



Edmund Rice Centre
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

February 2023 No.84

Dear Friends,

This 84th Edition of ERC Justice Updates, our regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on matters relating to human rights, first nations, refugees and people seeking asylum and environmental justice.

As we begin this year of 2023 the Edmund Rice Centre warmly welcomes our new Director 'Alopi Latukefu and wishes him all the very best in this challenging role. The staff of the Centre are pleased to have you on board as our new leader and are excited to work together with you in the next phase and new endeavours of the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education.

Click [here](#) to download a message from 'Alopi Latukefu

Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world. Desmond Tutu

May we never forget those in this broken world for whom we strive to make things better. One must never lose hope and continue to hold dear to Blessed Edmund Rice's three main tenets: **COMPASSION LIBERATION & PRESENCE**

Please note that if you come up against a paywall in any of the articles below - please contact me at: mmcinerney@edmundrice.org and I will send you the full article.

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

Peace & Blessings

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney

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



The Climate Council and Beyond Blue have recently released a summary of Results from a National Study of the Impact of Climate-Fuelled Disasters on the Mental Health of Australians. The first part of the study was a poll conducted by YouGov with a representative national sample of 2,032 Australians. The second part, conducted in parallel and hereafter referred to as the "community survey" sought to gain some deeper insights from those in disaster-affected communities, and saw 476 self-selected Australians share their personal experience of climate-fuelled disasters.

From the National YouGov poll

- The majority (80%) of Australians reported experiencing some form of disaster at least once since 2019, of which 63% said heatwaves, 47% flooding, 42% bushfires, 36% drought, 29% destructive storms, and 8% landslides.
- People living in rural and regional areas are significantly more likely to have experienced flooding at least once since 2019 (61%) than people living in urban areas (38%). Similarly, country residents were more likely to have been affected by a bushfire at least once (49%)

than people in urban areas (36%).

- People in Queensland and New South Wales are the most likely to have experienced multiple disasters since 2019. Specifically, 38% of Queenslanders and 34% of people in New South Wales reported experiencing flooding more than once since 2019 (compared to 13% in Victoria, 5% in Western Australia, 4% in South Australia, and national average of 24%.)
- More than half (51%) of Australians surveyed are “very (25%) or fairly worried (26%)” about climate change and extreme weather events in Australia.
- Around two in five (42%) are “very or fairly worried” about their community facing further disasters during the current summer.
- People who are “very worried” about climate change and extreme weather events in Australia are more likely to be women (27%, compared to 23% for men), and to be younger (30% for those aged 18 – 34, compared to 22% for those aged 65+).
- More than half (51%) of Australians who experienced climate-fuelled disasters since 2019 say their mental health has been somewhat impacted, of which one-in-five (21%) claim that the disaster they went through has had a “major or moderate impact” on their mental health.

From the community survey

Not surprisingly, level of worry about the current summer was higher among our group of 476 Australians who identified themselves as having recently experienced a climate-fuelled disaster:

- More than half (57%) said they were either “very or extremely worried”. Only 6% said they were not worried.
- When asked if they felt prepared for another disaster, 25% said they felt either unprepared or completely unprepared. Only 11% said they felt prepared.
- Asked more generally about climate change driving more severe and more frequent disasters, half (50%) said they were extremely worried about this. 96% responded that they were either “a little”, “very”, or “extremely” worried, leaving only 4% “not worried at all”.

The variety of impacts reported by those who have experienced a climate-fuelled disaster included:

- 57% experienced feelings of helplessness and despair

- 57% were worried about the safety of their family
- 51% were worried about their personal safety
- 44% reported loss of community facilities and services
- 27% were separated from loved ones
- 25% experienced disruption to their employment
- 11% experienced loss of livelihood
- 7% experienced a physical injury.

Read full summary:

https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/survey-results-climate-disasters-mental-health/?utm_source=Climate+Council+of+Australia&utm_campaign=e0a8d28ae5-2301_Mental_Health_Results_%5BND%5D&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-e0a8d28ae5-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D

Please note: A full report with detailed analysis of the results, case studies, and full recommendations, will be published on 28 February 2023.



Without compassion how can we begin to bear the weight of Australia's great sin?(Supplied: Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation)

As we debate the Indigenous Voice to Parliament there is one word missing: Compassion

Stan Grant, ABC News, 5th February, 2023

"Australians will not be just voting on a Voice, I cannot but think they will be voting on me, on the existence of my people," says Stan Grant.(ABC News)

Compassion. In all of the discussion about the Indigenous Constitutional Voice that is the one word missing. In all of the column inches, in the voices on the airwaves where is compassion?

On Q+A this week we devoted an hour to the many and varied views on the Voice, from no to yes, from sovereignty and treaty to justice and law and

politics, but not once did anyone utter the word compassion.

Without compassion how can we begin to bear the weight of Australia's great sin? How can we begin to move toward healing, truth or forgiveness without first compassion?

Can time heal suffering?

The great German theologian, Johann Metz, characterised this as *memoria passionis*: a remembrance of God that inspires a divine sensitivity to suffering. Metz called into question our ability to see ourselves in each other. We may call it empathy but it demands more than that. It means that we transcend our cultural amnesia.

Modernity itself is built on forgetting. On moving on. Captured in the phrase "time heals all wounds".

As a German, Metz had to confront this after the Holocaust, when he wondered: "Where was God? ... Where was humanity?"

Can time be expected to heal the suffering of Auschwitz?

The "sword of forgetting" and the "shield of amnesia" deadens us to suffering and evil. As Metz wrote, "Yesterday, Auschwitz; today Bosnia and Rwanda; and tomorrow?"

I have the wounds of my family

I have Wiradjuri wounds. I have the hurt of my Kamilaroi and Dharrawal family. First Nations people carry the memory of wounds.

The Voice to Parliament speaks to politics. But there is also a deep ache of the soul. Surely any consideration of justice for Indigenous people begins with compassion for suffering.

Yet sadly, we live in a nation where so many Australians do not even know a First Nations person.

Read full story

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-05/voice-to-parliament-debate-stan-grant-compassion-is-needed/101928250?>



What is the Indigenous voice to parliament and how would it work?

Lorena Allam, The Guardian, 5th December 2023

Explainer: Here's what we know so far about how the Albanese government hopes to enshrine an Indigenous voice in the constitution via a referendum

The Albanese government has put forward a preferred form of words to insert into the constitution to enshrine an Indigenous voice to parliament, which would be voted on in a referendum.

Here's what we know so far.

What has happened already?

The Albanese government has put forward a simple question for us all to vote on.

"We should consider asking our fellow Australians something as simple as: 'Do you support an alteration to the constitution that establishes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice?'" Anthony Albanese said in July during a landmark speech at the Garma festival in Arnhem Land.

He also suggested three sentences be added to the constitution:

- There shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice.
- It may make representations to parliament and the executive government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- The parliament shall, subject to this constitution, have power to make laws with respect to the composition, functions, powers and procedures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice.

The government has promised a public education campaign ahead of the referendum, to answer the most commonly asked questions. But the prime minister and many others have said there is "already an extraordinary level of detail out there from the work that Marcia Langton and Tom Calma did".

What is the voice and how would it work?

The voice would advise the Australian parliament and government on matters relating to the social, spiritual and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

.....

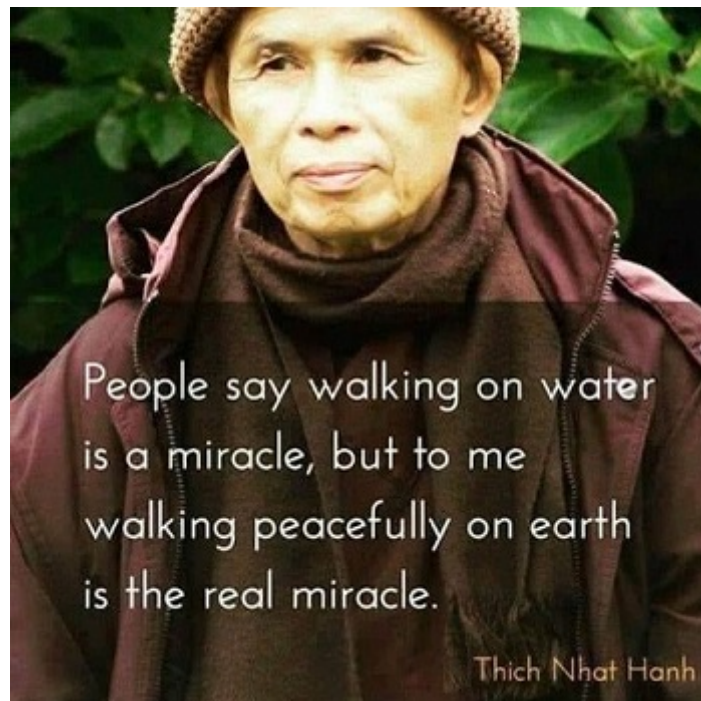
How would it be structured?

The report recommended the national voice have 24 members, with gender balance structurally guaranteed.

The base model proposes two members from each state, the Northern Territory, ACT and Torres Strait. A further five members would represent remote areas due to their unique needs – one member each from the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales. An additional member would represent the significant population of Torres Strait Islanders living on the mainland.

Read full Explainer:

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/dec/05/what-is-the-indigenous-voice-to-parliament-referendum-australia-how-would-it-work-why-should-we-have-it-explainer>



Australia needs a royal commission into immigration detention

Guest authors Michael Dudley & Louise Newman, Pearls & Irritations, February 5th 2023

Australia needs a Royal Commission into its heinous, wasteful, privatised

immigration detention policy. This is imperative in order to uncover immigration detention's secrets, racism and appalling costs, to change public attitudes and to explore humane alternatives.

Australian immigration detention's 30-year anniversary largely passed last year without comment. Successive Governments have denied responsibility, facts and wrongdoing, while immigration detention policy continues to dominate both major parties.

Although Australia's Albanese Government has been moving from temporary to permanent protection visas, its 2022-23 budget offshore boosted detention expenditure from \$150 million to a massive \$632.5 million – despite no-one being processed offshore from 2014. (Manus Island Regional Processing Centre (RPC) closed in October 2017, and monthly departmental bulletins confirm Nauru RPC has been empty since March 2019). The Government has given the lucrative Nauru contract to a US prisons operator with a controversial human rights record.

Onshore detention funding is an astounding \$1.3 billion in 2022-23 and over one billion yearly thereafter. Meanwhile Australia's supports of asylum-seekers' social, medical, legal and educational needs are still lacking as they languish for indefinite periods, and its combined asylum-seeker and humanitarian resettlement intake is sparing (per capita and relative to GDP) compared to low-income recipient countries. The future of its 'Legacy [never-to-be-resettled-in-Australia] Caseload' is unclear. *These decisions deserve sustained scrutiny.*

.....

A Royal Commission is crucial for naming the torture, cruelty, shocking harms and costs of privatised immigration detention, for destroying its social licence, and for decommissioning the policy's racist, fear-mongering and stigmatising practices. A Royal Commission's powers can uncover hidden truths and offer recognition for silenced voices, foreshadowing reconciliation, apology and reparation and identifying humane alternatives. It could potentially reveal new approaches to what Australians and asylum-seekers can offer each other. Can we remember our one-time generosity and restore such lost connections?

Can we afford to not try?

Read full story:

<https://johnmenadue.com/australia-needs-a-royal-commission-into-immigration-detention/>



The progress for Afghan women that was achieved over the previous two decades has been wiped away by the Taliban in just two years. (Ahmad Sahel Arman / AFP via Getty Images)

Since the Taliban takeover, Afghan women have been starving for knowledge — and they're losing hope

Simin Haidary, ABC Religion & Ethics, 1st February, 2023

On 20 December 2022, 450 days after banning girls from going to high school, the Taliban Ministry of Education banned Afghan women from attending university as well.

When I heard this, I remembered the day I took the Kankor, the university entry exam, at Kabul University. It was the first time I had encountered such a large number of students — boys and girls — whose faces were illuminated with hope. It was a cohort of students keen to participate in the development of the country; they were full of dreams to make Afghanistan both more prosperous and more equal.

I recorded the scene in my mind as a reminder to keep that hope alive as I took my place among this new generation.

The palpable sense of enthusiasm at Kabul University had always been a symbol of hope and progress for Afghanistan. Unfortunately, with every passing day since the Taliban ascended to power, that we can feel that enthusiasm wane. Students are losing hope. And no wonder. It's hard to mention "our dreams" when our fellow citizens are struggling just to survive. It's hard to look to the future when we see the despondent look in the eyes of young Afghan women whose hopes of pursuing an education have been wrenched away.

Where is the justice in denying the aspirations of almost half of a country's population? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that education is a fundamental human right. Likewise, the Islamic tradition has always invited

Muslims to read and learn — in fact, the first command given to the Prophet Mohammad was “Aqra” (“Read!”). Thus, according to Qur’ān, a Muslim’s first duty is to read.

The Prophet Mohammad, moreover, has said that “seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim” (Sunan Ibn Majah 224), and the Qur’ān praises the virtue of the desire to learn — to be “starving for knowledge” (2:30–33). The Qur’ān thus has an expansive concept of education and stresses the importance of autonomy. Allah has given us the freedom to live our lives the way we choose; as the Qur’ān states, there is no compulsion in religion (2:256). Allah has given us the right to “accept” or “deny”.

Read full story:

https://www.abc.net.au/religion/afghan-women-are-being-denied-an-education-and-hope-for-the-futu/101917440?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=abc_specialist_religion_sfmc_20230206&utm_term=&utm_id=2015879&sfmc_id=132400292



The Greens say asylum seekers remaining in Nauru and Papua New Guinea should be brought to Australia until they can be safely resettled. (AAP: Department of Immigration)

Greens push for immediate evacuation of remaining asylum seekers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea

Jake Evans, ABC News, 6th February 2023

The Greens will use the first day of parliament to introduce a bill that would offer immediate evacuation to asylum seekers and refugees who remain in Nauru and Papua New Guinea.

Key points:

- The Greens will introduce a bill offering temporary resettlement for about 150 asylum seekers
- They say the government could support the bill without compromising on

its immigration policy

- The move comes ahead of a visit by refugee Behrouz Boochani to parliament this week

The bill would offer roughly 150 people who are still in Nauru and PNG to temporarily live in the community in Australia until they are resettled to a third country, as long as there have been no adverse security assessments made against them.

Those who are evacuated would also be provided with medical assessments and treatment as needed.

Greens senator Nick McKim said the bill had been written specifically to be consistent with Labor's immigration platform.

"We've designed this bill specifically to be in line with Labor's policy so they can support it, and in doing that we're trying to avoid the toxicity that has dominated refugee politics in Australia over the last decade," Senator McKim said.

"The last ten years has been one of the darkest and most bloody chapters in our country's story and it's time we wrote the ending to it."

Read full story:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-06/greens-push-for-remaining-asylum-seekers-to-come-to-australia/101933020>





Lavenia McGoon (right) stands behind a makeshift seawall of old rubber car tyres to prevent erosion. (AFP: Saeed Khan)

Lavenia McGoon (right) stands behind a makeshift seawall of old rubber car tyres to prevent erosion. (AFP: Saeed Khan)

Graves sink, fisheries shrink and relocation looms as climate change hits Fiji

www.abc.net.au/news, 16th January 2023

The sea has already swallowed the village graveyard in Togoru, Fiji, and long-time resident Lavenia McGoon is dreading the day it claims her house.

She piles old rubber car tyres under the coconut trees that line the beachfront, hoping this makeshift seawall will at least buy some time.

The 70-year-old believes climate change, and the creeping ocean, will inevitably force her family to leave.

"Nobody can stop it," she tells AFP, as the tide sweeps in and crabs scuttle over the headstones.

"Nobody can stop water."

Togoru is a small settlement on the south coast of Fiji's largest island, Viti Levu.

It is one of dozens of coastal villages in the Pacific archipelago now confronting the reality of climate change.

McGoon, called "Big Nana" by locals, has spent almost 60 years here — living on the shoreline in a basic wooden house without power or running water.

"We used to have a plantation right in front," McGoon says, pointing towards the sea.

"After 20 to 30 years we have lost almost 55 metres of land."

About 200 people were once buried in the Togoru graveyard, but McGoon says most of the remains have since been moved inland.

For now she refuses to follow, clinging on to her small piece of paradise.

"Relocation to me at this age, it's a bit too ... sickening," she says.

Read full story:

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-01-16/graves-sink-fisheries-shrink-as-climate-change-hits-fiji/101855748?fbclid=IwAR1on2u4Z9Uqs6YQ_v6K6nCv6ZIBxX7w5AkTZSXWEfuB1IEuGc1Ip2yMCw4



An orange orchard near Leeton NSW (Image: AAP/Lukas Coch)

Australia must walk the talk on fruit-picking visas for our Pacific family

Michael Rose, Crikey, 30th January 2023

Backpackers get a pretty good run — some basic rules and they're right to go — but not so for Pacific Islanders on the PALM scheme.

For a few years as an anthropologist at the Australian National University, I found myself a job trying to make sense of the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. Writing on it could be fraught.

On my feeds, conspiratorial screeds from people convinced the scheme was some kind of slave trading racket sat uneasily alongside corporate schmaltz claiming all was well.

The reality was far more complicated.

To be fair, Australia does have a dark and continuing history of slave labour, including from the Pacific, but that is not what PALM is.

Fruit-pickers today are largely young and foreign, here seeking money and a way to see the world. There are two main types. “Backpackers” (popularly imagined as happy-go-lucky Europeans between music festivals but these days hailing from more than 40 countries) and workers from the Pacific under the PALM scheme.

Backpackers have a pretty free go of it. They need to speak English, have health insurance, \$5000 in the bank and some tertiary education. Once in Australia, aside from needing to annually clock up a certain number of days in agriculture or another essential industry to have their visas renewed, they can do more or less as they please.

PALM is more restrictive. Businesses in regional Australia can apply to be an “approved employer”, which gives them the right to employ workers from one of nine Pacific countries and Timor-Leste. Accommodation and transport are

provided, albeit partially at the worker's expense. Once here, workers cannot freely work elsewhere.

Some workers stay in Australia for up to four years, but most are shorter term (typically six to nine months). There are now more than 19,000.

On the job, in theory, PALM pickers have the same conditions and pay as any Australian. Rumours that they are officially forbidden from joining unions or paid less than Australians are not true. They are also supposed to have access to options for pastoral care and mechanisms for addressing grievances.

.....

There are two main issues. One is that PALM workers are subject to these conditions while their backpacker colleagues are not. It's patronising, at best. The other is that if the PALM system isn't working (or is being abused) this lack of freedom puts workers under it in a difficult position.

Read full story:

https://www.crikey.com.au/2023/01/30/pacific-islanders-visas-australia-fruit-picking/?utm_campaign=Daily&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter



Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby (R) with Rt. Rev. Iain Greenshields aboard the papal plane (VATICAN MEDIA Divisione Foto)

Archbishop Welby: 'Our pilgrimage together is a sign for the world'

Andrea Tornielli, Vatican News, 6th February 2023

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, shares his thoughts at the end of the ecumenical pilgrimage with Pope Francis to South Sudan, and says Christians have grown accustomed to living apart, but it is rather the norm for the Church to work as one.

"We need constantly to be reminded, and I hope this trip reminds people that the normal is for the Church to work as one."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, shared that consideration with Vatican News while still aboard the return flight to Rome from Juba.

Following a joint press conference, Archbishop Welby granted the following interview about the ecumenical pilgrimage of peace which he carried out with Pope Francis and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Rt. Rev. Iain Greenshields.

Q: Archbishop Welby, what are your impressions at the end of this visit to South Sudan, a pilgrimage made together with the Pope and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to foster peace and reconciliation in a country battered by civil war and poverty?

I think the trip comes with an effect at the local [level] South Sudan, which I'll come back to, and an effect at the global. The fact that these three religious leaders have gone together for the first time ever, certainly since the Reformation, before which two of our Churches did not exist, is a sign of hope for peace and reconciliation around the world.

.....

And in South Sudan, my cry and prayer is for the human hearts of the leadership to be changed. When I was speaking out there the last couple of days, you could hear the shouts from the crowd when any of us mentioned peace, the security of women, and the need for an end to corruption. The people of South Sudan are calling for peace. The leaders must give it.

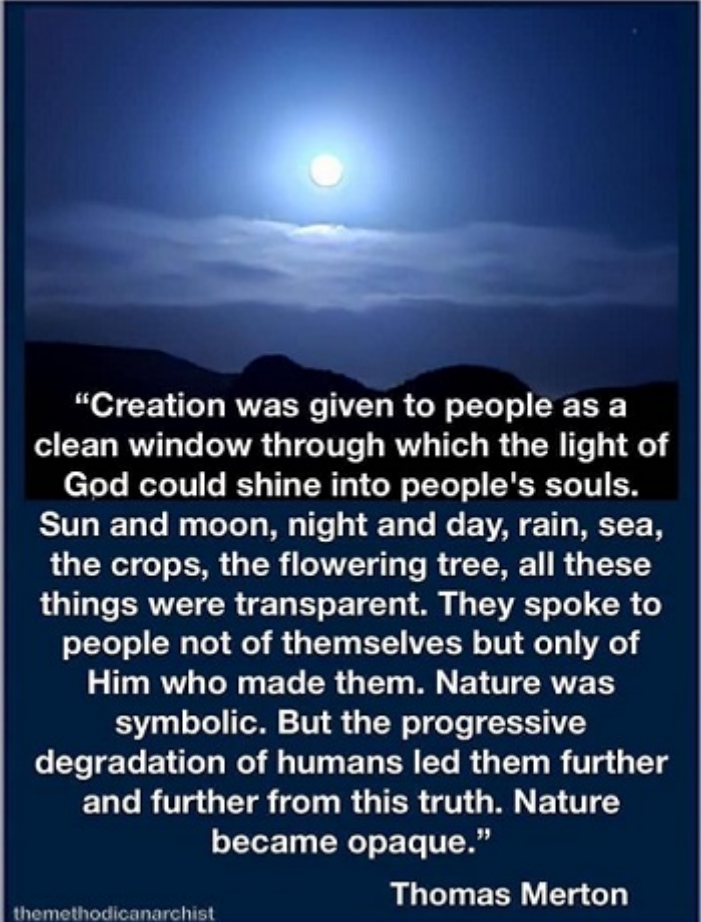
Read full story:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-02/pope-francis-south-sudan-interview-justin-welby.html?fbclid=IwAR10IldN8ZppAHHwfO0fpU3JCjFrfo1UzjpeeSC53cm6OsPINI-FFbyzZeY>

Link Pope Francis speech in South Sudan

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/february/documents/20230203-autorita-sudsudan.html>

REFLECTIONS



"Creation was given to people as a clean window through which the light of God could shine into people's souls. Sun and moon, night and day, rain, sea, the crops, the flowering tree, all these things were transparent. They spoke to people not of themselves but only of Him who made them. Nature was symbolic. But the progressive degradation of humans led them further and further from this truth. Nature became opaque."

Thomas Merton

thethodicanarchist



The image of the child musician crying was classified as one of the most emotional photographs of modern history.

This photo was taken of a 12-year-old Brazilian boy (Diego Frazzo Turkato), playing the violin at the funeral of his teacher who rescued him from the environment of poverty and crime in which he lived.

***In this image, humanity speaks with the strongest voice in the world:
"Cultivate love and kindness in a child to sow the seeds of compassion.
And only then you will build a great civilization, a great nation ".***

(Photographer: Marcos Tristao)



Pace - e - Bene Nonviolence Inspirations

“Close both eyes, see with the other one. Then we are no longer saddled by the burden of our persistent judgments, our ceaseless withholding our constant exclusion. Our sphere has widened and we find ourselves quite unexpectedly in a new expansive location in a place of endless acceptance and infinite love.” Fr. Gregory Boyle

“Mindful awareness can bring into consciousness those hidden, past-based perspectives so that they no longer frame our worldview. Choice begins the moment you disidentify from the mind and its conditioned patterns, the moment you become present. Until you reach that point, you are unconscious. . . . In present awareness we are liberated from the past.” Dr. Gabor Maté

“We need a new spirituality for a global awareness and we need a new way of acting in this polluted world. We have to say no to violence, war, and environmental destruction. We have to end our exploitation and domination of the earth and the poor. At the same time, we have to say yes to life, solidarity, conservation, dialogue and self-determination.”

Louie Vitale, OFM

“How can justice be attained when, in the expiation of an old wrong, another wrong is to be committed? No reasonable creature would conceive of the idea of obliterating ink stains with ink, or spots of oil with oil. (How can) blood be washed out with blood?” Bertha von Suttner

“We have to do small things and believe a big difference is coming. It’s like the miraculous drops of water that seep through mountain limestone.

They gather themselves into springs that flow into creeks that merge into rivers that find their way to oceans. Our work is to envision the drops as oceans. We do our small parts and know a powerful ocean of love and compassion is downstream. Each small gesture can lead to liberation. The bravest thing we can do in this world is not cling to old ideas or fear of judgment, but step out and just do something for love's sake."

Richard Rohr



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:

|HTML:LIST_ADDRESS_HTML| *|END:IF|*