



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live. We acknowledge their deep spiritual connections to this land and we thank them for the care they have shown to Earth over thousands of years.

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National Lament

We lament the lack of compassion for people seeking asylum in Australia
We lament the denial of human dignity and freedom
We lament the indifference
We lament our inability to turn the tide.

Catholic Religious Australia

In this edition we lament the indifference to the cry of the Earth, the cries of the asylum seekers and the cries of our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

Peta Anne Molloy, Anne Shay

Trafficking of Children

'A child has been trafficked if he or she has been moved within a country, or across borders, whether by force or not, with the purpose of exploiting the child.
UNICEF definition.

Among the factors that render trafficked children vulnerable, according to this definition, are that they "cannot speak the language, are disadvantaged by their legal status, suffer a lack of access to basic services (such as education and healthcare), or do not know the environment".

All these apply to children we have trafficked to Nauru.

In the heated debates about asylum seekers, including the tragic death of Reza Berati on Manus Island, there is one group that is always forgotten: children. Ten years ago we lamented the fact that there were about 100 children held in Australia's immigration detention prisons.

Today, ten years later, there are 10 times as many children subject to this practice on the Australian mainland, Christmas Island and Nauru. Children without parents, dismissively referred to as "unaccompanied minors", are now joining transported families with children on Nauru.

Australia is now trafficking more children across national borders, defying UN protocols of trafficking in persons.

"Duty of care" and "risk management" are terms familiar to Australians. Sending children to Nauru is a serious abrogation of duty of care and poses untold risks to unaccompanied children. Riots and fires on Nauru last year, and recent events on Manus Island, starkly reveal the impact of locking up innocent people and taking away all hopes and rights. For children to witness such events, sometimes without the protection of a parent, increases the well-documented harm that results from being locked up for indeterminate periods.

cf Linda Briskman & Chris Goddard The Age 25/2/14

ACRATH Conference

Members of Australian Catholic Religious against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) gathered on February 27, for a three day Conference in Templestowe in Victoria. A number of invited guests shared from their experiences of working with women who have been trafficked. There was much energy among the participants, resulting in excellent plans for ACRATH's work in 2014. You can find more information on the ACRATH website www.acrath.org.au

Joan Kennedy pbvm Victoria

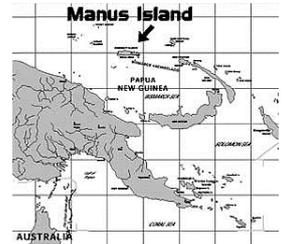


Lucy van Kessel and Joan Kennedy were there representing the Presentation Sisters.



The Cry of the Poor ...

PNG Bishops call for closure of Manus Island centre



Surely a human life is more important than property. Many others have been totally traumatised and hurt - refugees and staff. Yet it seemed that none of this mattered.

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project

PNG's Catholic Bishops Conference (CBC) said it was appalled to hear of the recent disturbance at the centre, resulting in death and injury.

Detaining people against their will in PNG, even if it works as a deterrent, is not a just solution worthy of a great nation otherwise proud of its human rights record.

'We were concerned that the rhetoric of a righteous campaign against people smugglers actually seemed to be more a question of political convenience.

It clearly places an intolerable strain on the capacity of PNG to manage and might lead to even more deaths, injury and trauma.

We repeat again our respectful encouragement to Australia to find a more humane solution to people seeking asylum in their country. Asylum seekers are human beings who deserve respect and recognition of their dignity.'

SBS News 3/3/14

Where are Our Leaders taking Us? Questions People are asking:

How have we become the oppressors?

How did we become people who break hearts?

How have we reached the stage when we imprison people without justification?

How did protection of Australia's borders become so important that we would do anything to protect it, even if this means turning away genuine refugees?

When did we begin persecuting the persecuted?

We refuse to be complicit in the implementation of these policies by our silence. CLRI(NSW) joins with other groups and individuals to continue our opposition to these policies until such time as a just, compassionate and humane approach to the issue of asylum-seekers and refugees prevails".

Laureen Dixon rsc
President CLRI NSW

A Call to Action

Catholic Religious Australia has launched a "National Lament", a campaign of prayer, penance and action for people seeking asylum in Australia. We are seeking to make a Christian response to these people, rather than treating them as a "problem" to be solved.

Our Response

- Write to your local member and to the Minister, Scott Morrison, expressing your lament for people seeking asylum in Australia.
- Write to your local Bishop asking him to support the call by the PNG bishops to close Manus Island detention centre.

Direction 62 - What is it?

Direction 62, issued by Minister Scott Morrison before Christmas, affects people who came to Australia by boat, have been found to be refugees and have protection visas.

Any applications they may have made to bring family members to Australia must remain at the bottom of the pile. Since there are very many applications that await scrutiny, the result of this direction is that people who came to Australia by boat cannot be reunited with their family in Australia.

The money, sometimes in the thousands of dollars, they may have spent in applying to sponsor family members, will not be returned to them.

One of the many people affected by this Direction is a young man from Sri Lanka who had to flee for his life from both rebel and government forces. He left his wife and two young children behind. One was born after he left.

Living in a region with a heavy army presence, his wife lives in fear and in poor living conditions. Her health has also been poor and she needs medical care.

While in detention he feared putting her life at risk if he contacted her directly. He was deeply depressed by his separation and inability to help her.

Once given protection he immediately put all his efforts into having his family come to Australia. After being told about Direction 62, he has locked himself in his room.

Andrew Hamilton *Eureka Street* 12/2/14

... and the Cry of the Earth

Religious Leaders Arrested at Maules Creek

When Bill McKibben (350.org) toured Australia last year, he commented that one of the most heartening aspects of the massive civil disobedience to stop the Keystone XL pipeline in the United States was that it wasn't just young people leading it. He saw 'elders acting like elders' and religious leaders, all stepping up to protect the future of their grandchildren and the planet.

We have now seen this here in Australia. Religious leaders - four Uniting Church Ministers, two Priests, one Catholic and one Buddhist, and a number of lay people - made the long trip to Maules Creek in northwest New South Wales to hold a prayer vigil at the gates to Whitehaven Coal's mine construction site.

In calling for the mine to be stopped, they've added their voices

of the traditional owners of the land - the Gomeroi people - who believe their sacred sites in the Leard Forest are being destroyed.

Following the vigil, some of the religious leaders joined locals and supporters to block the entrance to the mine site, turning away trucks and heavy equipment. Several of those religious leaders were then arrested and detained by Police. One of those people was Thea Ormerod, head of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change and grandmother of six. Thea said:

"You may ask how such a group could endorse anything so radical, but this is a well-worn path for people of faith....The movement to wind down coal-mining in Australia may be counter-cultural but it is the truly conservative one. Its aim is to keep the Earth's ecosystems more or less intact



for those who suffer the impact of climate change in developing countries, for our own young people here and for future generations. Not a radical position at all.

Today's events acknowledge that every legitimate avenue to stop the open-cut coal mine near Maules Creek has failed. Even though not one of the 212 submissions from the community supported the mine, the mine has been approved. And with climate policy being slashed by the Government, there comes a time where we have to make personal sacrifices to protect our future. That time has come."

www.350.org.au

Contamination of Aquifer near CSG Project

In March, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that groundwater in the Pilliga Forest, NSW, had been poisoned with uranium, arsenic and other heavy metals, as a result of CSG activities by Santos.

Local farmers Mark and Cherie Robinson demanded a halt to CSG drilling in NSW in the wake of the shocking confirmation of water impacts. On their farm west of the Pilliga, Mark and Cherie are completely dependent on groundwater.

They have both been arrested stopping Santos drill rigs in the Pilliga over the last month - an extraordinary action for two hard-working, law-abiding farmers.

There are fears that drinking-water supplies on the northern rivers could be contaminated by toxic chemicals if coal-seam gas (CSG) production goes ahead.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) took almost a year to issue a \$1,500 fine to energy company Santos over contamination which included uranium at a level 20 times the Australian drinking water guideline for human health. The fine could have been as high as \$1 million.

You can read more at <http://www.stoppilligacoalseamgas.com.au/>

Echonet daily 10/03/14

Galilee Basin at Risk



Photo: Bimblebox Nature Reserve

The Galilee Coal Basin, in the middle of Queensland, is one of the world's largest, untouched coal reserves, and mining barons are desperate to dig it up. In fact, coal companies plan to build nine new mega-mines in the Galilee Coal Basin, five of which would each be larger than any coal mine currently operating in Australia. If the Galilee was unlocked it would more than double Australia's coal exports, almost triple our emissions, trash the Great Barrier Reef and unleash catastrophic climate change.

www.earth-link.org.au www.bimblebox.org

Reconciliation - There are More Bridges to Cross



Towards the end of 2013, ANTaR received news that the Abbott Government intends to cut all funding for a number of organisations servicing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Two of the groups affected are:



National Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services



The **National Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services** program was advised of \$3.6 million in cuts over the next three years. This organisation is dedicated to providing legal and support services to survivors of family violence to keep them safe.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS)

ANTaR has been helping to set up a new National Justice Campaign. This is a coalition of likeminded organisations all calling on a new approach in order to address the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples within our criminal justice system. The **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS)** and law reform and policy officers in state based ATSILS work with governments to address the underlying causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration, through evidenced based policy development, education and diversionary and prevention programs.

Wisdom of Indigenous Peoples

The Aboriginal people, like Indigenous people the world over, teach us how to live in a relationship of intimacy and harmony with the Earth community. (Joan Power pbvm Victoria)

“.....The world is not a problem to be solved; it is a living being to which we belong. The world is part of our own self and we are a part of its suffering wholeness. Until we go to the root of our image of separateness, there can be no healing. And the deepest part of our separateness from creation lies in our forgetfulness of its sacred nature, which is also our own sacred nature.

When our Western monotheistic culture suppressed the many gods and goddesses of creation, cut down the sacred groves and banished God to heaven, we began a cycle that has left us with a world destitute of the sacred, in a way unthinkable to any indigenous people.

The natural world and the people who carry its wisdom know that the created world and all of its many inhabitants are sacred and belong together. Our separation from the natural may have given us the fruits of technology and science, but it has left us bereft of any instinctual connection to the spiritual dimension of life - the connection between our soul and soul of the world, the knowing that we are all part of one living, spiritual being.

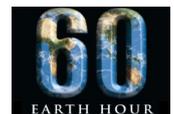
It is this wholeness that is calling to us now, that needs our response. It needs us to return to our own root and rootedness; our relationship to the sacred within creation. Only from the place of sacred wholeness and reverence can we begin the work of healing, of bringing the world back into balance.....”

Spiritual Ecology— The Cry of the Earth edited by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee.

Earth Hour

Saturday 29 March

8.30 - 9.30 pm



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Some suggestions for celebrating Earth Hour:

- Have a quiet night with family, or invite a few friends.
- At 8.30pm, switch off the lights, computer and electric entertainment! Light your candles for an hour of good company and conversation.
- If the sky is clear, look at the stars!

www.earthhour.org.au