



This holiday season, many of us will be spending time with family members who are very quick to recite what they hear on talkback radio or read in the tabloid press. That's why we've put together a guide to help you speak up for social justice this Christmas and holiday season.

First, some general tips. Keep your conversations constructive and perhaps experiment with the following:

- **Acknowledge the issue or concern behind the statement.** We just have different ways of approaching the issues and finding solutions.
- **Imagine the issue from the person's perspective.** We're asking people to see life from a different perspective so let's start with a look at the issue from their point of view.
- **Assume the best intentions from everyone.** Most people are just trying to live a good and peaceful life in the company of our families, hoping to leave a healthy, prosperous earth behind to benefit future generations.
- **Help them walk a mile in another's shoes.** Perhaps start with how you would respond to a situation. What would they do in the same circumstance?
- **Try not to argue, but gently offer another side to the coin.**

Here are some of the common statements we've heard in 2016 (if you have heard any others and would like to know how to respond - or to suggest a response – you can do so at: www.erc.org.au/surviving_christmas_suggestions).

You can also access the guide online at www.erc.org.au/surviving_christmas.

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Immigration, Refugees and Race

"Muslims are terrorists...Muslims support terrorism...Muslims don't speak out against terrorism..."

This is not true. The Muslim community always condemns terror attacks. Muslim leaders, including the Grand Mufti, condemn ISIL. The vast majority of people who have been attacked by ISIL have been Muslim.

The Muslim community is actively working with police and other law enforcement and security agencies to combat radicalisation.

Even Deputy Prime Minister and Nationals Leader Barnaby Joyce has rejected this myth. In response to Pauline Hanson's call for a ban on Muslim immigration to Australia, Joyce said –

"What happens if we turn that on its head and start banning people because they're Catholics or because they're Protestants or because they're Jewish? Every group has their ratbags, even Catholics. We had, in the past, the IRA (Irish Republican Army) but if someone says every Catholic is a member of the IRA, I'd say no. They have nothing to do with the religion that I practise. Islam at the moment also has a lunatic fringe."

Joyce is right. Extremist elements exist inside every group in society. We should not stereotype based on the actions of a very small minority.

For more information:

Debunking the Myths About Muslims in Australia

http://www.erc.org.au/debunking_myths_muslims

FactCheck Q&A: has the Grand Mufti of Australia condemned terrorist attacks overseas?

<https://theconversation.com/factcheck-qanda-has-the-grand-mufti-of-australia-condemned-terrorist-attacks-overseas-62688>

Muslim leaders including the Grand Mufti of Australia back fatwa against Islamic State

www.smh.com.au/national/muslim-leaders-including-the-grand-mufti-of-australia-back-fatwa-against-isis-20160101-glxtbp.html

“Boat people are queue jumpers”

If you were living in Syria at the moment, what would you do?

There is no single orderly refugee registration and settlement program. There is no queue. People flee persecution, terror and war and stop when they find a safe haven.

There is no standard refugee process where people wait in line to have their applications considered. Few countries between the Middle East and Australia are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and as such people seeking asylum are forced to continue to travel to another country to find protection.

According to the Australian Parliamentary Library:

“There is no orderly queue for asylum seekers to join. Only a very small proportion of asylum seekers are registered with the UNHCR and only about one per cent of those recognised by the UNHCR as refugees who meet the resettlement criteria are subsequently resettled to another country.”

For more information:

Debunking the Myths about Asylum Seekers

http://www.erc.org.au/debunking_the_myths_about_asylum_seekers

Debunking the Myths about Asylum Seekers 2nd Edition

http://www.erc.org.au/debunking_myths_about_asylum_seekers_2

"Refugees are illiterate, innumerate and will steal our jobs."

This is a myth started by Immigration Minister Peter Dutton. How can a person who cannot read and write or add up steal your job?

As the Guardian Newspaper explained:

"Putting aside for a moment that Australia takes refugees not because it needs their skills but because they need its protection, Peter Dutton was wrong in his statements to Sky News. The immigration minister's own department, other branches of government, the parliamentary library and the bureaucrats who work for him say so."

In 2011, a report from the Department of Immigration found that refugees, on average, had higher levels of education than other migrants, greater entrepreneurial qualities, and often higher levels of participation in both paid and volunteer work.

There have been numerous studies that show refugees and their families have made a significant economic contribution to Australian society. If anything, jobs have been created as a result of refugees coming to our country.

For more information:

Fact Check: Was Peter Dutton right about illiterate refugees taking jobs

www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/may/18/fact-check-was-peter-dutton-right-about-illiterate-refugees-taking-jobs

Will refugees really 'take Australian jobs' like Peter Dutton said this morning

www.news.com.au/national/politics/will-refugees-really-take-australians-jobs-like-peter-dutton-said-this-morning

"Asylum seekers get more government assistance than pensioners."

Refugees and people seeking asylum are not being afforded special benefits. There is no truth to the claim they are entitled to special rates of payment.

It's absolutely true that pensions and support for veterans are inadequate. But it's not right to blame refugees or people seeking asylum. What we should be doing is cracking down on tax concessions to wealthy people and big business, not cutting support for people who need it most.

For more information:

Australian Government assistance to refugees: fact versus fiction

www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/AustGovAssist-refugees

Do refugees receive higher social security payments than age pensioners?

www.ssi.org.au/faqs/refugee-faqs/143-do-refugees-receive-higher-social-security-payments-than-age-pensioners

"Boat people are illegal immigrants...or economic migrants."

You only have to watch the news and see what's going on in countries like Syria to understand the dangers refugees are fleeing. **What would you do if you were in their position?**

People who seek asylum by boat are not illegal immigrants or economic migrants. According to the Parliamentary Library:

"Under Article 14 of the 1948 Universal declaration of human rights, everyone has the right to seek asylum and the 1951 Refugee Convention prohibits states from imposing penalties on those entering 'illegally' who come directly from a territory where their life or freedom is threatened."

It goes on to make the following points:

- *"The Australian Government usually allocates around 13,750 places to refugees and others with humanitarian needs under its planned Humanitarian Program. Historically, the majority of these places are granted to offshore refugees referred to Australia by the UNHCR, but some are given to refugees who arrived by air or boat and were granted protection visas onshore. However, even during high boat arrival periods, onshore grants to boat and air arrivals combined still only comprise about 50 per cent of Australia's Humanitarian Program."*
- *The number of people arriving unauthorised by boat in Australia is small in comparison to the numbers arriving in other parts of the world such as Europe. Similarly, the number of asylum claims lodged in Australia is small in comparison to the USA and Europe.*
- *While about 20 developed nations, including Australia, participate formally in the UNHCR's refugee resettlement program, the vast majority of asylum seekers and refugees are actually hosted in developing countries."*

People seeking asylum and refugees are not migrants. The difference is a question of choice – a migrant chooses to leave their home country and may safely return at any time but a refugee has no choice and may not return safely. As the UNHCR explains:

Refugees are forced to flee because of a threat of persecution and because they lack the protection of their own country. A migrant, in comparison, may leave his or her country for many reasons that are not related to persecution, such as for the purposes of employment, family reunification or study. A migrant continues to enjoy the protection of his or her own government, even when abroad.

For more information:

Asylum Seekers and Refugees: What are the facts?

www.apph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1415/AsylumFacts#_Toc413067441

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol

<http://www.unhcr.org/about-us/background/4ec262df9/1951-convention-relating-status-refugees-its-1967-protocol.html>

"The boats have stopped and this saves lives at sea."

No one wants to see people risk their lives on a dangerous journey by sea in order to seek protection. But with over 21 million refugees around the world (the biggest humanitarian crisis since WWII), desperate people are going to take desperate measures. People seeking asylum are looking for safe places to rebuild their lives.

That's why we should be doing whatever we can to create safe passage for refugees seeking our protection. It's about helping people before they have to get on a boat.

What does safe passage look like? In the late-1970s and 1980s, people fleeing conflict in Indo-China did not have to get on a boat because there were safe places near their homeland where their claims for refugee status could be assessed and where an orderly resettlement process could take place. At the moment, there are very few safe places for people seeking asylum to go.

The current Australian Government's policies (boat turnbacks and offshore processing) do nothing to create this much needed safe passage. Turning back boats at sea puts the lives of refugees and Australian navy officials at risk - all the Government is doing is putting people back in harm's way. The reports of abuse, self-harm and neglect in regional processing centres on Manus Island and Nauru are truly disturbing and just as we would demand any allegation of abuse in Australia be investigated, it's important all allegations in these centres are properly and independently investigated.

While politicians like to claim they have "stopped the boats," the truth is the boats have simply been deflected to other parts of our region and there have still been attempts by people to seek asylum in Australia by boat in the past 12 months.

For more information:

By Hook Or By Crook: Australia's Abuse Of Asylum Seekers At Sea
www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA12/2576/2015/en/

'Turning back boats'
www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/publication/%E2%80%98turning-back-boats%E2%80%99#challenges

Why stopping the boats does not solve the problem
www.jrs.org.au/stopping-boats-not-solve-problem-part-1/

Climate change

“Climate change is a hoax...It is not caused by humans...Global warming actually stopped 15 years ago.”

Most of us aren't medical doctors. When we get sick, we see a doctor and follow their advice. The same logic applies when it comes to climate change. Most of us aren't scientists but we accept the advice of scientists on a whole range of issues.

So when 97 per cent of climate scientists say human action is causing global temperatures to rise and the climate to change we should listen and take action.

Every part of the Earth's climate system has continued warming over the past 15 years and 2016 is set to be the hottest on record.

For more information:

Scientific consensus

<http://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>

2016 locked into being the hottest year on record, NASA says

www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/oct/18/2016-locked-into-being-hottest-year-on-record-nasa-says

"The Great Barrier Reef is fine. The threat is being exaggerated."

Many of us have visited the Great Barrier Reef on holidays. We can all agree it is an incredible place and needs to be protected, no matter what the threat. There have been countless studies showing the link between human induced climate change, warmer waters and coral bleaching.

93 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef is affected by coral bleaching and the worst bleaching event on record occurred earlier this year. The reef has lost over half its coral cover since the 1970s and 1980s.

The reef may be dying – but it is not dead. It can be saved so it's really important we do everything we can to stop the damage being done.

For more information:

Great Barrier Reef bleaching would almost be impossible without climate change
<http://theconversation.com/great-barrier-reef-bleaching-would-be-almost-impossible-without-climate-change-58408>

Pauline Hanson visits the Great Barrier Reef
www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-25/pauline-hanson-visits-the-great-barrier-reef-climate-change/8059142

"Attempts to curb emissions are cruel and expensive."

When it comes to climate change, the cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of action.

In fact, the Government has received advice that a carbon price for the electricity industry would save households and businesses up to \$15 billion in electricity bills over 10 years.

Businesses and unions have both made clear they want to see a just transition towards a clean and sustainable economy. There is a real opportunity to create new jobs in renewable energy industries such as solar and wind. If we invest in higher education – universities and TAFE – we can build a skilled workforce capable of taking advantage of these new opportunities. It's now time for the Government to act.

For more information:

Government killed emissions scheme despite knowing it could shave \$15 billion off electricity bills
www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/government-killed-emissions-scheme-despite-knowing-it-could-shave-15-billion-off-electricity-bills-20161208-gt6v48.html

ACTU Policy Discussion Paper: A Just Transition for Coal Fired Electricity Sector Workers and Communities
www.actu.org.au/our-work/policy-issues/actu-policy-discussion-paper-a-just-transition-for-coal-fired-electricity-sector-workers-and-communities

Alliance of peak bodies pressures PM over climate change
www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/unprecedented-alliance-of-peak-bodies-pressure-pm-over-climate-change-20150628-ghzqfi.html

“Renewable energy is too unreliable...Reliance on wind energy caused the South Australia blackout this year”

Research consistently shows that renewable energy is reliable and capable of providing baseload power. The key is to get a mix of renewable sources, including wind, solar, hydro and geothermal. It's also important to remember that, even on a cloudy day, solar energy can still be generated.

We already generate enough renewable electricity to power almost 4 million homes. Austria generates 68 per cent of its total electricity from renewable sources, while Sweden generates 67 per cent of its electricity from renewables.

The South Australian blackouts, in September 2016, were not caused by renewable energy sources, but by damage done to the poles and wires. The heavy winds were so strong they caused the transmission lines to fall (just take a look at the image below). In other words, renewable energy was not the reason the network failed.



For more information:

Baseload power is a myth - even intermittent renewables will work

<http://theconversation.com/baseload-power-is-a-myth-even-intermittent-renewables-will-work-13210>

No renewable energy didn't cause South Australia's blackout

www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/09/28/no-renewable-energy-didnt-cause-south-australias-blackout/

Indigenous Peoples

“There is no definition of Aboriginal”

Contrary to what Pauline Hanson might say, there actually is a definition. Since 1981 there has been a three-part definition –

1. You must identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;
2. You must have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage; and
3. You must be accepted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

However, it's pretty offensive for non-Aboriginal people to go about deciding who is Aboriginal and who isn't. Aboriginality is defined by relationships – not skin colour.

Finally, it's also important to remember there are over 500 clan groups or 'nations' around Australia, each with their own cultures and languages.

For more definition:

Aboriginal Identity - Who is Aboriginal?

www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/aboriginal-identity-who-is-aboriginal#toc1

“Aboriginal people need to take responsibility for their own lives”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples want to have control and autonomy over their lives. We often hear people say they’d wish Canberra would just get out of their lives – Indigenous Australians feel the same way!

For tens of thousands of years they were peoples of resilience, innovation and sophistication. They developed complex systems of wealth distribution, trade and land and environmental protection.

There are so many examples where Indigenous peoples have developed successful programs based on these fundamental strengths – from Broome, to Cape York and in places like Goodooga in North-West NSW. Indigenous peoples want to build on these strengths but they can only do that if they have control over their own futures.

For more information:

Turnbull Government must let Indigenous Australians take control of their destiny
www.smh.com.au/comment/turnbull-government-must-let-indigenous-australians-take-control-their-destiny-20160209-gmp5qd.html

“There is no need to change the constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We’re all Australians and the recognition discussion is divisive.”

The Constitution is Australia’s “rule book” and considered a founding document of the country. But how can it represent all Australians – and be a complete founding document – if it ignores the fact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have lived here for over 50,000 years?

In fact, the Constitution has been used to the detriment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. That’s why it’s also important to remove the provisions of the Constitution that allow for racial discrimination.

As Indigenous MP Linda Burney says:

“For me it’s a no brainer. Where is the downside in recognising Aboriginal people in the Australian constitution? Every first world nation with a colonial history has done it - bar Australia.”

For more information:

Why Recognition?

<http://www.recognise.org.au/why/why-recognition/>

“We don’t need a treaty – a nation does not make a treaty with itself.”

Australia is the only Commonwealth nation that does not have a treaty with its Indigenous people. New Zealand and Canada both have treaties – and the concerns raised by opponents of a treaty in Australia have not eventuated in these countries.

Indigenous peoples did not cede sovereignty in 1788. They were dispossessed of their land and have never been able to take their rightful place in Australian society.

A treaty could provide, among other things:

- a symbolic recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and prior occupation of this land
- a redefinition and restructuring of the relationship between Indigenous people and wider Australia
- better protection of Indigenous rights
- a basis for regional self-government
- guidelines for local or regional treaties
- structures and systems for local and regional decision-making processes.

For more information:

Why Treaty?

www.australianstogether.org.au/stories/detail/why-treaty