



Edmund Rice Centre
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

April 2021 No.2 No.44

Dear All,

Welcome to the 44th 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 one never knows what we are to face from day to day and what shocks the world will bring us, let us give thanks for what we are blessed with and think of those in war-torn countries who face daily atrocities - let us pause and reflect on the words of Martin Luther King

"Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at the goal." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As always please send us anything you would like included in Justice Updates. Your suggestions and comments both positive and negative or indeed any information that you would like to disseminate amongst the wider Edmund Rice Network - it is all much appreciated.

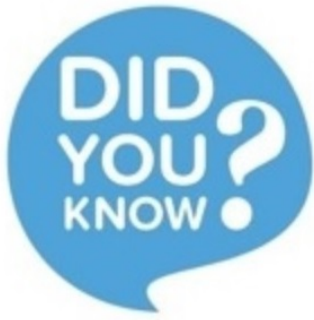
Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

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

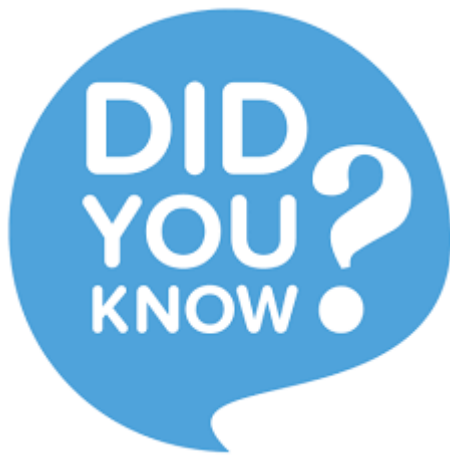
Peace

Marita
Communications Project Officer,

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that there may be articles in this publication with names and images of deceased people.



On Friday 23rd April 2021, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2807 days.



In an article in 'The Conversation' on 15th April entitled: *'Failure is not an option': after a lost decade on climate action, the 2020's offer one last chance* - Professor Will Steffan discusses the Climate Council's recently released report *'Aim High: Go Fast: Why Emissions Need to Plummet This Decade'*.

- **The report acknowledges - It will be virtually impossible to keep average global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C this century.**
- **The increasing rate of climate change, insights from past climates, and a vanishing carbon budget all suggest that the 1.5degrees C threshold will in fact be crossed very soon, in the 2030's.**
- **There is no safe level of global warming. Already at a global average temperature rise of 1.1degreesC , we are experiencing more powerful storms, destructive marine and land heatwaves and a new age of megafires.**
- **The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that the consequences of reaching 1.5 degreesC will be stark. Sea levels will rise, species will become extinct and crop yields will fall. Coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef, will decline by up to 90%.**

- Even more frightening is overshooting 1.5degreesC which runs a greater risk of crossing "tipping points", such as the collapse of ice sheets and the release of natural carbon stores in forests and permafrost. This could set of irreversible changes to the global climate system, and destroy critical ecosystems on which life on Earth depends.
- The report states that we can, and must, limit warming to well below 2degreesC. The goal is challenging but still achievable.
- Australia must grab the opportunities available. The Climate Council's report proposes that Australia radically scales up its emissions-reduction targets to a 75% cut by 2030 from 2005 levels (up from the 26-28% target. Australia should also aim to reach net-zero emissions by 2035, 2050 is too late.
- State, territory and local governments are leading the way are leading the way in the transformation required eg: The emerging new economy is bringing jobs to regional Australia and building cleaner cities by reducing fossil fuel pollution. A massive potential is also there for a new industry built on export to Asia of clean energy products and those made from clean hydrogen.
- Short-term disruptions will occur but the cost of a stable climate far outweighs these disruptions. The Report concludes: THE PATHWAY WE CHOOSE NOW WILL EITHER PUT US ON TRACK FOR A MUCH BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN, OR LOCK IN ESCALATING RISKS OF DANGEROUS CLIMATE CHANGE. THE DECISION IS OURS TO MAKE. FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION.



Edmund Rice 4 Uluru Artwork

Uluru- From Heart of the Nation

So what is the Uluru Statement? After a process that consulted with First

Nations People, on 26 May, 2017, two hundred and fifty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders came together at Uluru and wrote the From The Heart Statement.

The Uluru Statement is an invitation to all Australians to walk with First Nations People in the spirit of 'makarrata', coming together after a long struggle. It invites people to hear the stories from Indigenous perspectives and to ask the Australian Government to bring about substantive changes in the legal processes that deny Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples their dignity and proper place in the life of this country. The process will include Referendum, Voice to Parliament, Truth Telling and Treaty.



Artist David Riley holding his artwork

Brisbane Aboriginal artist, David Riley, was commissioned by the Edmund Rice Centre to do artwork on canvas to depict the journey of the Edmund Rice Network in support of the Uluru Statement. David is a past student of St James College in Brisbane.

David has used dot art to symbolize the various countries and homelands of Aboriginal and Torres Islander Peoples that make up Australia: Blue dots- salt water people, Silver dots- fresh water people, Green dots- grassland/ forest people, Ochre dots- desert people.

In these yarning circles people are gathering to listen to the stories of First Nations People. Small black dots signify the fact that the ERN is connecting with and journeying in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Islander Peoples towards the circle in the centre. This large circle symbolizes the Federal Parliament of Australia being enlarged by the inclusion of First Nations People having a Voice to the Parliament represented by black dots. Gold, silver and orange colours signify the richness and vibrancy of a nation enriched by the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Islander Peoples in the decision making of the Federal Parliament. *(Artist: David Riley)*

It is hoped that David's artwork may inspire people associated with the ER Centre and the Edmund Rice Network to go on the journey and find out what the Uluru Statement is about: to listen to First Nations People's stories of loss and dispossession and to look at substantive changes to our legal processes to right the injustices of the past. It is an invitation to go beyond reconciliation to share history and to share power and what is at the heart of being Australian.

BJ D'arcy cfc- Projects Officer, Edmund Rice Centre, Homebush West



'The Morrison government's response to growing concerns about the recent cluster of deaths has been quite desultory.'

Thirty years on, I sense the same storm brewing around Aboriginal deaths in custody

Pat Dodson, The Guardian, 17th April 2021

When I worked on the royal commission, distrust of police and prisons ran deep. The situation today is worse, and political resolve is lacking

When a 28-year-old Aboriginal man hanged himself in the Brewarrina police cells on 6 August 1987, his family and the Aboriginal community (at least half the population of the town) blamed foul play by the police, and violent protests erupted.

For prime minister Bob Hawke, it was “the one death too many” that led to his establishing in October 1987 the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody (RCIADIC). As Commissioner Hal Wootten QC would finally report, Aboriginal suspicions that the Brewarrina man was killed by police were “*not unreasonable or unnatural*”; such suspicions were “*voiced all over Australia*.”

I was the only non-lawyer on the royal commission (the other five commissioners were distinguished lawyers) and it was my job to inquire into why Aboriginal people were being taken into custody in Western Australia in the first place, and the factors that pertained to their deaths. Of the 99 deaths across the country between 1 January 1980 and 31 May 1989 that the commission examined, 32 (29 males, three females) occurred in Western Australia, where suspicion and distrust ran particularly deep between Aboriginal people and the agencies of police and prisons.

When I was appointed to the royal commission in July 1989, it had already been decided to establish Aboriginal Issues Units in all states and territories. I recruited the late Rob Riley, a Noongar man, to lead the WA unit. He had worked for the WA Aboriginal Legal Service and was a former chair of the National Aboriginal Conference. His co-workers were Darryl Kickett, another Noongar man, and Jackie Oakley; from Broome (where I chose to be based) I recruited Paul Lane and fellow Yawuru countryman, Peter Yu, now vice-president (First Nations) at Australian National University.

Our work was demanding. It fell to the staff in the Aboriginal Issues Unit to liaise with Aboriginal communities across the state and lay the ground for the commission’s hearings. Working days were long, travel was extensive. We visited prisons and lockups and heard directly from Aboriginal people about their interactions with the criminal justice system. It was depressing and confronting work for 18 months, and only later did I appreciate the mental and

emotional toll that our small team endured. I now believe that the repetitive exposure to entrenched racism rekindled painful memories of the traumas that Rob suffered at Sister Kate's Children's Home in Perth and contribute to his tragic death on 30 April 1996, age 41.

My report for the commission identified family disruption as a common background of those who died in custody: "... each individual who died was exposed to some degree of mission/welfare interference at a primary or secondary level which ... resulted in family disruption."

Police and prison personnel in WA were most wary of our inquiry, and extracting official information, even with all the powers of a royal commission, was often frustrating. John Quigley was legal counsel for police and prison officers and our encounters were always lively (his representation helped him win a life membership of the police union, but he was stripped of that in 2007 after he was elected to parliament and criticised police – he is now the WA attorney general).

In November 1990 I delivered my report (more than 1,000 pages) to Elliott Johnston QC, who by then was heading up the royal commission. In the opening chapter, I wrote: "... I can only conclude that the majority of Aboriginal people in this state remain not only in a destabilised and powerless situation compared to the dominant non-Aboriginal population, but also in a position where their powerlessness remains remarkably unrecognised." Aboriginal people needed to have control of certain process and resources to direct and manage their legal, social, cultural and economic affairs.

Read More:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/17/thirty-years-on-i-sense-the-same-storm-brewing-around-aboriginal-deaths-in-custody>

Read the State Coroner's full statement on Indigenous deaths in custody

Teresa O'Sullivan, SMH, 12th April 2021

Every First Nations death in custody represents the loss of a valued individual, family and community member. Every First Nations death that comes before this court is a tragedy. We cannot separate the issue of First Nations deaths in custody from the over-representation of First Nations people within the criminal justice system, nor can we separate it from the colonial history of this nation.

A key theme in the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) 30 years ago, and one also reflected in its 339 recommendations, was the importance of self-determination. To quote directly from the report: "The whole thrust

of this report is directed towards the empowerment of Aboriginal society on the basis of their deeply held desire, their demonstrated capacity, their democratic right to exercise, according to circumstances, maximum control over their own lives and that of their communities.”

Today, 30 years after the RCIADIC report was tabled, those words still hold such force. Self-determination for First Nations people is still lacking in this country. This unfinished business cannot be separated from anything else that is done to try to prevent the deaths of First Nations people in custody.

This is the reason I often draw on the words in the Uluru Statement from the Heart in my coronial findings when a First Nations person dies in custody: “Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future. These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.”

The Uluru Statement represents an invitation from First Nations people to all Australians that we cannot ignore if we are serious about preventing Aboriginal deaths in custody.

By accepting the Statement’s invitation, creating and supporting the processes that will give full effect to the Statement, and ensuring First Nations people have a say in what happens to First Nations families in relation to criminal justice issues, healthcare, and social policies, we will ultimately reduce the unacceptable numbers of First Nations deaths in custody.

Read More:

https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/read-the-state-coroner-s-full-statement-on-indigenous-deaths-in-custody-20210411-p57i6h.html?fbclid=IwAR17zy9dwg1O2e1Rq9QxRzNqaMFAh2W_rFNmEah9uRhwtgfhhd2zTfdXCdEE



The Morrison government is facing further calls to provide visa extensions for more than 3,000 Myanmar nationals in Australia. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/EPA

Thousands of Myanmar citizens in Australia at risk of being deported to violence back home

Labor urges Morrison government to extend the stay of temporary visa holders and expand sanctions against military figures

Daniel Hurst, The Guardian, 13th April 2021

The Morrison government faces fresh calls to allow more than 3,000 citizens of [Myanmar](#) to stay in Australia once their visas expire, amid fears about the dangers they face if forced to return home.

With more than 600 civilians now estimated to have been killed in violent crackdowns by security forces since the 1 February military coup, Labor has written to Australian ministers to demand help for temporary visa holders and the expansion of sanctions against junta figures.

“No one should be involuntarily deported to Myanmar if they don’t want to go back,” the opposition’s foreign affairs spokesperson, Penny Wong, and her home affairs colleague, Kristina Keneally, said in the letter to the government.

There were 3,366 visa holders from Myanmar in Australia at the end of February, government figures show. They included 1,680 students and 612 bridging visa holders.

Wong and Keneally said the deteriorating situation in Myanmar was “causing extreme distress for members of Myanmar’s diaspora community in Australia”.

“We are therefore urging the government to enable Myanmar nationals on temporary visas in Australia to extend their stay,” they told the foreign minister, [Marise Payne](#), the home affairs minister, Karen Andrews, and the immigration minister, Alex Hawke.

“The Morrison government has options available to act right now – the home affairs and immigration ministers have extremely broad powers and should use those powers to provide visa pathways to respond to any emerging needs.”

Read More:

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/apr/13/thousands-of-myanmar-citizens-in-australia-at-risk-of-being-deported-to-violence-back-home?utm_term=c01e687b7cca64546c2accbcee210914&utm_campaign=GuardianToDayAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email



Main image: Pope Francis (Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk/Flickr)

Climate crisis, displacement and solidarity

Stephen Minas, Eureka Street, Vol. 31, No.7, 13th April 2021

On 30 March, the Holy See engaged with an important aspect of displacement with the publication of its 'Pastoral Orientations on Climate Displaced People'. The document, approved by Pope Francis, was produced by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, a Vatican department established by Francis that works on both migration and environmental matters.

The intersection between climate change and human displacement is a still emerging area of concern. Nevertheless, we know that climate change is already a factor in various forms of human mobility, ranging from relatively voluntary migration to compulsory resettlement to temporary or permanent displacement, either internal or international.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Working Group 2 noted that climate change affects human mobility through a range of slow and rapid onset impacts, including floods, droughts and sea-level rise. The Asia-Pacific is forecast to be especially hard hit, due to its large population and prevalence of disasters. In 2019, the countries that suffered the greatest displacement due to disasters were all in Asia (India, the Philippines, Bangladesh and China).

In recent years, international organisations have urged more focus on this growing challenge. The World Bank recently highlighted an 'urgent need for countries to integrate climate migration into national development plans', while the Asian Development Bank warned that 'policy responses and normative frameworks that address climate-induced migration remain scattered and highly inadequate'.

'Pastoral Orientations' addresses the difficulties faced by climate displaced people (CDP) by focusing on ten challenges and associated responses suggested for the Catholic Church. The intended audience includes Bishops' Conferences, local churches, Catholic organisations and laypeople who may be involved in 'effective assistance' for CDP. The purpose of the document is practical, to set out 'markers for a roadmap in pastoral planning for CDP', and specific actions are suggested to this effect.

The ten challenges begin with vision: not in the sense of foresight, but rather the act of seeing and acknowledging. Too often displaced persons have been out of sight, out of mind, while the climate crisis remains ignored in too many quarters. As Pope Francis paraphrases Hamlet in the preface, 'To see or not to see, that is the question!' The document opens with a call for acknowledging climate displacement and for promoting awareness and outreach.

Read More:

<https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article/climate-crisis--displacement-and->

[solidarity?](#)

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ERC Media Release - Thursday 15th April 2021

Edmund Rice Centre calls on Australian PM Scott Morrison to #StepUp4ThePacific at Biden Climate Summit

Several leading Australian and Pacific not-for-profit organisations, including the Edmund Rice Centre, have jointly called on Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison today to step up Australia's climate action targets ahead of the Biden Climate Summit to be held on 22 April.

The organisations, also including the Pacific Conference of Churches, Oxfam Australia, Greenpeace Australia Pacific and the Climate Council, commissioned a [full-page advertisement](#) in the Australian Financial Review (AFR) urging Mr Morrison to ensure that Australian "emissions plummet to well below half of their current levels this decade".

"Australia could become a renewable energy superpower, as well as help protect the prosperity and stability of our region. It is critical that the Morrison government shows courageous leadership on this issue at the Biden Summit, said Ms Corinne Fagueret, Coordinator of the Pacific Calling Partnership program at the Edmund Rice Centre.

"All of Australia's major allies and trading partners are taking stronger climate action while Australia is being left behind, continued Ms Fagueret.

This call is being strongly echoed by Pacific Islanders, including through last year's [Open Letter to Mr Morrison](#) signed by 15 high profile Pacific political and religious figures, asking him to take urgent climate action.

Mr Gordon Melsom, a Project Officer at the Edmund Rice Centre and himself of Pacific Islander heritage said: “In the past 18 months my family in Sydney has endured drought, bushfire and floods made worse by climate change. My family in the Pacific faces even greater threats. Let’s #Stepup4thePacific and tackle climate change. Australia’s and our region’s future is being written now.”

Ms Maria Tiimon Chi-Fang, Pacific Outreach Officer at the Edmund Rice Centre and herself originally from Kiribati, added: “Climate change is happening right now and is a matter of life and death for I-Kiribati people. As a woman originally from Kiribati and an Australian citizen, I am urging the Australian government to save the future of my 7-year-old son, who currently lives in Kiribati, and the young generation of Australia”.

For more information and interview requests, contact: Corinne Fagueret;
Program Coordinator Pacific Calling Partnership, Edmund Rice Centre, Ph:
0421 831 889

Gordon Melsom from PCP was interviewed on the ABC's Pacific Beat on Monday 19th April

To listen to interview:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio-australia/programs/pacificbeat/pacific-beat-2021/13308182> (interview starts at about 57 mins).



Kabay Tamu says he is terrified of being forced to leave his island home in the Torres Strait.(ABC News)

For these Torres Strait Islanders, climate change is already here — and they're urging the government to do more

Andy Park, Alex McDonald & Jenny Ky, ABC News, 20th April 2021

For generations, Indigenous Australians have thrived on the islands in the Torres Strait – but rising sea levels, more extreme weather and coastal erosion are devouring some of the 17 inhabited islands in the region and threatening their way of life.

Scientific modelling suggests that some of the low-lying islands could become uninhabitable within decades if global temperatures keep rising at the current rate.

"If this happens, we'll be climate change refugees in our own country," Torres Strait Islander Kabay Tamu told 7.30.

"It's going to be so traumatising.

"Our ancestors, our forefathers were buried here. Just thinking about it just sometimes brings tears to my eyes.

"It's really scary to think about that."

In the east of the Torres Strait, Yessie Mosby says climate change has made his island home an increasingly desolate place.

Fresh water from a well that once sustained generations of Torres Strait Islanders has now turned to salt water and parts of the reef around the island that were once abundant with shellfish are now filled with sand.

"The reef outside, it looks like a desert," Mr Mosby said.

ancestors survived off drinking fresh water along the wells they dug out through this island.

"Most of the wells are near the shorelines now — they used to be inland.

"All the water [has] now become brackish. It used to be drinkable — [it's] not drinkable anymore."

'Our human rights are being violated'

Boigu Island priest Stanley Marama is one of eight Torres Strait Islanders who accuse the Australian Government of failing to address the climate impacts that threaten their homes and culture.

They've taken their case to the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva.

Read More:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-04-19/torres-strait-islanders-climate-change-impacts-uninhabitable/100069596>

Pope's prayer intention for April: 'For fundamental human rights'

Pope Francis releases his prayer intention for the month of April 2021, and urges everyone to pray for those fighting to protect people's fundamental human rights in all parts of the world.

Devin Watkins, Vatican News, April 2021

"Defending fundamental human rights demands courage and determination."

Pope Francis begins "The Pope Video" for April with this remark, and goes on to describe exactly what he means.

He says he is referring to "actively combatting poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land and housing, and the denial of social and labor rights."

As a press release from the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network points out, the Pope is inviting all people of goodwill to pray for those who "risk their lives fighting for fundamental rights."

Risking life and limb for others

In the video, the Pope laments that human rights are often not equal for all, saying there are "first-, second-, and third-class people, and those who are disposable."

Yet, he appeals, fundamental human rights "must be equal for all."

"In some places, defending people's dignity can mean going to prison, even without a trial. Or it might mean slander," he notes.

Despite the danger, says Pope Francis, "every human being has the right to develop fully, and this fundamental right cannot be denied by any country."

With this in mind, the Pope urges everyone to pray during April for this intention.

"Let us pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis, that they may see their sacrifice and their work bear abundant fruit."

Listen to our report

Read More:

REFLECTIONS



Photo Ann Cahill

JOHN O'DONOHUE

Excerpt from his book, *Anam Cara*

Too often people try to change their lives by using the will as a kind of hammer to beat their life into proper shape. The intellect identifies the goal of the program, and the will accordingly forces the life into that shape. This way of approaching the sacredness of one's own presence is externalist and violent. It brings you falsely outside yourself and you can spend years lost in the wildernesses of your own mechanical, spiritual programs. You can perish in a famine of your own making.

If you work with a different rhythm, you will come easily and naturally home to yourself. Your soul knows the geography of your destiny. Your soul alone has the map of your future, therefore you can trust this indirect, oblique side of yourself. If you do, it will take you where you need to go, but more importantly, it will teach you a kindness of rhythm in your journey.



Jamberoo Abbey Facebook Post 22nd April 2021

Earth Day

"The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope."

~Wendell Berry

I love this day and I love this quote! "Our most pleasing responsibility"... if only our politicians could really believe that and act on it! Meanwhile, we will keep doing what we can to cherish and renew, enjoy and praise. Thank you Mother Earth for your wondrous gifts to us!



On Meditating, Sort Of

Meditation, so I've heard, is best accomplished
if you entertain a certain strict posture.
Frankly, I prefer just to lounge under a tree.
So why should I think I could ever be successful?

Some days I fall asleep, or land in that
even better place — half asleep — where the world,
spring, summer, autumn, winter —
flies through my mind in its
hardy ascent and its uncompromising descent.

So I just lie like that, while distance and time
reveal their true attitudes: they never
heard of me, and never will, or ever need to.

Of course I wake up finally
thinking, how wonderful to be who I am,
made out of earth and water,
my own thoughts, my own fingerprints —
all that glorious, temporary stuff.

—Mary Oliver



Pace-e-Bene

Daily Non-violence Inspirations

"For me, activism is about a spiritual practice as a way of life. I realized I didn't climb the tree because I was angry at the corporations and the government; I climbed the tree because when I fell in love with the redwoods, I fell in love with the world. So it is my feeling of 'connection' that drives me, instead of my anger and feelings of being disconnected."

—Julia Butterfly Hill

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.

The Edmund Rice Centre wholeheartedly supports and endorses the

ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART
and urges all Australians to get behind this wonderful statement.

Our mailing address is:

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