have exploited this earth to such an extent that nature has come back to bite us. We can ask for the wisdom of both St Francis and of sound science to know how to work with, rather than against, Mother Earth.

Read More:

https://johnmenadue.com/ecological-conversion/?fbclid=lwAR1WZEbjRX--URKLw8ipk1o3Ml5D_eYpJ3veWkMAmMFOEWaChlpfw5FbRmQ

REFLECTIONS



Coronavirus World

Each day, one wakes - silent, and attentive to cries of lamenting Ears and eyes open to oft unspoken distress.

Persons alone, distant from loved ones, feeling intensely Spirit and body weakened by depth of pain endured.

Coronavirus world seeks wisdom, hope, and endurance.

Mercy and Hope challenge all to heed the cries for a new tomorrow.

Jude Butcher August 25: Identifying with people lamenting and their cries for a new tomorrow.

Br Jude Butcher cfc AM PhD



Pace e Bene Nonviolent Service
Daily Inspiration September 9th, 2020

"There will be no Peace if there is no Justice.

There will be no Justice if there is no Equity.

There will be no Equity if there is no Progress.

There will be no Progress if there is no Democracy.

There will be no Democracy if there is no Respect

For the Identity and Dignity of the Peoples and Cultures"

-Rigoberta Menchu



Contemplative Monk Facebook Post 6th September 2020

Ask Me Anything

I am not old ... she said ... I am rare.
I am the standing ovation
At the end of the play.
I am the retrospective
Of my life as art
I am the hours
Connected like dots
Into good sense

I am the fullness

Of existing.

You think I am waiting to die ...

But I am waiting to be found

I am a treasure.

I am a map.

And these wrinkles are

Imprints of my journey

Ask me anything.

~ Samantha Reynolds

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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|IF:REWARDS| *|HTML:REWARDS|* *|END:IF|*