



Edmund Rice Centre

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

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Dear Friends,

This 100th 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.

As one faces this ever changing, complex, unjust and unequal world let us always remember Blessed Edmund Rice's three main tenets:

COMPASSION LIBERATION & PRESENCE

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events... it is from numberless acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Robert F. Kennedy

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.



Labor senator Pat Dodson at Parliament House on Tuesday. He said the lesson from the defeat of the voice to parliament was non-Indigenous Australians needed to come on board with the project of reconciliation. Photograph:

Lukas Coch/AAP

Pat Dodson leaves national stage, warning Australia not to wallow in ‘disagreement and division’

Katharine Murphy, The Guardian, 29 November 2023

The WA senator known as the father of reconciliation departs parliamentary life with a ‘sense of sorrow’ at the failure of voice to parliament referendum

Often, when politicians depart the national stage, combatants struggle to contain their emotions. But when it came time for Pat Dodson to say farewell to parliamentary life, the 75-year-old Yawuru man was stoic. Emotion, a kind of preemptive mourning, coalesced around the father of reconciliation like a gathering swell. Dodson kept his feet and looked beyond the moment he found himself in to the unfinished business.

Dodson has been treated for cancer, treatment which required him to visit Noongar lands. In an essay he wrote for the Monthly earlier this year, Dodson explained he shaved off his beard – the facial hair he’d grown since 1967 – to show respect as a senior man visiting other country. As is common with people who have experienced life-threatening illness, Dodson is now physically altered by his experience. He walks more lightly on the Earth.

Anthony Albanese said on Tuesday there were few more reassuring sights than seeing Pat and his hat coming down a corridor towards you. There is something solid and enduring about Dodson’s physicality and gait that invites

that reaction. The signature hat abides and the beard is coming back, but one of the more important protagonists in the story of reconciliation in this country is now frailer. History seems to flow through him.

Dodson is leaving politics because he can no longer discharge his duties as a Western Australian senator. Representation is a demanding business and his energy is ebbing. When he fronted journalists to say farewell, Dodson was supported by Indigenous colleagues from the Labor caucus: Linda Burney, the portfolio minister; Malarndirri McCarthy; Marion Scrymgour; and Jana Stewart. Burney thought she might cry, and did, briefly, before gathering herself in front of the cameras.

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The moral clarity of Dodson's warning was clear to anyone listening. "We as a nation, and the political structures we have, have got to give us the leadership, the political leadership," he said.

"We can't do anything without people in this place collaborating together in a positive way with the same objective or similar objectives. Because if you don't have that, you will continue to have this division and discord and we'll all be diminished as a consequence, because this rubs off on all of us.

"We will wear the costs of this if we don't come to grips with it."

Whether anyone will heed this warning remains anyone's guess.

Read full article:

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/nov/29/pat-dodson-leaves-national-stage-warning-australia-not-to-wallow-in-disagreement-and-division?utm_term=656647691cf24c445ca35423a6d9f201&utm_campaign=MorningMailAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=morningmailau_email



Truth after the Voice

Megan Davis, The Monthly, December 2023 - January 2024

The lost opportunity of the Voice referendum revealed Australians' poor

understanding of the Constitution, and the level of racism in the community

Weeks prior to the Voice referendum, journalists began seeking input for their post-referendum obituaries. When I politely declined, wanting to wait for the nation to vote, I was told by one tabloid journalist that I should reconsider because, by the Monday after, “the caravan would have moved on”. Lordy. After 12 years of a formal recognition process in Australia, the caravan was poised to leave.

The mass exoneration of the nation for the defeat of recognition in the Australian Constitution began in earnest on referendum night. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declared in his address to the nation that the blunt and unequivocal “No” vote was a vote for change. He remarked that it was not a vote for the status quo and implored, “Let us hold on to that truth.”

Ah, post-truth.

It was hard to stomach the prime minister’s exculpatory comments, for our exhausted and dehydrated team was barely hours returned from an outer-Brisbane polling station where an SUV had zipped around the primary school car park screaming “Vote no to petrol sniffers!” Hardly an endorsement of change. Earlier in the day, a voter put a finger in my sister’s face and screamed, “Next you Abos will come for my property!” And then there was the female voter who calmly said, “You weren’t here first,” and then claimed the “Pygmy” were.

There are hundreds of similar stories across this continent that went unreported and will remain unreported. We heard many were disinclined to report the racism. The reality is that from the time the prime minister announced he would run a referendum, despite his laudable exhortation that he would not tolerate racism in the campaign, the First Nations communities have been subject to vile racism. Thinly veiled racism was given respectability and wide ventilation through conventional media because of its slavish adherence to “both sides”, a false equivalence approach to reporting, which in turn gave licence for it to run even more rampant on social media.

The pain and the hurt of that racism and the rejection at the ballot box were the subjects of widespread Indigenous grieving in the week of silence that followed the result. Time has not diminished the hurt. The community felt utterly bereft in the rejection of recognition.

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As we face the reinforcement of the status quo, the only solace we find is in the six million confirmed friends that we never knew we had. The six million Australian brothers and sisters who walk with us. This has been the tonic for our hurt and our despair. The kind and caring emails, the loving gestures and

the cheering us up and cheering us on, the barbecues and the meet-ups with local community groups who joined with mob and devoted their past year door-knocking and letterboxing, and yarning to other Aussies. I have heard stories from Aboriginal colleagues and relatives of non-Indigenous Aussies bringing casseroles and lasagne each night in the week that followed. I draw strength from the thousands and thousands of emails from Australians I have not yet met who send their love and share their grief. And there are many, many more who did not actively join the campaign but who voted "Yes". We six million are bonded together now. There is power in our voices. Collectively, we the people believe in recognition and rights. Those Australians who accepted the offer of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and listened to the dialogues, now make up an Australian chorus, six million voices in unison, who march on in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

The other consolation is that the Voice was a solution conceived of by First Nations people in a historic First Nations process that no one has ever tried. But the status quo has prevailed, and time will show what a lost opportunity this was to bring about change.

Read full article (subscribers only):

<https://www.themonthly.com.au/share/213353/0eZrqhn>

NB: If you are not a subscriber to this publication and would like a copy of full article please email me: mmcinerney@edmundrice.org



We are the custodians of the future, you and I

Christine Owen, Pearls & Irritations, November 18 2023

In the 1990s, in an Aboriginal community near Alice Springs a young boy, aged about nine, and I stood looking at some soft, waving, light-filled spinifex, seemingly floating over the deep red earth. See? he said. I shook my head. I

was blind to the possibilities right in front of me.

The period between the recent referendum and commencement of the 28th United Nations climate change conference—the COP (Conference of the Parties), at the beginning of December—is a good time to reconsider the way we think, in terms of our responsibilities to each other and to the planet.

Effectively, the referendum ‘no’ vote on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice to parliament was a vote to preserve the status quo which has serious implications for a number of issues affecting the world, most especially for climate change before which many of us are like the frog sitting in water slowly coming to the boil, without registering that the water is becoming fatally hot.

At present, the dominant voices of concern about climate change, particularly the urgent need to phase out fossil fuels, are the voices of scientists, concerned organisations and, mainly young, activists, who are increasingly being targeted by police. What is reducing all of their effectiveness is a large popular movement, such as supported the anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s. At that time, people were concerned about the possibility of nuclear war and of nuclear accidents. As our generation faces the tipping point for the certain end of life on the planet, why aren’t more people screaming at decision-makers to act urgently and effectively?

We need to change our thinking because our Western cultures in particular, are dominated by the idea that we are free and autonomous individuals with discrete rights and this impacts on everything, including climate change, war and racism. An essential first step is to think of our responsibilities as well as our rights and to stop delegating responsibility for the future of the planet to dominant decision-makers.

Each of us needs to decide what kind of individual we will be. Will we change our priorities and gather together to urgently call for stopping the production of fossil fuels or will we continue to live in comfort and do what suits us without consideration of the consequences?

Gregory Bateson, famed anthropologist, suggested that the inextricable nature of the relationships we have with each other and with the natural world is necessarily delicate and complex, and that paying attention requires great sensitivity. To keep that sensitivity to the forefront of our decision-making, he said, requires a humility that acknowledges deeply that we cannot know everything.

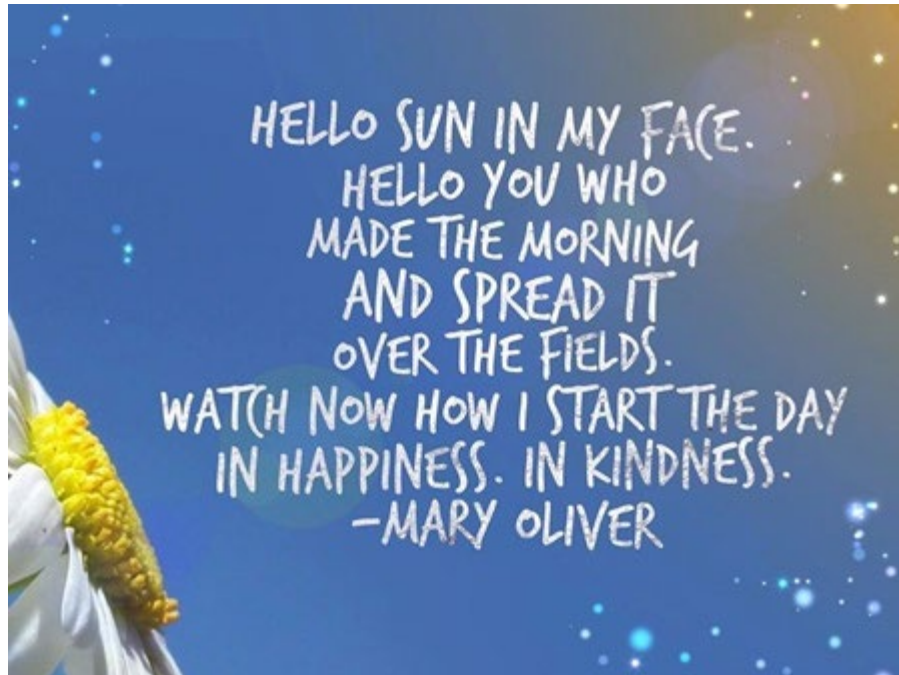
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How does this relate to the referendum? Indigenous people often comment that, unlike non-indigenous people who are born into rights, they are born into responsibility. The word ‘custodian’ is often used by indigenous people to

describe their responsibilities for the land, for culture, for each other and for future generations. The phrase ‘custodians for the future’ suggests we all join together to direct our energies to putting pressure on decision-makers to ensuring the planet is a fit place to live for generations to come.

Read full article:

<https://johnmenadue.com/we-are-the-custodians-of-the-future-you-and-i/>



Afghan refugees arrive on a truck to cross the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Chaman on 7 November after Pakistan ordered 1.7 million people to leave or face arrest and deportation (Banaras Khan/AFP via Getty Images)

Where did the Afghan refugees go – and where next?

Sadiq Amini, The Interpreter, 10 November 2023

While the world is still figuring out the politics, the people are paying the price. The majority of Afghans who fled the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 now reside in Pakistan (an estimated 600,000) and Iran (500,000), adding to the totals in both countries as hosts of the highest total number of Afghan refugees worldwide – 1.35 million in Pakistan and 780,000 in Iran. The living standards and treatment of these refugees are often very poor, facing discrimination and prejudice from authorities and difficulty accessing necessities such as employment, shelter and healthcare. And hanging over them is the constant threat of deportation.

Pakistan is currently undertaking a mass deportation of Afghans, ignoring repeated calls by the international community to reconsider the decision. Iran is also deporting Afghan refugees on a regular basis.

Other countries in the region are also hosting Afghans who have recently fled the Taliban, including Türkiye (300,000), Uzbekistan (13,000) and Tajikistan (10,000). The situation for Afghan refugees in these countries is equally challenging. They have restricted rights, receive minimal benefits, and have no clear path towards citizenship. They, too, face deportation, especially in Türkiye.

The Afghan political and business classes in these countries appear to live comfortably, but even some of those are now attempting to make their way to the United States and allied countries.

Read full article:

https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/where-did-afghan-refugees-go-where-next#msdyntrid=CuMtthVArPYeDSCg8YrqanXynXXLHFJ_SrP34l8vuT8



‘This country failed them’: calls for detention inquiry

Michael West Media, November 28 2023

Former immigration detainees have described harrowing experiences and the death of their friends as they call for a royal commission into the detention scheme.

Refugee rights campaigner Zaki Haidari recalled his friend taking his own life after suffering in immigration detention when he sought asylum, saying he didn't feel he was respected as a human.

He also pointed to the experience of a man who set himself on fire after saying he abandoned hopes of humanity in Australia.

"They survived the horrific boat journey seeking freedom, human rights and justice, but this country failed them to a point they took their lives," he told an event in Canberra on Tuesday.

"As a Hazara man, I know how it feels to lose your family member, I know how it feels to keep running away from genocide and persecution in Afghanistan.

"But what pains me more is that continues here in Australia."

Former detainee and human rights activist Behrouz Boochani said the powers of a royal commission were needed to expose the system and the impact it had on refugees and asylum seekers.

The system was only compounding the tragedies they were facing and a royal commission would challenge the pattern of inhumane immigration policies by both major parties, he said.

Kurdish artist and musician Farhad Bandesh, who came to Australia by boat after fleeing political persecution in Iran, was held for six years on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea.

He recounted being beaten, denied basic necessities and, for two years, bleeding continuously as detention centre staff refused him medical attention.

"This whole system is cruel and wants everybody to be silent – they tried to bury us alive," he told AAP.

Mr Bandesh, 41, witnessed the murder of Kurdish asylum-seeker Reza Barati at the hands of security guards after a riot in 2014.

Read full article:

<https://michaelwest.com.au/this-country-failed-them-calls-for-detention-inquiry/>



Fair Play: Exploring the Interaction between Sport, Social Justice and Human Rights Event for Schools

On Thursday 16th November, the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education hosted the 'Fair Play: Exploring the Interaction between Sport, Social Justice and Human Rights Event for Schools' at Santa Sabina College, Strathfield. This event saw 250 students from Years 8 ,9 ,10 and 11 from a range of EREA (Edmund Rice Education Australia) and other partner schools gathered to explore the ways in which sport, social justice and human rights are connected. Read feedbacks from MacKillop Catholic College, St Pius X College Chatswood, Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College and Santa Sabina College. Former Australian Football Captain, lawyer, broadcaster and social justice advocate Craig Foster AM got the day underway as he shared some of his experiences. He reminded us of the fact that we all have power that we can use to act for justice.

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Throughout the day the, the theme of HOPE was highlighted. Hope inspires us to believe in the possibility that things can change or improve. The significance of Hope was celebrated as the speakers incorporated this theme into their presentations, there were hopeful moments of sporting history, quotes about hope, and the Ulysses butterfly (a significant symbol of hope) displayed as decorations in the hall for the duration of the day.



The idea for this Fair Play: Exploring the Interaction between Sport, Social Justice and Human Rights Event for Schools was a collaboration between Marisa Brattoni- Education Officer at the Edmund Rice Centre and Gillian Daley – Director of Identity at St Patrick's College Strathfield (on sabbatical) who facilitated the development of the program and was our MC for the day.

Everyone involved and those who participated on the day, were very pleased to see this idea become a successful reality.

Full story on ERC Website:

https://www.erc.org.au/fair_play_exploring_the_interaction_between_sport_social_justice_and_human_rights_event_for_schools



Funafuti, Tuvalu. Photo: RNZ Pacific / Sally Round

Australia-Tuvalu falepili union 'shameful' - former Tuvalu PM
Enele Sopoaga, RNZ (Radio New Zealand), 27 November 2023

The Australia-Tuvalu 'falepili' strategy is bullish and most alarming.

The initiative was never consulted with the people of Tuvalu, nor was it ever raised in Parliament. It is not a climate change response. It is ceding Tuvalu sovereignty to Australia. It reverses Tuvalu political status to that of 45 years ago.

The Albanese-Kausea 'falepili' deal is exactly and literally that, secretive and scathing, between their very own houses. The devil of course is in the details since little is known in Tuvalu about the deal, and I suspect it is also of the same in Australia.

The real concern now, given the secretive nature of the deal was formulated in both countries and the very dubious aims contained therein, is whether the deal is legally doable and sustainable, and whether or not Tuvalu as Australia's territory will continue to be eligible to international arrangements of membership, ODA and special support from GEF, GCF.

Tuvalu enjoys strong cordial relations with Australia. It benefits from Australia's ODA, bilateral relations, and by virtue of their membership in regional fora including in the Pacific Islands Forum. The bilateral relations are so strong it is hardly necessary to have another special bilateral treaty.

Moreover, this deal is signed a mere month before the dissolution of Parliament on 24 November 2023, and General Elections in January 2024. It would be extremely naive to believe this deal did not aim as well as a dangling carrot to influence the elections outcome in January 24 and interfere in Tuvalu's sovereignty.

But given the information shared on the media, Australia is offering to resettle 280 Tuvaluans per year in Australia as climate change refugees. In return Tuvalu will allow Canberra to take control of Tuvalu's fishing rights, and national security within its EEZ and territorial waters.

It is the view of this piece that this so-called treaty must be scrutinized within the bounds of international law, and first be ratified by the people of Tuvalu before enforcement. The sovereign independent Nation of Tuvalu cannot and must not be used as 'guinea pigs' in the zero-some game being dangerously played by metropolitan powers in the Pacific.

The deal was signed in the Cook Islands, a self-governing island territory in free association with the Government of New Zealand, at the margins of the 52nd Pacific Islands Forum Meeting, the regional body supposedly to be the paramount body of sovereign independent States of the Pacific.

The PIF main concerns are primarily to deal with the political sovereignty,

stability and security of the Pacific. It is unclear if the deal was an outcome of the PIF Leaders, and/or whether there has been a shift in PIF.

There are however serious problems with such a deal.

Read full article:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/503354/australia-tuvalu-falepili-union-shameful-former-tuvalu-pm>



Two-state solution won't deliver peace for Israel/Palestine. But this might

Antony Loewenstein, *Pearls & Irritations*, November 21 2023

At the end of October, three weeks after the brutal Hamas attack on Israeli civilians and soldiers that killed around 1200 people, US President Joe Biden said es next, and in our view, it has to be a two-state solution.”that he still firmly believed in the justness of the two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians. Two states for two peoples.

“There’s no going back to the status quo as it stood on October 6,” Biden explained. “It also means that when this crisis is over, there has to be a vision of what com

It wasn’t long before this message was echoed by Australia’s Foreign Minister Penny Wong. “Ultimately, a just and enduring peace requires a two-state solution”, she wrote.

The two-state solution is the answer to a question that nobody serious is proposing. It’s become akin to gospel in every Western capital, endlessly repeated by American and European officials, even elements of the belligerent pro-Israel lobby who loathe the concept of Palestinian self-determination, and a whole army of think tanks and organisations in multiple countries.

It’s the zombie solution that’s resurrected every time the Middle East is on fire

and presidents and prime ministers scramble for something nominally sensible to say. It's convenient to mouth the two-state platitudes while knowing it'll never happen. Making it a reality would require putting pressure on the more powerful party, Israel, to cease its obsession with colonising more Palestinian land.

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It's highly unlikely that Israeli Jews will willingly forgo their current privilege – few occupiers ever have, historically – so it will require interested nations, including Australia, telling the Jewish state that the current treatment of the Palestinian people is unacceptable in the 21st century.

Today's reality is a de facto one-state arrangement, with millions of Palestinians forced to live under a brutal, Israeli-led regime, fully backed by the West as a form of historical absolution after the Holocaust.

The time is now to imagine a different future where all peoples in the land of Israel and Palestine are truly equal and free.

Read full article:

<https://johnmenadue.com/two-state-solution-wont-deliver-peace-for-israel-palestine-but-this-might/>

This article was first published in the Sydney Morning Herald on November 18 2023

REFLECTIONS

“Once the world was perfect, and we were happy in that world.

Then we took it for granted.

Discontent began a small rumble in the earthly mind.

Then Doubt pushed through with its spiked head.

And once Doubt ruptured the web,

All manner of demon thoughts

Jumped through—

We destroyed the world we had been given

...

Then one of the stumbling ones took pity on another

And shared a blanket.

A spark of kindness made a light.

The light made an opening in the darkness.

Everyone worked together to make a ladder.

A Wind Clan person climbed out first into the next world,

And then the other clans, the children of those clans, their children,

***And their children, all the way through time—
To now, into this morning light to you.”***

Joy Harjo. *Conflict Resolution From Holy Being*



Jamberoo Abbey Facebook Post 29 November 2023

***On hope...for ourselves...and those close to us or in our wider world
whose hope is diminished...***

***“I’ve been thinking about hope a lot lately. How it’s real, not a dream. How
our minds have to be taught again how to cope with it when it has been
absent for so long, it feels like a fairytale long gone. My grandmother tells
me to think about it like this: it takes time and nurture to grow a seed to a
sapling, for the sapling to grow deeper roots and become a tree that
bears fruit and sustains all kinds of life. Hope is like that. It needs to be
nurtured. It needs to be believed in. It needs to be fought for. So that
when it arrives, arms full of joy for us all, we remember that hope is a
product of action. Not a distant dream.”***

~ Nikita Gill

"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

"In Arabic, nonviolence is sometimes translated as sumud or steadfastness. We must remain steadfast, without going numb, as we witness the ongoing horrific tragedy in Gaza. Only compassion and a commitment to building a shared future will succeed where violence has failed." Mubarak Awad, [Nonviolence International](#) newsletter on Nov 17, 2023

Let us not tire of preaching love; it is the force that will overcome the world. Let us not tire of preaching love. Though we see that waves of violence succeed in drowning the fire of Christian love, love must win out; it is the only thing that can." Oscar Romero

"The revolutionary potential of the written word lies less in the dictum 'Speak truth to power' than it does in gathering the power of the disaffected." Mychal Denzel Smith, *Stakes Is High: Life After The American*

Dream

“You know quite well, deep within you, that there is only a single magic, a single power, a single salvation . . . and that is called loving.” Hermann Hesse

“Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.” The Talmud



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.