



**Edmund Rice Centre**

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

## **ERC JUSTICE UPDATES**

**June 2023 No.92**

Dear Friends,

This 92nd Edition of ERCJCE 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](mailto: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.**



Illustration: Andrew Dyson.

## **The real referendum question is ‘How smart do I want my country to be?’**

***Jack Manning Bancroft, The Sydney Morning Herald, 30th May 2023***

On Monday morning, as I dropped our little girl off to preschool in Bulli on the NSW south coast, the teacher was addressing the kids holding my mum’s book – *The Art in Country*. It’s Reconciliation Week, and the teacher was reflecting on Indigenous Australia.

She asked whether I could say a few words. “Oh, maybe,” I replied. (I am wary of moments when I open my heart to the vortex of emotions and lives to which I’m connected). I went inside with our daughter Pemau, who is named after her great-great-great-great-grandmother, one of a handful of survivors of a massacre on our country. Both my daughter and her ancestral namesake, at different times, have carried on with them, via a single strand, our connection to the longest continuous intelligence lab on Earth.

As we packed Pemau’s purple backpack away she whispered to me, “Dad, are you going to say something?”

“Do you want me to?”

She nodded and breathed out the words, “Can I stand with you?”

Outside, I took the book and spoke with the children about the strength of Pemau’s barbin (grandma in Bundjalung). I spoke about how our systems connect us to the stars, the lava below our feet, the trees. One of the kids said, “Aboriginal people are genius”. And there it is. That’s the question we face on Earth right now: Will we find the intelligence needed to navigate the maps of the

next century and beyond?

When we look to a vote on the Voice, try to reframe the question from “what do they get?” to “how smart do I want my country to be?”

**Read full story:**

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/the-real-referendum-question-is-how-smart-do-i-want-my-country-to-be-20230529-p5dc62.html>



Inagie Manas has been working hard to get her community enrolled to vote Source: NITV / Keira Jenkins

## **Meet the women driving up enrolment in their communities ahead of the referendum**

***The Point, NITV, 29th May 2023***

***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have long been underrepresented on the electoral roll, but with a referendum slated for later this year there's a push to drive voter numbers up.***

In the remote community of Seisia in Queensland's Northern Peninsula Area (NPA), Inagie Manas is working to get everyone she knows on the electoral roll. She is particularly focused on young people.

"When I see an individual that I think is old enough, I just walk up to them and ask if they've been enrolled for the Australian Electoral Commission," she said. "Then if they haven't, I get them to sign up. Sometimes they're a bit shy and they don't want to, but I just tell them it's OK."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment rates have increased across the country in recent times, with an extra 21,000 people signing up to vote in the second half of last year.

This brought the First Nations enrolment rate up to 84.5 per cent.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has said it was the biggest increase since 2017, but with the total enrolment rate across the country sitting

at 97 per cent, there's still plenty of work to be done .So far Ms Manas has signed up seven young people in her small community.

She's one of four young women doing this work across the NPA communities of Bamaga, Seisia, Umagico, New Mapoon and Injinoo. "I feel happy that we have more people enrolling to vote in my community and the NPA," she said. "I hope they encourage more young people to enrol. It's so important to hear our voice in our community."

AEC deputy electoral commissioner Jeff Pope said he hopes to get the rate of Indigenous enrolment up into the 90th percentile before the referendum, which is expected later this year.

"NSW and I think Tasmania are already there but we've got a fair bit of work to do in some of the other states," he said.

***"This is our absolute priority and we're not going to rest until we close that gap."***

**Read full story:**

[https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/the-point/article/meet-the-women-making-sure-their-communities-are-enrolled-before-the-referendum/7g5s6ru4m?dlb=%5b2023/05/29%5d%20del\\_newspm\\_bau&did=DM25050&cid=sbsnews:edm:acnewspm:relation:news:na:na](https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/the-point/article/meet-the-women-making-sure-their-communities-are-enrolled-before-the-referendum/7g5s6ru4m?dlb=%5b2023/05/29%5d%20del_newspm_bau&did=DM25050&cid=sbsnews:edm:acnewspm:relation:news:na:na)



**The Herald has a proud history of telling Australia's story. But on Myall Creek, we failed dismally**

**Editorial Sydney Morning Herald, 9th June 2023**

***Truth is an essential force for reconciliation and, on the 185th anniversary of the Myall Creek massacre, we offer an apology for our historical coverage.***

**[\(See all six stories\)](#)**

As late afternoon light settled across Myall Creek Station in northern NSW on June 10, 1838, a cloud of red dust appeared on the horizon as 11 stockmen rode over a hill and headed towards a group of women, children and elderly men known as the Wirrayaraay, a tribal clan of the Kamilaroi nation.

The clan sought protection in a hut occupied by two station employees, George Anderson and Charles Kilmeister, whom they had come to know and get along with. But the gang burst into the hut and used a rope to tie the Wirrayaraay together by their hands and lead them away. Under the threat of violence, Kilmeister betrayed the Wirrayaraay and assisted the stockmen. Anderson refused and would later give evidence in court about what was about to unfold.

The Wirrayaraay were marched away to a gully, where the stockmen slaughtered them in cold blood. Some were slashed or decapitated by swords and others trampled to death by horses. The 28 mangled bodies were thrown in a pile and burnt in an attempt to destroy any evidence of one of Australia's worst massacres. In a final act of depravity, the men kept one Indigenous woman to rape over the coming days.

This was not the first massacre in the so-called Frontier Wars and it would not be the last; the indiscriminate killing of First Nations people would continue for nearly a century after Myall Creek. But the events of 1838 can only be retold in detail today because the massacre was the first – and only – time in Australia when colonists were arrested, charged and prosecuted for the mass killing of Aboriginal people. So many other atrocities faded into nothingness, casualties of a culture of silence that has left us with an incomplete picture of our national story.

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While the damage had already been done, thankfully the Herald's attitude towards Indigenous Australians shifted markedly in the 1840s.

As Australia prepares for a referendum on constitutional recognition for Indigenous Australians later this year, the nation is thinking deeply about what reconciliation looks like in 2023. So too is the Herald. We agree truth is an essential force for reconciliation, and on the 185th anniversary of the Myall Creek massacre offer an apology for our coverage of the slaughter and two subsequent trials.

When a committee of Indigenous elders and non-Indigenous locals set about building a memorial at the Myall Creek massacre site in the late 1990s, they wrote a fitting statement that rings just as true today: "If we and our descendants are to live in peace in Australia then we have to tell and acknowledge that truth of our history. It is not that all of our history is bad, but the bad must be acknowledged along with the good, if we are to have any



integrity.”

*It is in this spirit that we today seek to right the Herald's historic wrong.*

**Read full Editorial:**

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/the-herald-has-a-proud-history-of-telling-australia-s-story-but-on-myall-creek-we-failed-dismally-20230529-p5dc9y.html>



The wives, widows and children of slain or jailed Islamic State fighters are being held in the Roj camp in north-east Syria.

Photograph: Delil Souleiman/AFP/Getty Images

## **‘Last resort’: government faces legal action to force repatriation of Australians from Syrian refugee camps**

***Ben Doherty, The Guardian, 5th June 2023***

***Seventeen women and nine children will take the government to court, arguing that Australia has ‘effective control’ of their detention and the power to set them free***

Australian mothers and children held in a Syrian detention camp will take the Australian government to court in an attempt to compel the government to bring them home.

Seventeen Australian women and nine children – the wives, widows and children of slain or jailed Islamic State fighters – held in the Roj camp in north-east Syria, will file a writ of habeas corpus in the federal court on Monday morning, arguing that Australia has “effective control” of their detention and the power to set them free.

The group members are all Australian citizens and argue they have a legal right to return to Australia.

Most have been held in squalid and violent detention camps more than four years: children are suffering from untreated shrapnel wounds, malnourishment and serious psychological illnesses. Some Australian children were born in the camp and know no life outside it.

Save the Children Australia, acting as litigation guardian in the case, said that legal action was “a last resort”, but it had been left with no choice but to take the Australian government to court “formally requesting ... [it] stand by its moral and legal obligation to repatriate its citizens immediately”.

“This is a regretful but resolute action, borne of fear, suffering, frustration and despair,” chief executive of Save the Children Australia, Mat Tinkler, said.

**Read full story:**

[https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jun/05/last-resort-government-faces-legal-action-to-force-repatriation-of-australians-from-syrian-refugee-camps?utm\\_term=647cf8cc1491dbb81e811ebf787a925a&utm\\_campaign=MorningMailAUS&utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&CMP=morningmailau\\_email](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jun/05/last-resort-government-faces-legal-action-to-force-repatriation-of-australians-from-syrian-refugee-camps?utm_term=647cf8cc1491dbb81e811ebf787a925a&utm_campaign=MorningMailAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=morningmailau_email)



A Taliban guard last month at a market in Jalalabad( Shafiullah Kakar,AFP via Getty Images)

## **Dealing with the Taliban to stop a humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan**

***Chayanika Saxena, The Interpreter, Lowy Institute, 29th May 2023***

### ***The basic needs of Afghans cannot be ignored.***

The Taliban is here to stay. The question that follows for the international community is what's next. Recognise “facts on the ground”, or not?

World powers, particularly those in the democratic bloc, are wary of being seen to abet a regime premised on the denial of basic human rights. If the international backlash against the recognition of the Taliban is any indication, a diplomatic acknowledgement continues to remain off the table. Any provision of financial aid delivered to struggling Afghans runs the risk of indirectly emboldening and supporting the Taliban.

But in the 1990s, when the Taliban was last in power, humanitarian aid kept afloat whatever little health, educational and nutritional support was provided in the country. The need then was to focus on the “survival rights” of Afghans.

That need is true today. Upholding the economic rights of the Afghans does not imply recognition of the Taliban. Instead, it should entail a focus on reviving the economic structures of Afghanistan through regulated and internationally monitored measures to help make aid delivery cost-effective, efficient and sustainable.

There are steps that the world could take that do not entail formal diplomatic recognition of the regime. This could involve providing limited, targeted assistance to local stakeholders. The restoration of the Da Afghanistan Bank, for example, could be undertaken with international oversight. This may even convince the Taliban to see dialogue as useful.



The world made mistakes in 2002. But the Taliban's return to power two decades later does not mean those mistakes should be compounded. While the option of international recognition remains a non-starter, proffering wilful ignorance about the situation in the country is not sustainable. Evidence of direct engagement with the Taliban by countries such as China and Pakistan reflect a gradual adaptation to the enduring reality. While this may help mitigate the impacts of economic and diplomatic isolation for the Taliban, these engagements are not alone sufficient to diminish the international chorus that demands greater accountability and responsibility from the Taliban, which also includes those directly engaging like China itself.

Better to privilege actions that attend to the basic needs of Afghans. Engaging with the Taliban may prevent a humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan, which could have widespread international ramifications. And it may also open some precious space for further negotiations.

**Read full story:**

[https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/dealing-taliban-stop-humanitarian-disaster-afghanistan#msdyntrid=z\\_MdrFVTWBZTfqs59quVxOCsxhVq5mx-FPSd4C06T0g](https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/dealing-taliban-stop-humanitarian-disaster-afghanistan#msdyntrid=z_MdrFVTWBZTfqs59quVxOCsxhVq5mx-FPSd4C06T0g)





## **WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY JUNE 5**

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has launched its Laudato Si' Action Plan on World Environment Day, outlining practical responses to Pope Francis' landmark 2015 encyclical letter.

When it published the 2021-22 Social Justice Statement Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, the Bishops Conference committed to developing its own plan – believed to be the first episcopal conference in the world to make that pledge.

Soon after, the Conference set up a working group made up of Bishops Conference staff and chaired by Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, chair of the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service.

"I'm very pleased to announce that we have released our plan and registered it with the Vatican's Laudato Si' Action Platform today," Bishop Long says in a video message to mark the launch.

"The plan contains actions to care for our common home, the earth, and all who live on it. The Conference's Secretariat and all our agencies will be busy implementing these actions over the next two years and we'll be adding new actions for the following five years.

"We hope it will encourage Catholics around Australia to make a commitment to do more to care for our planet and to leave a worthwhile legacy for generations to come."

The Conference's plan includes steps to be taken across seven areas: Cry of the Earth; Cry of the Poor; Ecological Economics; Sustainable Lifestyle; Ecological Education; Ecological Spirituality; and Community Engagement.

Some of the actions include the identification and planting of native species on Conference properties, ensuring slavery-free supply chains, using recyclable products where possible and providing prayer resources aligned with the messages of Laudato Si'.

The Bishops Conference has also prepared a [one-page flyer](#) with 10 steps that people can take in responding to Laudato Si'. They include energy efficiency tips, advice on food waste and an encouragement to read and reflect on Pope Francis' encyclical.

**Read full article:**

<https://catholicoutlook.org/bishops-conference-launches-laudato-si-action-plan/>

**Read full Action Plan:**

[https://s3.ap-southeast-](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/acbcwebsite/Articles/Documents/OJEP/Laudato%20Si%20Action%20Plan.pdf)

[2.amazonaws.com/acbcwebsite/Articles/Documents/OJEP/Laudato%20Si%20Action%20Plan.pdf](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/acbcwebsite/Articles/Documents/OJEP/Laudato%20Si%20Action%20Plan.pdf)



A 'gummy squirrel', the nickname given to *Psychropotes longicauda*, one of the thousands of newly discovered creatures in the depths of the Pacific Ocean. Photograph: Smartex Project/NERC

## **More than 5,000 new species discovered in Pacific deep-sea mining hotspot**

***Karen McVeigh, The Guardian, 5th June 2023***

### ***A wealth of biodiversity has been found in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, an area earmarked for exploitation by mineral firms***

Scientists have discovered more than 5,000 new species living on the seabed in an untouched area of the Pacific Ocean that has been identified as a future hotspot for deep-sea mining, according to a review of the environmental surveys done in the area.

It is the first time the previously unknown biodiversity of the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ), a mineral-rich area of the ocean floor that spans 1.7m sq miles between Hawaii and Mexico in the Pacific, has been comprehensively documented. The research will be critical to assessing the risk of extinction of the species, given contracts for deep-sea mining in the near-pristine area appear imminent.

Most of the animals identified by researchers exploring the zone are new to science, and almost all are unique to the region: only six, including a

carnivorous sponge and a sea cucumber, have been seen elsewhere.

Contracts for mining exploration in the CCZ have been granted to 17 deep-sea mining contractors in an area covering 745,000 sq miles. The companies, backed by countries including the UK, US and China, want to exploit minerals including cobalt, manganese and nickel, in part to sell to the alternative energy sector.

In July the International Seabed Authority, a quasi-UN body based in Jamaica that regulates deep-sea mining, will begin accepting exploitation applications from these companies.

To better understand the impact of mining this fragile ecosystem and its newly discovered inhabitants, an international team of scientists has built the first “CCZ checklist” by compiling all the records from expeditions to the region. Published in the journal *Current Biology*, it includes 5,578 different species, of which an estimated 88% to 92% had never before been seen.

***“We share this planet with all this amazing biodiversity and we have a responsibility to understand it and protect it,” said Muriel Rabone, the paper’s lead author, a deep-sea ecologist at the Natural History Museum (NHM).***

**Read full story:**

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/may/25/more-than-5000-new-species-discovered-in-pacific-deep-sea-mining-hotspot>



Palestinian Child in handcuffs

**Childhood trauma: protect the 2,000 Palestinian children Israel detains every year**

***Michal Fruchtman, Pearls & Irritations, June 4th 2023***



***From nighttime detentions without a court order, to blindfolding and beatings: the silence of Israeli mental health therapists in the face of severe harm to Palestinian children is particularly alarming.***

Among the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who have been taking part in the ongoing massive protest against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's judicial overhaul, the thousands of mental health workers who left their clinics to demonstrate may be the most unexpected group.

For these workers, accustomed to neutrality and protecting the boundaries of their professional realm, this is a significant shift in perspective. It takes courage to voice a professional opinion beyond the familiar confines of their comfort zone. They're articulating a professional responsibility to warn against measures that could worsen mental health in the country.

But such courage shouldn't be restricted only to safeguarding a separation of powers and the Supreme Court's independence. While these are fundamental elements of a democratic system, they don't ensure a framework that promotes the values of equality, freedom and human dignity — one that cares for the well-being of all citizens.

The protest movement, now asserting that threats to democracy are directly intertwined with mental health, must broaden its scope. It has to address the absence of democracy for entire communities living under this government.

Many mental health professionals still hesitate to protest the negative impact on the mental health of minority groups wrought by deliberate policies of discrimination and deprivation of rights. They remain silent despite the damage caused to millions of Palestinians in the West Bank by denial of their personal and collective rights for 56 years.

Above all, this silence attests to the psychological shackles that trap mental health institutions, many professionals, and the general public. In an environment of oppression, every person's mental health is restricted and undermined.

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Every year, Israeli security forces detain about 1,000 Palestinian children from the West Bank and another 1,000 from East Jerusalem. The children are taken from the street, their schools and even their beds. The methods used in these detentions are extremely damaging to children and youths, both physically and mentally. In fact, they're prohibited under both Israeli law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [which Israel only applies to Jewish children], which Israel has signed.

**Read full story:**

<https://johnmenadue.com/childhood-trauma-protect-the-2000-palestinian->

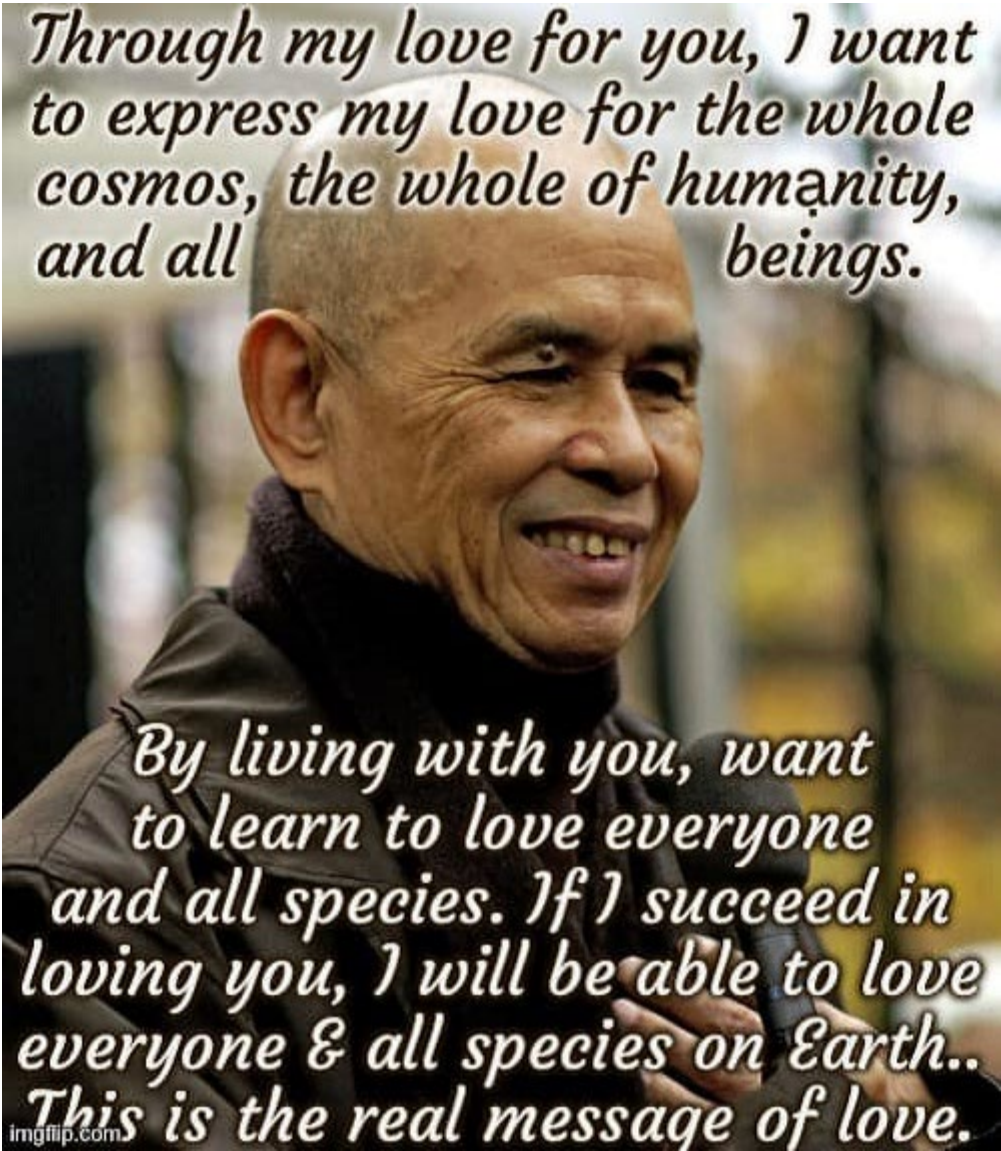
## REFLECTIONS



### The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

—Wendell Berry



*Through my love for you, I want  
to express my love for the whole  
cosmos, the whole of humanity,  
and all beings.*

*By living with you, want  
to learn to love everyone  
and all species. If I succeed in  
loving you, I will be able to love  
everyone & all species on Earth..  
This is the real message of love.*

imgflip.com

"Let us develop respect for all living things. Let us try to replace violence



and intolerance with understanding and compassion. And love." - Jane Goodall

### Pace - e - Bene Nonviolence Inspirations

*" A voice from the dark called out,  
'The poets must give us  
imagination of peace, to oust the intense, familiar  
imagination of disaster. Peace, not only  
the absence of war.'  
But peace, like a poem,  
is not there ahead of itself,  
can't be imagined before it is made,  
can't be known except  
in the words of its making,  
grammar of justice,  
syntax of mutual aid."  
Denise Levertov, "Making Peace"*



***"When I choose to see the good side of things, I'm not being naïve. It is strategic and necessary. It's how I've learned to survive through everything. I know you see yourself as a fighter. Well, I see myself as one too. This is how I fight. . . . The only thing I do know is that we have to be kind. Please, be kind. Especially when we don't know what's going on."***

*Waymond Wang in the film Everything, Everywhere, All at Once*

***"I'm grateful for being here, for being able to think, for being able to see, for being able to taste, for appreciating love—for knowing that it exists in a world so rife with vulgarity, with brutality and violence, and yet love exists. I'm grateful to know that it exists."*** Maya Angelou

***"We are no doubt at a critical point in time. Our world hangs in the balance. Awakening to reality is no longer a possibility: It is an imperative. Wake up or perish is the spiritual call of our times. Could we ever need more motivation than this?"*** Adyashanti

***"We live in a time in which it is important that we do not separate our spiritual path from social activism. The world is a part of our heart, so we have to do something to protect the world, for example against human induced climate change. I want to do something about it because I know that we—people, animals, Earth—are all one."*** Tara Brach



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.