



Act Justly

Dignity for asylum seekers

Catholic leaders respond to Government actions

The Australian Government's announcement that it is suspending all visa applications from asylum seekers Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, and reopening the infamous Curtain Immigration Detention Centre, has drawn strong criticism from Catholic leaders.

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference used the occasion of its plenary meeting in May to urge the Government to change its policies.

"Mandatory detention, especially in remote places such as Christmas Island and Curtin RAAF base, as the

government indicates, is a costly exercise that adds to the trauma already endured by people seeking asylum," they said in a statement. "Political leaders have a par-

ticular responsibility to avoid demonizing or stereotyping asylum seekers."

Catholic agencies have also entered the debate. Dr John Falzon, CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society, in a joint statement with the Society's president Mr Syd Tutton, has called for an end to the 'politics of division and spite', citing the commitment of Society members to good works with refugees and asylum seekers as evidence that Australians have the capacity to 'work together to act with humanity.'

Dr John Sweeney, spokesperson for the Edmund Rice Centre, invoked the Government's own principles to challenge its recent moves. "For any asylum seeker whose identity, health and security checks have been completed, suspension of processing must be accompanied by release from detention." said ERC spokesperson Dr. John Sweeney.

"At all costs we must avoid a reintroduction by stealth of policies which deport people back into danger – policies that Australia rightly abandoned", Dr Sweeney concluded.



Equity in Australia at a crossroads

The Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Bishop Christopher Saunders, has issued the 2010 Pastoral Letter for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, which compares the circumstances of the richest and poorest Australians following the global financial crisis.

According to the pastoral letter, the consequences of the financial crisis have not been carried proportionally. A 2009 decision of the Australian Fair Pay Commission imposed a wage freeze on 1.6 million safety net workers with the aim of preventing job loss and promoting economic recovery.

'While the lowest paid workers endure a pay freeze for the sake of Australia's

economic interests, the Productivity Commission recently dismissed suggestions of pay caps or reduced tax concessions on executive remuneration...'

Drawing on Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical, 'Charity in Truth', the Bishop highlights the need for long-term development with adequate protections for low paid and unemployed workers.

'Equity and justice must be built into the operation of the market and not remain just an afterthought. The market must not be a place where the strong subdue the weak. The minimum wage decision that Fair Work Australia makes in June will be a critical test of this nation's fairness,' Bishop Saunders concluded.

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Call to deepen Catholic teaching on ecology

On April 10 over a hundred people from a range of faiths gathered at Santa Sabina College to hear the reflections of Fr Sean McDonagh on the 2010 New Year Message of Pope Benedict XVI, "If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation."

Fr McDonagh is a Columban Missionary priest and Catholic advocate for action on climate change. His commitment to global environmental justice stems from his experience working amongst the T'boli people in the Philippines, whose homes were destroyed by logging.

Fr Sean welcomed the Holy Father's criticism of affluent lifestyles and their negative impacts on the earth. He also noted that the Holy Father has emphasized the need for solidarity, both with future generations and between developing countries and highly industrialized nations, which carry a historical responsibility for environments destruction.

While commending these aspects of the message, Fr McDonagh called for greater urgency in addressing the current ecological crisis. He described the loss of global biodiversity as the irreversible destruction of God's creation, and encouraged the Church to move forward to a deeper theological understanding of creation, for example through a Synod on Creation that would allow church communities worldwide to offer their local expertise.

The April forum was organized by the Columban Mission Institute and included responses from Bishop Julian Porteous, Chair of Catholic Earthcare Australia, who called for prudence in evaluating scientific data associated with such issues as climate change, and local speakers Sandra Menteith (CANWin, Bundanoon) and Emily Aitken (Macquarie University student), each involved in initiatives to face present environmental challenges.

Cadbury Dairy Milk goes FairTrade

In 2009 Cadbury chocolate announced that its Dairy Milk line would shift to FairTrade suppliers by Easter 2010; this year, FairTrade certified Cadbury products have begun appearing on supermarket shelves.

10 products in the plain Dairy Milk line are now certified FairTrade. You can find more information at www.cadburyfairtrade.com.au.

Of course there are lots of other companies producing FairTrade chocolate, coffee, tea and other products to ensure justice for local producers. FairTrade Fortnight is 1—16 May 2010. Go to www.fta.org.au and make the big sway today!

Concerned Citizens

Last November, 'Concerned Australians' launched *This is What We Said*, a book based on its investigation into the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). *This is What We Said* contains statements from indigenous people living in the Northern Territory about the effects of the NTER on Aboriginal communities.

Five months later, Concerned Australians continues to advocate for un-compromised reinstatement of the Racial

Discrimination Act in the Northern Territory. They argue that suspension of the RDA, whether complete or partial, undermines the self-determination, cultural integrity and respect vital to indigenous health and well-being.

To view the petition, which will be presented to the UN in late May, go to www.socialpolicyconnections.com.au. To order *This is What We Said* for (\$15 each plus postage) contact the Justice and Peace Office.

Free captives: Drop debt

May 16, the Feast of the Ascension, is Jubilee Sunday. Scripture tells us that at this time Jesus' handed over to us, his followers, his work for God's Kingdom.

On Jubilee Sunday, we are asked to focus on one of the root causes of endemic global poverty – the unjust debts of many countries. Developing countries send the equivalent of AU \$550 billion overseas each year to pay back their debts, much of which was accumulated by corrupt and undemocratic regimes of the past. They lose another AU \$230 billion every year through tax evasion by large companies. This is much greater than the AU\$60-90 billion needed yearly to meet the Millennium Development Goals to halve extreme poverty, and at least 7 times more than these countries receive annually in foreign aid.

One of these countries is Haiti, now suffering not only from the effects of past economic policies but from the devastating earthquake. How do we apply the essence of the Law of Jubilee found in scripture to today's world? Parishes, schools and congregations can get involved by using the ideas on the resource sheet available on <http://www.jubileeaustralia.org/jubilee-sunday-2010>.

Debt prayer bookmarks are available from Anne Lanyon, Columban Mission Institute: 02 9352 8021.

Encounter East Timor

Palms Encounters are short-term cross-cultural experiences available to individuals or groups of up to 8 participants.

These 10-day cross-cultural experiences are designed to provide an insight into the daily life of people of another culture; an understanding of sustainable approaches to development, including ecological sustainability; and an insight into the life and work of development volunteers.

To find out more visit www.palms.org/encounter. Applications close at the end of May or when places run out.

Position Vacant

Palms is also looking for an Administrative Assistant. Go to www.palms.org.au.

Each month, Grow a Culture of Peace!

Each month the Columban Mission Institute produces a monthly bulletin for parishes called "Growing a Culture of Peace". The bulletin takes its theme from the Sunday readings; in May the theme is "Globalising Love".

To subscribe email pej.cmi@columban.org.au or contact Anne Lanyon: 9352 8021.

What's on around Sydney

- 20 April – 19 May** **Portraits from the Edge: Putting a Face to Climate Change**
A photographic exhibition by John Lewis, presented by Sydney Theatre Company. **10:30am - 10:30pm daily except Sundays, The Wharf Gallery, Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay.**
- 11 May** **Catholic Schools and the Church of the Poor**
Author and theologian Dr James Nickoloff offers this presentation for educators, school leaders, board members and other interested people. Dr Nicholoff is Adjunct Professor of Theology at Barry University, Miami. **10am - 3:15pm, St Patrick's College, Francis St, Strathfield.** Contact: Dmulhearn@edmundrice.org.
- 12 May** **Human Rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territories**
Professor Bisharat (University of California and author of a book about Palestinian lawyers in the West Bank), speaks on law and politics in the Palestinian occupied territories. **12:30pm - 2pm, Staff common room, Faculty of Law, University of NSW.** RSVP: ahrc@unsw.edu.au.
- 13 May** **Faiths and Families in Harmony: Role of Religious and Community Leaders**
A forum for religious and community leaders to increase their awareness and understanding of family and domestic violence. Hosted by the Auburn Interfaith Network in partnership with the Stop Domestic Violence Action Group. **4pm-6pm, Auburn Town Hall, 1 Susan St, Auburn.** Contact: 9351 2048 or go to www.usyd.edu.au/sydney_ideas/
- 14 May** **The Burden of Debt: How Serious and Who will Pay?**
Politics in the Pub presents Dr Jim Stanford, author of *Economics for Everyone*, and Associate Professor Steve Keen, author of *De-bunking Economics*. **6pm to 7:45pm, The Gaelic Club, Level 1, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills.** For more info go to www.politicsinthepub.org.au.
- 14 May** **Young Adult Social Justice Discussion and Pizza Evening**
A night for people aged around 18 – 35, hosted by the Edmund Rice Network. **6pm - 8pm, Edmund Rice Centre, 15 Henley Road, Homebush West.** Contact: lefonkalsrud@edmundrice.org or crondeau@edmundrice.org.
- 19 May** **Post-Copenhagen: The Road Ahead**
Reflections, dialogue and action with the Pacific Calling Partnership Delegation to the Copenhagen Climate Change summit. Cost: \$35. **2pm - 5pm, Good Samaritan Centre, 2 Avenue Rd Glebe.** Contact: jillf@erc.org.au or clrinsw@ozemail.com.au.
- 19 May** **David Atkins on the Intergenerational Report**
David Atkins, Council on the Ageing NSW, discusses the impact of the Federal Government's 2010 Intergenerational Report, which addresses the challenges Australians will face over the next 30 years. Cost:\$5 including afternoon tea. **1pm - 2pm, Theatrette, NSW Parliament House, 6 Macquarie St, Sydney.** Contact: 9230 3341.
- 19 May** **NSW Ecumenical Council Dinner: What is our Christian Mission Together Today?**
Celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity for 2010 and to mark the 100th anniversary of the Edinburgh International Missionary Conference. Speakers include Metropolitan Archbishop Paul Saliba (Antiochian Orthodox Church) and Commissioner Linda Bond (Salvation Army Eastern Territory). Cost: \$55. **7pm, Fontana di Trevi Function Centre, 53 Raymond Street, Bankstown.** RSVP: 9299 2215 or kmoroney@ncca.org.au. For more info go to: www.churchresources.info/missionspirit/0410/NSWEC%
- 19 May** **Our Emerging Spirituality and Environmentalism**
Spirituality in the Pub presents Margaret Hinchey and John Charadia. **7.30 pm, Sutherland United Services Club, 7 East Parade, Sutherland.** Contact: 9520 0617 or 9548 2475. For more info go to: www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.
- 20 May** **Sex on Demand**
Award-winning journalist and author Victor Malarek, and Captain Danielle Strickland, Social Justice Director with the Salvation Army, talk about the global sex trade. Hosted by Collective Shout and the Salvation Army, and emceed by Melinda Tankard Reist. **5pm - 6pm, NSW Parliament House Jubilee Room.** For more info go to: www.justsalvos.com.

What's on around Sydney (cont.)

20 May The Human Cost of Carnage: Iraqi Voices Unearthed

Dr Richard Hil (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies) and Michael Otterman (Human Rights Consultant) are the authors of *Erasing Iraq*. They examine the human cost of the conflict in Iraq and the resulting refugee crisis through the stories of the Iraqis who experienced it first hand. **6pm—7pm, Sydney Law School Foyer, Eastern Avenue, Camperdown Campus, University of Sydney**. Contact: 9351 2048. For more info go to: www.usyd.edu.au/sydney_ideas/

20 May Refugees: Innocent Victims, Illegal Migrants or Political Pawns.

A talk from Dr Eileen Pittaway, Director of the Centre for Refugee Research, UNSW. **6pm to 7:30pm, Leighton Hall, John Niland Scientia Building, University of NSW, Kensington**. Contact: 9385 8512

21 May Making Sydney Sustainable: Transport

Three speakers discuss what Sydney needs, what Sydney is doing and what works well elsewhere at this seminar from the Environmental Defenders' Office. Light refreshments provided. **12:30pm to 2pm, DLA Phillips Fox, Level 38, 201 Elizabeth St, Sydney**. RSVP: 9262 6989. For more info go to: www.edo.org.au/edonsw/site/seminar.php.

22 May Walk and Concert for Reconciliation

Organised by Mt Druitt and District Reconciliation Group, with the support of Blacktown City Council, NSW Reconciliation Council and Mt Druitt Police. **Concert and BBQ: 12.00 noon. Walk commences: 2.00 pm, Mt Druitt Town Square, between Westfield Shopping Centre and the Library, Mt Druitt**. Contact: 02 9625 4344. For more info go to: www.cnet.ngo.net.au/content/view/47570/448/.

24 May Restorative Justice: Moving Forward

Hear from a panel of speakers including Dr Ivo Aertsen, Leuven Catholic University; Julie Stubbs, Sydney Law School; Natalia Blecher, Supreme Court of NSW. **4pm - 7pm, Sydney Law School, New Law Building, Eastern Avenue, University of Sydney**. RSVP: 9351 0238 or law.events@sydney.edu.au.

25 May Global Home Lecture Series: Indigenous Health

A lecture to engage students in health issues and to inspire students with recent successes in Closing the Gap programs. Speakers include Dr Paul Torzillo, Medical Director, Nganampa Health Council, member, National Indigenous Health Equity Council; and Associate Professor Ngaire Brown, Director, Poche Centre for Indigenous Health. **6pm - 7:30pm, Eastern Avenue Auditorium, University of Sydney**. Contact: nvit7048@uni.sydney.edu.au.

25 May A Night of Inspiration Told in Story and Song

A women's night of spirituality, with Elsie Heiss (Aboriginal Catholic Ministry), Bonnie Boezeman and Julie Smith. Facilitated by Caroline Jones. **7:30pm, St Mary's Church, Miller St, North Sydney**.

27 May A New Green Deal

Michael Renner examines how the pursuit of green jobs could become a key economic driver nationally and provide additional momentum toward a low-carbon global economy. **6pm - 7pm, Sydney Law School Foyer, Eastern Avenue, Camperdown Campus, University of Sydney**. Contact: 9351 2048. For more information go to: www.usyd.edu.au/sydney_ideas.

3 June Where is the Global Food System Headed

Dr Per Pinstrup-Anderson (Cornell University) examines the global food system, and suggests policy changes governments need to make to ensure there is food for everyone as the world's population continues to grow. Cost: \$20 / \$15. Free for Sydney University staff, students and alumni. **Thursdays 6:30pm - 8pm, Seymour Centre Theatre, corner of Cleveland St and City Rd, Chippendale**. Contact: 9351 1935. For more info go to: www.usyd.edu.au/sydney_ideas.

3 June – 15 July Creators of Peace Circle

A group for women of all beliefs and religions who want to be better at building peace in their families and community. **Thursdays 7pm - 9pm, Coogee**. Contact: Carol Miller, 9664 9743. For more info go to: www.iofc.org/creators-of-peace.

5 June ARRCC Eco-Awards Dinner

Australian Religious Response to Climate Change celebrates World Environment Day and recognize environmental achievements within a range of faith communities. Speakers include John Connor (The Climate Institute) and Bhante Sujato (Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils). Cost: \$60 each, \$480 for a table of 8. **7pm, St Mark's Anglican Church, The Mall, South Hurstville**. For more info go to www.politicsinthepub.org.au.

The initiatives above are organized by a range of Church and non-Church groups throughout Sydney. The Justice and Peace Office does not necessarily endorse the views and perspectives that will be expressed at these events.