



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

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## **ERC JUSTICE UPDATES**

### **October 2020 No.33**

Dear All,

Welcome to the 33rd 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.

It seems that there are so many hurdles and obstacles to overcome in our world as we are living in it in 2020 - that every time one thinks that a corner has been turned we are faced with yet another problem to overcome. Joan Chittister osb has some wise words to reflect on:

**"The truth is that happiness is not something we get from life. Happiness comes from what we give back to it. Happiness comes from discovering what the world needs that we can give it." *Joan Chittister osb***

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.

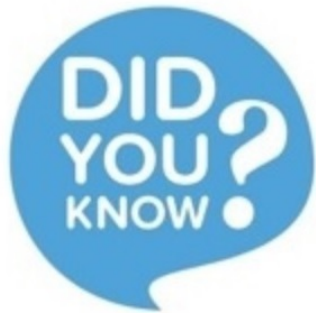
Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

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

Peace

Marita

Communications Project Officer,  
Marita McInerney



*On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2618 days.*



**A Report by the Jesuit Social Services' Support After Suicide released on 10th September 2020 highlights areas for reform in mental health system to prevent suicides:**

- 142 Victorian family members of people who took their own lives completed an online survey. Former or current participants of the Jesuit Social Services 'Support After Suicide's' counselling services completed the survey and 28 of the 142 were chosen for in-depth interviews.
- Around half (47%) of people who took their lives were known to have attempted suicide in the past.
- Almost three quarters (70%) of people who died had previously sought help from the mental health system.
- 41% of those who suicided were reported by loved ones to have experienced bullying or harassment (more than one third of these at work).
- 79% of family members said they felt there were barriers to them accessing information or help in caring for their loved one.
- 27 of 28 participants interviewed expressed concerns that mental health professionals did not have the skills to recognise their loved

one was at risk of suicide or to complete an adequate treatment plan. Recommendations include:

- An increase in training
- Resources and targeted support for health practitioners to assist people at risk of suicide
- A review of how confidentially practices and protocols limit the information and guidance given to families around appropriate care.
- A call on the Victorian Government to commit to secure long-term funding for post-suicide programs. This would allow for increased access to services for people in regional and rural areas.



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**MEDIA RELEASE     Wed October 7, 2020**

***2020-21 Federal Budget***

## **First Nations People and Refugees Should Not Pay the Price for Australia's Recovery**

The Edmund Rice Centre today expressed serious concern at the disregard for the needs of First Nations Peoples and Refugees in the 2020-21 Federal Budget.

“It has been said that the Federal Budget is statement on the nation’s priorities. Clearly if that is the case, judging by this Budget, First Nations Peoples, refugees and people seeking asylum – some of the most vulnerable people to the pandemic - are very low priorities for this Government”, Phil Glendenning, Director of the Edmund Rice Centre and President of the Refugee Council of Australia said today.

Two months ago the Prime Minister signed a new *Closing the Gap Agreement* committing Federal and State Governments to a long-term program to finally reduce the huge disparities in life expectancy, health, incarceration, education

and employment between First Nations peoples and other Australians.

“The new Agreement was a welcome step, but in last night’s Budget the Government provided no resources to make it happen”, Mr Glendenning said. “Surely it was possible for the Government to support its own flagship Indigenous Affairs policy”.

The Government did provide some monies for Indigenous Home Ownership, mentoring a program to increase First Nations peoples’ access to water, and support for the return of cultural heritage material from overseas.

“These are all worthy and significant, but they are not going to close the gap or change the inequities First Nations peoples face in this nation”, Mr Glendenning said.

However, money was provided in the Budget for reports on Closing the Gap targets.

“So there is money to report on progress, but no money for the essential work to actually make the progress that is to be reported on!”

In similar vein, the Budget also severely slashed support for some of the world’s most vulnerable people - refugees and people seeking asylum - as 5000 places a year were cut from Australia’s Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

“The Morrison Government has now joined with President Donald Trump in cutting refugee resettlement at a time when millions of refugees are in dire situations made worse by the impact of the pandemic”, Mr Glendenning said.

Significantly, financial support for people seeking asylum has been cut by a massive 86% (from \$139.8 million in 2017-18 to just \$19.6million in 2020-21).

This has occurred at the same time as a substantial increase in the numbers of people seeking assistance because of the pandemic; thousands of asylum seekers have lost their jobs forcing them to seek help from state government services and charities.

Yet, at the same time, the Government has allocated \$1.9 billion for punitive offshore processing.

“Put simply, the Government is prolonging the suffering of people seeking protection at the expense of programs which offer desperate people the

possibility of a path to safety”.

“If you follow the money, this Government, like the Trump administration, prioritises punishing asylum seekers rather than protecting them. All at a time of global crisis”.

“The First Nations People of Australia, refugees, and people in need of protection, should be priorities in good times and bad, and they certainly should not be asked to pay the price for Australia’s economic recovery”, Mr Glendenning concluded.

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**For Comment: Phil Glendenning AM - 0419 013 758**

[pglendenning@edmundrice.org](mailto:pglendenning@edmundrice.org)



New Greens senator Lidia Thorpe will bring a message that she intends to fight for families of those who have died in custody, represented by 441 burnt lines on a message stick, when she joins parliament. Credit: Dominic Lorrimer

## **'I'm swearing allegiance to the coloniser': New senator says it's not easy**

***Katina Curtis, SMH, 5th October 2020***

Even without coronavirus lockdowns hindering travel, Lidia Thorpe doubts her family would have travelled to Canberra to see her "swearing allegiance to the coloniser".

The newest Greens senator will formally join the Senate on Tuesday, cloaked in

possum skins and carrying a message stick with a line burnt on it for each of the 441 people who have died in custody since the 1991 royal commission.

The Gunnai and Gunditjmara woman is the first Aboriginal senator for the Greens and to represent Victoria, just as she was the first Aboriginal woman in the Victorian parliament.

She replaces the party's previous leader, Richard Di Natale, who left the Parliament in August.

"It's not an easy thing to do as a sovereign black woman to then swear allegiance to the Crown and the very people who caused great harm to this land and the people who belong to it," Senator Thorpe told The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald.

"It's not something that my community's excited about the same way as the rest of the community.

"I'm swearing allegiance to the coloniser, so I think the first speech (to the Senate) will be what people will be more excited about."

Read full story:

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/i-m-swearing-allegiance-to-the-coloniser-new-senator-says-it-s-not-easy-20201005-p5621l.html>



**Morrison government cuts refugee places by thousands**

***Anthony Galloway, Sydney Morning Herald, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020***

The Morrison government has slashed the maximum humanitarian intake by thousands on the basis it is too difficult to bring refugees into Australia in the same numbers as before the coronavirus pandemic.

The humanitarian intake was reduced from 18,750 places to 13,750 over the next four years in Tuesday's budget.

Asylum-seeker advocates have slammed the move, which is expected to save almost \$1 billion, saying the country should be accepting more refugees at a time when its net overseas migration will drop by hundreds of thousands a year.

But the government insists the number of humanitarian places had to be slashed because of [international travel grinding to a halt](#) and [refugee services around the world being significantly impacted](#).

Most of Australia's refugees are taken through the UNHCR's resettlement program, meaning they have to fly here from other countries to get to Australia.

The humanitarian intake will still be reviewed every year, allowing the government to return the cap to pre-pandemic levels if the global situation improves.

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Opposition immigration spokesman Andrew Giles said the reduction in the humanitarian intake was a "very big change".

"And while we are in very novel and uncertain circumstances, it does require a proper explanation and then a very serious examination," Mr Giles said.

"Who will be the next Frank Lowy, Majak Daw or Anh Do that Australia will miss out on due to the Morrison cuts to our humanitarian program?

"We can recover from COVID-19 and continue to provide a lifeline to people in need - like Frank, Majak and Anh who have contributed so much."

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Amnesty International campaigner Shankar Kasynathan said the government's decision was "inhumane and makes no sense".

"Throughout COVID-19, refugees across Australia have gone above and beyond to help their communities get through these difficult times," he said.

"Instead of seeing these people as a financial burden, this government should be welcoming them with open arms.



"It's the humane thing to do; it's also, economically and for our communities, the most sensible thing to do. When refugees move to regional communities like Wagga Wagga and Armidale, they restart their lives and in doing so support schools, infrastructure and businesses."

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/morrison-government-cuts-refugee-places-by-thousands-20201007-p562u4.html>

## **#KP120**

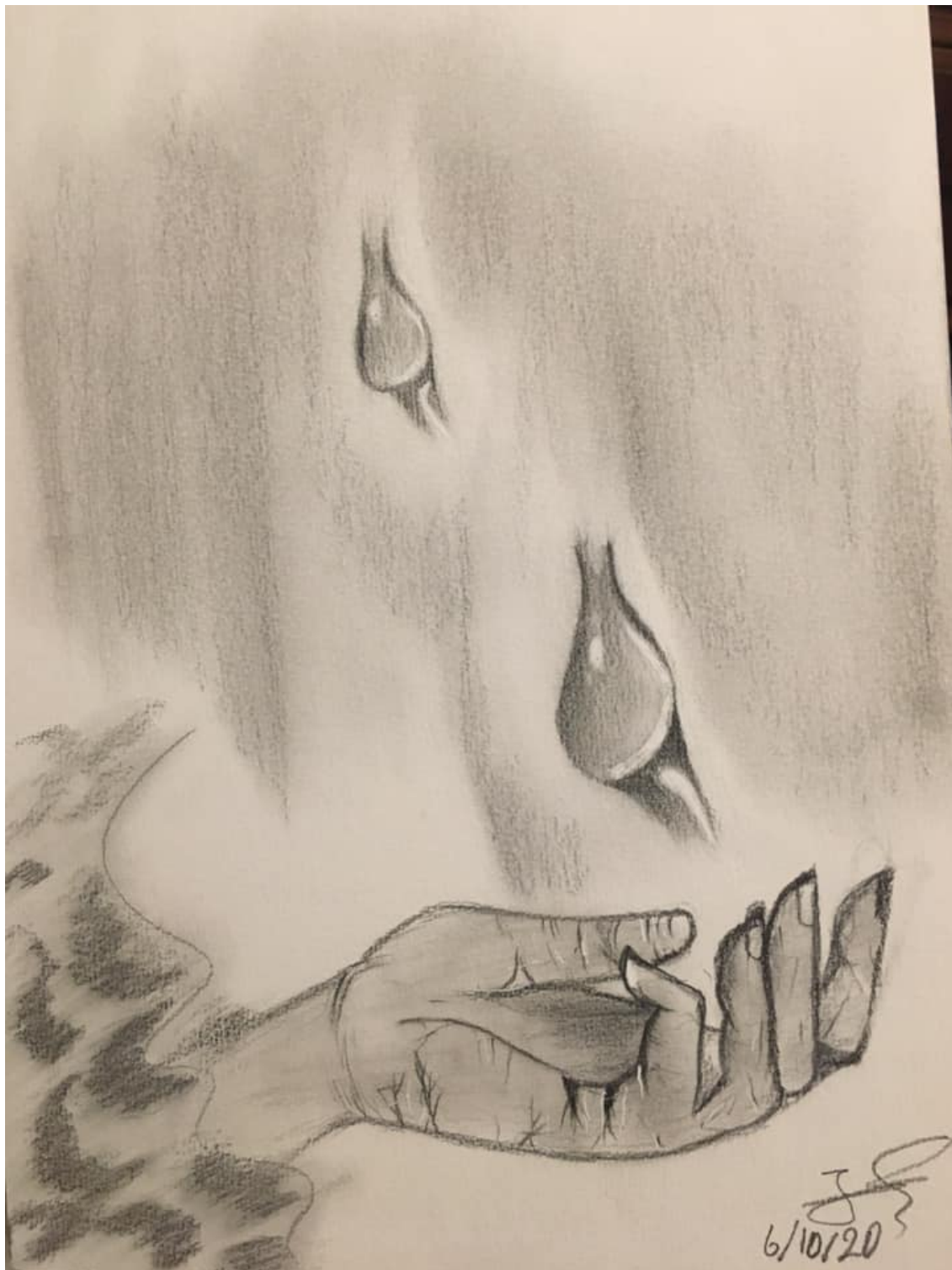
The "KP" refers to the motel accommodation at Kangaroo Point in Brisbane where refugees are being detained. The number "120" refers to the 120 people from off-shore detention centres who were transferred to the Australian mainland for medical attention under Medevac and have been kept there ever since. #KP120 (along with the #Mantra60 in Melbourne, and other groups of refugees detained around the country) have been locked for sometimes up to eight years for fleeing war, persecution, violence, poverty, misery- trying to find a safe place to live. Many have been highly traumatized by violence in their home countries.

Over a hundred of the KP120 are locked inside the [makeshift prison, or APOD \("Alternative Place of Detention"\) at 721 Main Street, Kangaroo Point](#). But some are at BITA (the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation), a high-security prison near Brisbane Airport. Many people have been protesting for several months for people to be released into the community.

For more information on the stories of these people and how to help, go to:

<https://www.freethekp120.com.au/>





**Facebook 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020 – Eyes Offshore**  
**Jalal Mahamede's post in tribute to Australians**

Im a drop of rain, I am a stranger in this desert,  
I wander and wonder, looking for the river,  
You held me in your beautiful hands, You did not allow this drop to fall to the  
thirsty ground.  
You will leave me in the river, You will save me from the desert.  
It's been a long time ,  
I have a thirst to kiss the beach water,,,  
You understand what I'm saying.

Only your kind heart hears the cry of mine , And it takes me to the shore of freedom.

I will always remember you.

Remember that if you cross the beach one day, call me, I will visit you with all my being.

I love you Australians and how hard it is to know that one day I will lose you.

*Read Jalal's full story and hear Jill Horton's tribute to him and if you would like to DONATE to and SHARE this fundraising campaign to bring Jalal to freedom in CANADA [chuffed.org/project/jalal-poet-and-artist-in-exile](http://chuffed.org/project/jalal-poet-and-artist-in-exile)*

I invite everyone to renewed hope, for hope “speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning.

**Hope** speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love...

FRATELLI TUTTI, POPE FRANCIS



## **Pope releases new encyclical, 'Fratelli tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship'**

Communications Office, [melbournecatholic.org.au](http://melbournecatholic.org.au), 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Pope Francis has written his third encyclical entitled [\*Fratelli tutti \(On Fraternity and Social Friendship\)\*](#), which he addresses to all people of goodwill and offers as a

proposal for a way of life 'marked by the flavour of the Gospel'.

While the pope's second encyclical, [\*Laudato Si'\*](#) (On care for our common home), focused on our relationship with the natural world, *Fratelli tutti* focuses on our relationships with each other. The document's release coincides with the conclusion of this year's Season of Creation, and during this time of pandemic is offered as a contribution to 'the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity by acknowledging the dignity of each and every human person'. (FT 8).

Following the release of the new encyclical, Archbishop Peter A Comensoli encouraged the faithful to read the pope's words: 'Situated as we are in the latter stages of this Pandemic, *Fratelli tutti* offers much that we might embrace as we determine who we are as people of God in Melbourne, and how we might emerge from this time of exile to go on mission into the world with the beating heart of Jesus.

I urge everyone to read it, and to then return to it with time and space to draw more deeply into the riches within.'

**Read the [full text of Fratelli tutti](#) here or view the summary below.**

### **Friendship and unity in a fragmented world**

The document begins by explaining that our call to love others as brothers and sisters, even when they are far from us is a call to 'open fraternity', a love without borders. The encyclical offers eight chapters, each exploring themes of friendship and unity in a time of growing fragmentation, with a focus on the human family in a post-COVID-19 world. Below is a summary of each chapter.

### **Chapter 1: Dark clouds over a closed world**

The first chapter describes the dark clouds over a closed world; these clouds extend to all parts of the world, hindering the development of universal fraternity (FT 9).

What are these clouds? They are the circumstances that leave many people wounded by the roadside, discarded and rejected. The clouds plunge humanity into confusion, isolation, and desolation.

Under the dark shadows of this ever more tightly closed world, precious words like democracy, freedom, justice, and unity are manipulated and emptied of meaning (FT 14). We see people sowing despair and discouragement, hyperbole, extremism, and polarization—these are the strategies for dominating and gaining control over people. The system denies the right of others to exist or to have an opinion. Politics has been turned into marketing (FT 15). Persons considered no longer productive or useful are disregarded and discounted by this throwaway culture (FT 18) that prevails beneath the dark clouds of our closed world.

The Pope reminds us that love, justice, and solidarity are not achieved once and for all but that they have to be built and worked by each person day by day (FT 11).

Read Full Summary:

<https://melbournecatholic.org.au/News/ArtMID/416/ArticleID/24662/Pope-releases-new-encyclical-Fratelli-tutti-On-Fraternity-and-Social-Friendship>



A woman in Ethiopia who lost her job because of the coronavirus pandemic prepares food for her family in a small tent. Photograph: Mulugeta Ayene/AP

## **Further 150m people face extreme poverty by 2022, warns World Bank**

***Larry Elliott, The Guardian, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020***

### ***Covid-19, climate crisis and war combine to reverse decades of progress on raising living standards***

An additional 150 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by the end of next year as conflict, climate change and [Covid-19](#) combine to end two decades of progress in raising the living standards of those on the lowest incomes, say the latest World Bank estimates.

The Washington-based organisation said the proportion of the world's population living on less than \$1.90 a day was expected to rise from 9.1% to 9.4% during 2020, with the increase concentrated in countries with already high poverty rates.

In the absence of the outbreak of coronavirus, the Bank said it would have



expected the poverty rate to fall below 8% during 2020.

A target of eliminating extreme poverty by 2030 has been set by the United Nations as one of its [sustainable development goals](#) but the World Bank, which lends to developing countries, said there was no chance of this being achieved without swift and significant action. In 10 years' time, 7% of the world's population could still be living on less than \$1.90 a day, it added.

Global extreme poverty fell by about one percentage point a year from 1990 to 2015 but the rate of progress had already slowed to half a percentage point a year between 2015 and 2017, before Covid-19 sent the process into reverse.

The Bank's biennial poverty and shared prosperity report estimated that during 2020 the number of people living on less than \$1.90 a day would rise by between 88 million and 115 million. Depending on the severity of the economic contraction resulting from the virus, the number could reach 150 million by the end of next year.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/oct/07/further-150m-people-face-extreme-poverty-by-2022-world-bank-covid-19-climate-coronavirus>



**Third Pacific Ocean Climate Change Conference to be delivered online**

***Climate change experts and those who wish to learn from them will be***

***gathering online at the third Pacific Ocean Climate Change Conference  
from 27–30 October 2020.***

**6 October 2020**

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington and the National University of Samoa (NUS) are working with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the Government of Samoa to convene the online Conference.

After two successful Pacific Change Conferences in 2016 and 2018 hosted by the University in Wellington, the third conference was to take place at the National University of Samoa in May this year but due to COVID-19, it will now be fully online with a ticket price of just NZD\$25.

“This year’s theme is ‘Blue Pacific, Climate Action for Climate Resilience’,” says Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Pasifika) Luamanuvao Dame Winnie Laban from Wellington’s University. “We are looking forward to exploring the science, the impacts, the solutions, and the enablers of climate resilience at this important conference.”

Keynote speaker Professor James Renwick, Head of School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences at Wellington’s University, adds, “We have seen over the past two years a heightened awareness among young people in particular of climate change, and we are inspired by innovative ways to improve resilience from a range of voices, which we will hear from at this year’s inclusive online conference.”

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“The range of Pacific stories shared at this conference should empower us all to do more for both ocean, and climate, action,” says Mr Latu. “Our ocean is our greatest resource, and climate change is our greatest threat to our Pacific region, this conference is providing space for us as the Blue Pacific to continue amplifying our Pacific realities in this time of COVID-19.”

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View the [conference programme](#) online and [register to attend now](#).

*The 2020 Pacific Ocean Pacific Climate Conference from 27 - 30 October, 2020 is a partnership between the Government of Samoa, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), National University of Samoa (NUS) and Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University Wellington. The theme of this*

online conference is 'Blue Pacific, Climate Action for Climate Resilience'.

Read more:

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/news/2020/10/third-pacific-ocean-climate-change-conference-to-be-delivered-online>

## **Fruit-picking industry is rotten at its core**

**Sherry Huang, SMH, October 12th 2020**

The government is considering increasingly unlikely strategies to fill the gaping labour market hole left by migrant workers in agriculture. But the system was broken before the pandemic.

In 2010, I came to Australia from Taiwan as a working holidaymaker and began work in an apple-packing shed in Shepparton. The work itself was not too bad, but I was paid about \$13 per hour — below the legal minimum. From that \$13 per hour, the labour hire provider took 13 per cent in fees and charges that I later discovered were unlawful. These charges were ostensibly to cover things such as accommodation; we slept six to a small room in bunks, or two in a shipping container.

The experiences of myself and my fellow temporary workers on the farm later became the subject of a *Four Corners* investigation and Senate Inquiry, but little has changed so far. The three sexual assaults I personally took to the police on behalf of friends have still never been acted upon; the police told us there was no point as the victims would have left the country by the time the case was tried.

Workers are still denied medical care when they are injured because non-European workers don't enjoy reciprocal rights under Medicare, and labour hire companies typically fail to register our names for WorkCover. A man I know lost three fingers in a meat grinder — would you trade six months on the minimum wage for three of your fingers?

In the wake of COVID-19, Australia's agricultural harvesting has ground to a halt as working holidaymakers are barred from entering Australia. Last week, the Refugee Council of Australia put forward a proposal to grant permanent visas to people seeking asylum in exchange for a year picking fruit. Clearly, Australia is prepared to consider any solution to the agricultural labour shortage except a market one — improving conditions and pay.

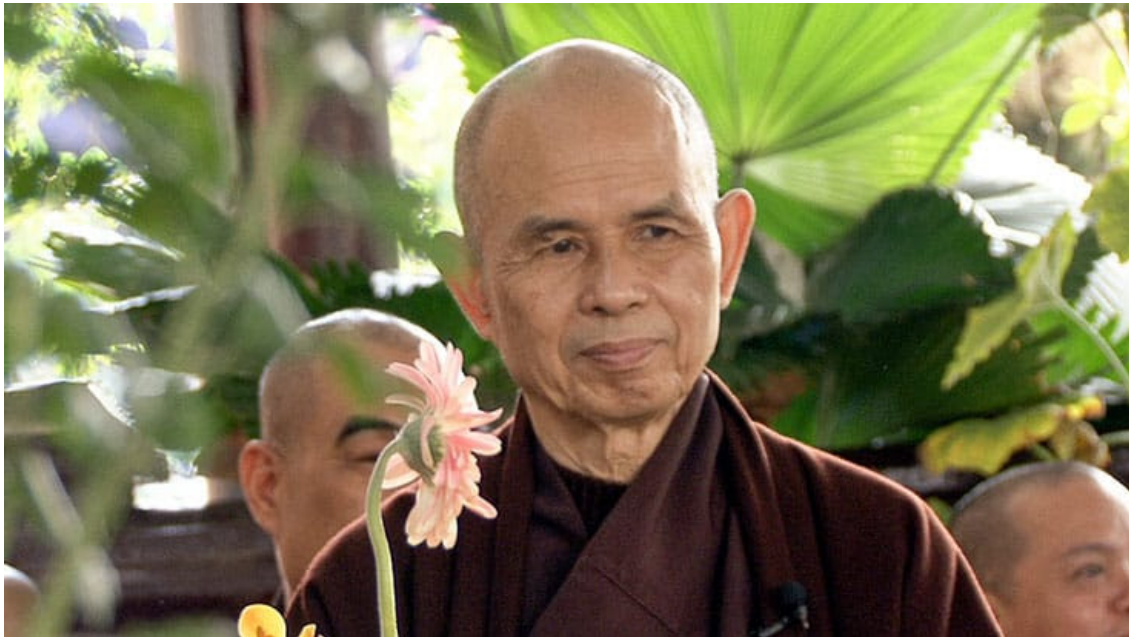
Australia's fruit and vegetable harvesting industry is a house of cards, stacked upon the willing blindness of Australians to human suffering, poverty, and abuse, imposed



by their fellow countrymen.

Read More: <https://www.smh.com.au/search?text=Fruit-Picking+industry+Sherry+Huang>

## REFLECTIONS



### Pace e Bene Non-violence Daily Inspiration

Wednesday October 7, 2020

*"What we need is not another doctrine, but an awakening that can restore our spiritual strength. What made Mahatma Gandhi's struggle a great success was not a doctrine—not even the doctrine of nonviolence—but Gandhi himself, his way of being. A lot is written today about the doctrine of nonviolence and people everywhere are trying to apply it. But they cannot rediscover the vitality that Gandhi had, because the 'Gandhians' do not possess Gandhi's spiritual strength. They have faith in his doctrine but cannot set into motion a movement of great solidarity because none of them possess the spiritual force of a Gandhi and therefore cannot produce sufficient compassion and sacrifice."*

—Thich Nhat Hahn



### ***The Beatitudes of Dignity***

Blessed are you, **all you who are different** - you are a unique and glorious reflection of God's astounding creativity and love!

Blessed are you **when you dare to bring the truth of who you are into loving relationship with others**—you heal and strengthen the body of Christ!

Blessed are you **who challenge stereotypes and caricatures**—you bring light to

**the world!**

**Blessed are you who speak out against religious hypocrisy—you help to birth justice and peace!**

**Blessed are you when you work for full equality and inclusion—you honor the sacredness of all people!**

**Blessed are you when you create new kinds of families, families formed by love rather than by law—you live the truth that all God's people are one family!**

**Blessed are you who seek to worship in spirit and in truth, whose prayer arises from humble hearts—the Spirit of Holiness will inspire and guide you!**

**Blessed are you who offer comfort to the dying, healing to the sick, food to the hungry, housing to the homeless, presence to the lonely, hope to the hopeless—you are the Gospel, the Good News our aching world so desperately needs to know!**

**Blessed are you, reviled and persecuted, yet persistent in faith, hope and love! Rejoice and be proud, for in you God's love is revealed!**

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.

**Our mailing address is:**

**\*|HTML:LIST\_ADDRESS\_HTML|\* \*|END:IF|\***

