



Edmund Rice Centre

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

March 2023 No.87

Dear Friends,

This 87th 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.

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**

The most valuable possession you can own is an open heart. The most powerful weapon you can be is an instrument of peace. Carlos Santana

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.



Directors Notes

Firstly, it was a pleasure to meet and catch up for a coffee with our Justice through the Arts Ambassador Melina Marchetta with Marisa Brattoni from the team. Melina who is not only an author of renown (Looking for Alibrandi), but is also a scriptwriter, librarian and podcaster! We very much look forward to doing more with Melina over the coming year.

A very important announcement was made by Prime Minister Albanese, Minister Burney along with others announcing the question for the referendum on the voice and the changes to the constitution. The Edmund Rice Centre as one of many organisations who are #alliesforUluru [have stated our support](#) for the establishment of the Voice, recognition of our First Nations people in the constitution and the full implementation of the Uluru Statement of the Heart including Voice, Truth, Treaty. We will along with the others involved in the Allies for Uluru utilise our networks including the Aboriginal Awareness Group to mobilise the response with those eager to see the 'Yes' vote to the referendum carried later this year.

It's expected the Commonwealth Government will take forward its legislation around the Safeguards Mechanism to a vote in the next week or so. We hold strong concerns that the proposed safeguards mechanism will not do anywhere near enough to avoid the catastrophic climate impacts that many of those we work with through the Pacific Calling Partnership face in coming

years. I recently published an op ed around the issues in the Canberra Times which you can [read here](#).

Finally, we look forward to hosting a range of workshops in collaboration with DLA Piper for those we work with through our Refugees and People Seeking Asylum programs under the title 'Know Your Rights'. These will be initially held at the St Patrick's Cathedral meeting room at 1 Marist Place, Parramatta on the 12 April, 19 April and 26 April. The workshops will cover a range of topics including 'Australia's Legal and Government System'; 'Police and Your Rights'; and 'Tenancy and your Rights'.

'Alopi Latukefu
Director

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MEDIA RELEASE

A liveable future and a liveable Pacific means no new fossil fuels, says UN report

With today's release by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of its latest report (and its last report for several years to come), the world's science community has made itself very clear: to secure a liveable planet we must take bold and swift action that reduces emissions and we must stop digging up new fossil fuels. This has direct implications for the Federal Government's proposed Safeguard Mechanism legislation being debated in Parliament.

Edmund Rice Centre (ERC) Director 'Alopi Latukefu said: "Rather than pursuing quixotic and compromised carbon offset measures we need Prime Minister Albanese and his Government to act now by stopping all new coal and gas projects; identifying ways of prioritising genuine emissions reduction by polluting companies; and limiting use of carbon offsets to meet the

emission intensity cap set by the proposed Safeguard Mechanism."

Current policies across the world are projected to lead to 2.7°C or more global warming by 2100, and net-zero climate commitments would still produce warming of around 2.2°C. This scenario would be catastrophic for Australia and across the Pacific. It would also mean the disappearance of small Pacific island nations such as Kiribati and Tuvalu, with others facing major challenges to cope with worsening climate impacts. In turn, this could lead to significant population movements and major destabilisation of the region.

ERC Pacific Outreach Officer Maria Tiimon Chi-Fang said: As one of the largest exporters of coal and gas in the world, Australia is fuelling the climate catastrophe which my home country of Kiribati faces. The latest IPCC report is very clear in making the link between fossil fuels and catastrophic climate change. The Pacific region needs Australia to stand shoulder to shoulder with us and take urgent, decisive and ambitious policies to ensure our survival."

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Port Vila, Vanuatu, after being hit by two cyclones in as many days. Photograph: Jean-Baptiste Jeangene Vilmer/French

Embassy Vanuatu/AFP/Getty Images

As Pacific islanders, we bear the brunt of the climate crisis. The time to end fossil fuel dependence is now

Ralph Regenvanu and Seve Paeniu, The Guardian, March 21st 2023

Today's IPCC report has given a 'final warning' to avert global catastrophe. We call on all world leaders to urgently transition to renewables

The cycle is repeating itself. A tropical cyclone of frightening strength strikes a Pacific island nation, and leaves a horrifying trail of destruction and lost lives and livelihoods in its wake. Earlier this month in Vanuatu it was two category 4 cyclones within 48 hours of each other. The people affected wake up having nowhere to go and lack the basic necessities to survive. International media publishes grim pictures of the damage to our infrastructure and people's homes, quickly followed by an outpouring of thoughts, prayers and praise for our courage and resilience. We then set out to rebuild our countries.

The Pacific island countries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and Vanuatu is the most vulnerable country in the world according to a recent study. Our countries emit minuscule amounts of greenhouse gases, but bear the brunt of extreme events primarily caused by the carbon emissions of major polluters, and the world's failure to break its addiction to fossil fuels.

The science is clear: fossil fuels are the main drivers of the climate crisis and need to be phased out rapidly, as the new Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report once again confirms. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has shown that ending the expansion of all fossil fuel production is an urgent first step towards limiting warming to 1.5C.

The climate crisis is driven by the greed of an exploitative industry and its enablers. It is unacceptable that countries and companies are still planning to produce more than double the amount of fossil fuels that the world can withstand by 2030 if we are to limit warming to 1.5C, a limit Pacific countries fought hard to secure in the Paris agreement. As the UN secretary-general António Guterres has repeatedly declared, fossil fuels are a dead end. Governments must pursue a rapid and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels.

Countries cannot continue to justify new fossil fuel projects on the grounds of development, or the energy crisis. It is our reliance on fossil fuels that has left our energy infrastructure vulnerable to conflict and devastating climate impacts, left billions of people without energy access, and left investment in more flexible and resilient clean energy systems lagging behind what is needed.

Read full article:



Mr Greg Ugle. Photo credit: Hazel Johnson.

Silenced too long, it is time for our Voice to be heard

Greg Ugle, National Indigenous Times, March 20th 2023

My name is Greg Ugle. I became a number when I was 10 years old.

My number was 514/65 after I was convicted in the children's court of Bencubbin of being a neglected child. I was stolen from my family and imprisoned in Australian Welfare.

My mum, Elizabeth Mary Ugle, was a number (203/29) and my dad, John Jackamarra, was a number too (640/26).

My number followed me as I grew up in the mission. My identify was tied to it and it told everyone what they wanted to know about me. When I was evicted at 18 years old, I left with nothing except my number and a broken heart.

Numbering of people like me and my family has been used to manage "the Aboriginal problem" since non-Aboriginal people came here. When A.O. Neville was appointed to "protect" us in 1915, people like me were given numbers and locked up in institutions like missions, Christian Brothers, children's homes and jails. They said it was for our own good.

Between 1927 and 1954, we needed another number, recorded in a Native Pass, to work and enter Perth and regional towns. These passes gave assurance that you had given up your Aboriginal culture and language.

In exchange for your Aboriginal voice, they allowed a small taste of life enjoyed by other Australians. We could work and buy food in shops but we could not get too comfortable. Even with a pass, you would be arrested in Perth

after 6pm. There are stories of working men detained at 6:01pm whilst waiting to buy dinner.

By the time I was stolen in 1965, Aboriginal identity was linked to the institutions we were locked up in. Our numbers were registered in government systems from here in Perth all the way to Canberra. Our number was the only way we were recognised as part of Australia, part of the system. We were a statistic, a number to be referenced, and numbers don't have voices.

.....

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Why should that voice be there? Because in all this time and with all this talk, no government has “closed the gap”.

In almost 200 years, we still talk about closing the gap, and if we continue the same way, we will be talking about it in another 200 years. The gap will never be closed until an Aboriginal voice joins the conversation.

The Stolen Generation need to be part of the discussion about Aboriginal communities and families so it never happens again. We are now old people and we need your help to give us our voice back whilst we are still here.

Next year, when the voice referendum happens, I will be 70 years old. I have lived through the historical silence of Aboriginal people and I have survived in our country with no land rights and no voice.

I was stolen at 10 years, I was recognised as a person same as you when I was 12 years and I hope that when I am 70 years, I will finally be given a voice. To my fellow Australians, I ask for your help. Please stand with us again.

Greg Ugle is a Whadjuk Bibbulmun Noongar and a member of the Whadjuk Regional Aboriginal Corporation Cultural Advisory Committee

Read full article:

https://nit.com.au/20-03-2023/5343/silenced-too-long-it-is-time-for-our-voice-to-be-heard?fbclid=IwAR1QMAhLwt4c8XKIESGvJ8_vbrc2UKU0-OBptyJTTmAvdx5grleYk7hsDtM



Iraqi refugee Mohammed Al-Bdairi remains in immigration detention despite an order from the AAT to set aside his visa cancellation at the end of 2022. Photograph: Supplied

'I need my freedom': Mohammed Al-Bdairi should be at the birth of his child – but he remains in detention

Ben Doherty, The Guardian, 18th March 2023

The Iraqi refugee's visa was cancelled in 2019 but the Administrative Appeals Tribunal overturned the ruling in December

In the final days of last year, Mohammed Al-Bdairi won what he believed was

a life-changing victory, one that would allow him to be home for the birth of his child.

On 27 December, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) ruled that the cancellation of Al-Bdairi's bridging visa should be set aside, effectively restoring his right to live in the Australian community.

But more than two-and-a-half months since the tribunal's decision, Mohammed Al-Bdairi remains in detention.

His child will be born within days.

"I need my freedom," Al-Bdairi told Guardian Australia from immigration detention. "That's all I want. I need to be with my family, they need me to be with them."

Al-Bdairi drove trucks for Nato forces across Iraq for nearly a decade from the time he was a teenager. He witnessed "violent deaths and the aftermath of bombings" in the course of his job, the AAT heard, and was shot in the ankle as violence steadily worsened across the country.

In 2013, he fled his homeland after a series of threats was made against him and his family by a fundamentalist Islamist group, angered by his cooperation with western powers. He and a brother fled through Iran to Indonesia, and ultimately, Australia, arriving by boat in late 2013, before they were removed to Manus Island.

Al-Bdairi's brother returned to Iraq in 2014 after his son was killed by a car bomb. He was shot and wounded and fled to Turkey where he now lives. Another brother was also killed by a militia group in the same year.

Al-Bdairi was held in the Manus Island detention centre. The AAT heard "he was the victim of assaults by officers, along with his prolonged hunger strike where he lost 30kg of weight".

"This was against a backdrop of witnessing suicides and self-harming incidents in the detention centre," the tribunal heard.

Read full story:

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/mar/18/i-need-my-freedom-mohammed-al-bdairi-should-be-at-the-birth-of-his-child-but-he-remains-in-detention?utm_term=64150d1c6821d22531a6545312eb7b58&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email



The ongoing violence endured by the Tamil the community should provoke us to take seriously the voices of refugees in the way we design and implement immigration policy. (Greg Wood / AFP via Getty Images)

“Our survival is conditional”: The trauma of Tamil refugees amid their struggle for a place of safety

Neeraja Sanmuhathan and Niro Kandasamy, ABC Religion & Ethics, 7th March 2023

One of the best known, and most powerful, poems of British Somali poet Warsan Shire is called “Home”. In it, Shire foregrounds the voices and perspectives of asylum seekers in order to convey some sense of what would make a person choose to abandon their traditional homelands and livelihoods, their neighbourhoods and neighbours, and embark on perilous journeys across vast lands and seas in search of safety and freedom. She writes:

*you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.*

In fact, Shire says, the choice to flee is no choice at all:

*you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.*

When we fail to hear the voices of refugees — the way Shire permits us to hear them — “persecution” is just a word, and refugees’ desperation is permitted to devolve into something closer to aspiration.

What would it mean, then, to take seriously the voices of refugees in the way

we design and implement immigration policy?

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What would it mean, then, to take seriously the voices of refugees in the way we design and implement immigration policy?

On 12 February, the Australian government granted permanent visas to approximately 20,000 refugees who were on temporary visas. Although this is a welcome move, granting permanent protection where appropriate is less about charity or compassion, and more about fulfilling Australia’s legal obligations. For while Australia is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol — thereby extending its offer of protection to those fleeing persecution beyond Europe’s borders — there have been a number of troubling instances during the last three decades where those international obligations were ignored or outright rejected.

Even Australia’s use of temporary visas was in defiance of international law, which states that temporary protection should only be used in exceptional circumstances where mass movements of asylum seekers limit individual refugee status determinations. In Australia, however, temporary visas were introduced in order to deter asylum seekers by restricting family sponsorships, travel overseas, and permanent residency. They also contribute to greater difficulties in securing employment, to say nothing of their adverse effect on the mental health of refugees themselves.

A 2019 study published in the European Journal of Psychotraumatology Studies found that refugees with insecure visas — such as bridging visas or temporary residency visas — suffer from significantly greater Post Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms, depression symptoms, and suicidal intent compared to those with secure visas.

Read full story:

<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/trauma-of-tamil-refugees-and-the-struggle-for-safety/102061982>

To be kind
is more
important than
to be right.
Many times
what people
need is not a
brilliant mind that
speaks but
a special heart
that listens.



Image: Nathan Dumlao/Unsplash

A reflection for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ, Catholic Outlook, 21st March 2023

In recent years, we have become much more sensitive to the extent of discrimination in our society. We have come to see more clearly how easily we

can take it for granted and fail to notice it. People who are discriminated against have found a voice and called us out when we tolerate wounding and scornful ways of speaking and behaving.

Today's celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination may seem more urgent now after the protests of the Black Lives Matter movement against police discrimination and the routine killings of Black citizens in the United States. These were followed by similar movements in Australia. These showed how common and routine are racist attitudes. More recently, other groups of people have protested against the discrimination and brutal treatment of people who are homosexual or have changed gender. They have also allowed us to see from inside how hurtful and debilitating discrimination is.

Racial discrimination is unjustifiable because it is built on a shallow and dangerous understanding of what it means to be human. It assumes that the most important and defining quality of people is their race. From that belief follows the conclusion that race controls the way in which people should be treated. In reality, although racial identity is an important aspect of human lives, each person is uniquely precious simply because they are human. Because we share a common humanity, we are all entitled to equal respect. We should not privilege one group over others on the grounds of race, wealth, gender religion or political allegiances.

In Australia, many people complain of meeting different kinds of prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives. Some are abused and discriminated against on the grounds of their race, others on the grounds of their religion, their political views or their gender. Because people who are marginalised are the most discriminated against, we at Jesuit Social Services have the privilege of accompanying people who suffer discrimination in all these forms.

In any society, discrimination against minority groups in society displays a lack of respect for the humanity of the people who are discriminated against. Societies often need laws against racial; and other forms of discrimination. But such laws cannot create respect. Respect is the business of the whole community. That is why we have a World Day to remind us of this call.

Link to Reflection:

<https://catholicoutlook.org/a-reflection-for-the-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-racial-discrimination-2/>

REFLECTIONS



Love that is real,
love that engages the soul,
is a glimpse into the eternal love of God
—Joan Chittister



Image ~ the rising of stardust!

Jamberoo Abbey Facebook Post 23rd March 2023

Dust is always a familiar companion in Lent. This tender poem reminds us of all the possibilities of the dust within as well as a few wild thrums and hums...enjoy!

Belonging

*And if it's true we are alone,
we are alone together,
the way blades of grass
are alone, but exist as a field.
Sometimes I feel it,
the green fuse that ignites us,
the wild thrum that unites us,*

*an inner hum that reminds us
of our shared humanity.
Just as thirty-five trillion
red blood cells join in one body
to become one blood.
Just as one hundred thirty-six thousand
notes make up one symphony.
Alone as we are, our small voices
weave into the one big conversation.
Our actions are essential
to the one infinite story of what it is
to be alive. When we feel alone,
we belong to the grand communion
of those who sometimes feel alone—
we are the dust, the dust that hopes,
a rising of dust, a thrill of dust,
the dust that dances in the light
with all other dust, the dust
that makes the world.*
~ Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer



Pace - e - Bene Nonviolence Inspirations

“One of the amazing things about being human is that we find what we are looking for. When we look for hate, we find it. When we look for love, we find that. This crafts the lens that we have. The stories that we believe create our reality. If we’re not terrified of one another, there’s nothing that we can’t do.” Arno Michaelis, reflecting on his journey leaving his white

supremacist activities and mindset behind

“Suppressing a culture is violence. Neglecting school children is violence. Punishing a mother and her family is violence. Discrimination against a working man is violence. Ghetto housing is violence. Ignoring medical need is violence. Contempt for poverty is violence.” Coretta Scott King

“If you want to end the war then instead of sending guns, send books. Instead of sending tanks, send pens. Instead of sending soldiers, send teachers.” Malala Yousafzai

“Every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil.”

Pope Francis, “Fratelli Tutti” encyclical

“The secret of happiness, you see, is not found in seeking more, but in developing the capacity to enjoy less.” Socrates



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.