



Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES COMMITTEE

Newsletter to Clergy, Parishes and Agencies

28 January 2013 www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/src

Greetings!

<p style="text-align: center;">PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION OF GENERAL SYNOD ‘The Nathan Project’ A Conference at Trinity College Theological School</p>

This was a first! It was a gathering of November of SRC people from dioceses around Australia with people on the PAC. The conference title was ‘The Nathan Project’ and the theme was the Church speaking into the public arena. Here are three papers from the conference.

- **‘Why should the Church speak into the public conversation?’ by Sarah Bachelard, an Anglican priest and theologian, from Coffs Harbour in the Diocese of Grafton. Go to: www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/src**
- **‘The Church is not beyond reproach’ – by Frank Brennan, SJ. Go to: www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=34264**
- **Reporting on the Conference by Graeme Garrett. Go to: www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/src**

Other speakers included Carolyn Tan, is a member of PAC and the Perth SRC, Kasy Chambers CEO of Anglicare Australia and Greg Thompson , former CEO of Anglicord (now Anglican Overseas Aid), telling us of their experience of speaking out publically on issues.

The conference also included ‘show and tell’ by people form the various SRCs. This revealed a range of activities from mainly research papers, in Brisbane, to creating public events on social justice issues, in Perth, to some of both in Adelaide and Tasmania.

I came away with a strong desire to get more of what the SRCs are doing into circulation, so that we might benefit from and support each other’s work. I think of this as the PAC Contact. See below for how it has already informed this newsletter.

Congratulations to Prof John Langmore and others on the PAC for taking this initiative!

AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES GAMBLING TASK FORCE

I noticed the 'toy' gaming tablet for kids, helping them become the future pokey gamblers. Did anyone see these being given to kids as a Christmas present?

A Google search yielded no toy pokies, but plenty of ways to buy toy guns for kids including the "coolest AK47" with realistic sounds, vibrations and six golden bullets! There is no 'silver bullet' to prevent violence, especially violence using guns.

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

ANNOUNCEMENT: Pending Report of the Anglicans Promoting Respectful Relationships for Violence Prevention. Pending report: 'Violence prevention: what works, what doesn't and what's promising in Anglican communities.' This will soon be available at: www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/women

PASTORAL TRAINING: Equipping local leaders in violence prevention

The *Peer Mentoring Program* assists Anglican leaders to develop a deeper understanding of the issues involved in Preventing Violence Against Women. Using the program, leaders meet in pairs over six sessions to discuss various topics. The program provides an introduction to each topic; resources to read and questions for conversation. The program has been adapted for an Anglican audience. Contact the Project Co-ordinator, Dr Ree Boddé, to register your interest.

To follow the project on Facebook, click this button:



FOOD

This is a 'smorgasbord' of different insights about food, faith and living in Christ together, locally and globally. Many thanks to the many contributors.

If you are looking for a guide to ethical consumption here is one - go to: www.ethical.org.au It is, *Ethical Consumer Guide – Everyday choices that change the world*. It is easy to use, and covers pretty well all you might be seeking, by products, category, brand, and company. All this is in a user friendly on-line format. Thanks for this tip from Chelle Trebilcock, a doctoral student at St. Mark's National Theological School.

Anglicare Australia had food insecurity as the major focus of its annual flagship publication *State of the Family* in 2012. This is a study of food insecurity among emergency relief clients at 62 Anglicare sites around Australia in a three month period in the first quarter of 2012. It would be fair to say that the two million people in Australia living in poverty experience some measure of food insecurity. Go to: www.anglicare.asn.au/site/sotf12_notenoughtoeat.php

Food insecurity along with inadequate income (with which it is inextricably linked) remains one of the major advocacy targets this year for Anglicare Australia

Gordon Preece from *Ethos* has given us access to the November 2011 issue of *Zadok* with some very engaging discussions of food. Please go to, www.ea.org.au/Ethos/Ethos-Overview/Resources/ResourceShop/Zadok-Institute-for-Christianity-and-Society.aspx

See the paper by John Beddington, Chief Scientific Advisor, United Kingdom: *The Inescapable Challenges of the Early 21st Century: sustainability and resilience, and the interconnected challenges of energy, water, food and climate*. Please go to, www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/src

Claire Barrett-Lennard of the SRC in the Diocese of Perth sent the following neat set of files. The Anglican EcoCare Commission had 'Food and the Faith of Life' as its Sustainable September theme. There are four files:

Introduction	go to the file 'Sustainable September 1 – Introduction'
Bible Studies	go to the file 'Sustainable September 2 – Bible Studies'
Children's resources	go to the file 'Sustainable September 3 – Children's resources'
Worship resources	go to the file 'Sustainable September 4 – Worship Resources'

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John Langmore sent in the following comment from Bob Carr's launch of Michael Mobbs' book, *Sustainable Food* – a logical companion to his earlier publication, *Sustainable House*.

"Sustainable Food provides localised solutions to the global problems of food security and carbon emissions associated with growing, processing, selling and disposing food. Expanding Australian cities reduce land to grow food. Moreover, expanding mining is taking more ground and river water. Mobbs notes,

'Over 40 percent of the [Queensland] catchments [of the Murray-Darling rivers] are to be mined. [The mining] will cause the quantity of food grown in the Murray-Darling Basin in the next 10-20 years to at least halve. About 40 percent of Australia's food is grown here.'

By 2050, the world population will be over 8 billion, with food production falling to around 0.01 hectare per person.

Additional food must come from existing agricultural land, which will require a more sustainable approach.

Sustainable Food is an enjoyable and informative how-to guide. It breaks down the seemingly insurmountable challenges of our food security and carbon footprint into practical grassroots solutions that are eminently achievable."

It is OK for Mr. Carr to end on this upbeat note but cutting into our foreign aid to pay for our off-shore treatment of refugees is not a good look.

REFUGEES

The Uniting Church of Australia has provided an excellent brochure 'Justice for Asylum Seekers' setting out the key issues to do with Australia's response to refugees. Copies of the brochure can be obtained from www.unitingjustice.org.au.

Here are some of its points.

Who is an asylum seeker?

Anyone who has fled their own country and applies to the government of another country for protection as a refugee.

Asylum Seekers or Illegal Immigrants?

Whether asylum seekers arrived in Australia by boat or by plane, whether they have identity papers or not – they are not illegal. They are exercising their right under Australian and international law to seek asylum. (Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Articles 23,31,33 Refugee Convention – which Australia signed sixty years ago.)

Of the asylum seekers who arrive by boat, around 90% are determined to be genuine refugees.

Should asylum seekers 'join the queue'?

The most common and dangerous myth is that asylum seekers should 'join the queue' and that they are taking the place of real refugees.

In places like Iraq and Afghanistan there is no 'queue' to join, as there is no where to have their applications assessed.

Australia is the only country in the world that has a policy of reducing its offshore refugee intake for every one person who is accepted as a refugee after making a claim on shore. This link has contributed significantly to the perception that asylum seekers arriving by boat are 'queue jumpers' taking the place of more deserving and legitimate refugees in residing in refugee camps overseas.

Do you think we do enough?

Of the 10.4 million refugees under the UNHCR's mandate between 2005-2010, the top 5 refugee hosting countries took in almost half the people deemed to be refugees. On this scale Australia ranked 47th. When all refugee hosting countries are assessed in terms of their national wealth, Australia ranked 91st.

Do we have too many refugees?

- *In Australia there is only 1 refugee for every 1000 people*
- *With asylum seekers arriving by boat making up less than 2% of our annual immigration*
- *numbers, it would take 20 years to fill the MCG.*

Did tough policies stop the boats?

Global asylum seeker numbers dropped markedly from 2001 to 2006 (asylum applications in all industrialised countries fell by 49% over this period) – as did asylum applications.

Theological reflection

From Rev Prof Andrew Dutney, President of the Uniting Church of Australia:

“I don’t presume to endorse one particular public policy as the most effective in delivering the hospitality to strangers that Christ commands. That’s the particular skill and responsibility of politicians. But it would appear that – with the exception of very welcome recommendation to increase Australia’s annual refugee intake – current policy development is not primarily directed to helping strangers in need at all. On the contrary, all the political energy is going devoted to eliminating one kind of appeal for asylum by making an example of any who attempts it. As a church leader it is my job to say that this wrong. It is unworthy of us all as human beings, and it is especially unworthy of those of us who would follow Jesus.

A nation that is so determined to turn strangers away – to oppose what the God whose mission begins with the stranger, the disadvantaged and the unwanted – cannot prosper in way that matters.”

First published on the website *ABC Religion and Ethics*. For the full statement, go to, www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2012/08/16/3569184.htm.

Action: Raise with our congregations who among us would be prepared to receive refugees into the community in our homes (individually or as a group). Urge the government via Mr Chris Evans the Minister for Immigration and our local members to move more asylum seekers and refugees into the community and add that we, like many other Australians, are prepared to help.

Religious and Legal Attitudes on Refugees

Guest speakers include Julian Burnside, Rabbi Kim Ettliger, Sr Brigid Arthur and Sheik Abdinur Weli

Sunday February 17th 2013 at 3.00 pm at the **Edmund Rice Education Centre Australia**, 9 The Vaucluse, Richmond (off Church Street) ample parking (vehicle entry from St Kevin's Waterford Campus on the Vaucluse opp. St Ignatius' Church)

This is being presented by the *Council of Christians and Jews Victoria* (CCJ).

You are cordially invited to attend. Please advising the CCJ office. Tel 9817 3848 or email ccjvic@bigpond.net.au

NEW SRC DISCUSSION PAPER

There is a new SRC Discussion Paper, 'Public Theology – Who Needs It?' by Stephen Ames. It was delivered at the National Anglicare Australia Conference in Hobart in September 2012. Please go to, www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/src

IDOLATRY – A CASE STUDY

A worshipping community could have considerable resources to make the worship of idols a distinctive clue to understanding how its own life can be distorted, how the life of the wider society can be distorted, and how it is possible to be freed from the power of idolatry in order to find the fuller life of worshipping the living God as promised and commanded by the two great commandments.

Here is a case study of idolatry. It is by James E. Atwood, a retired Presbyterian pastor, a gun owner, author of *America and its Guns: A Theological Exposé*, and chair of the Greater Washington chapter of the anti-gun- violence group *Heeding God's Call*. The gun issue in the US is here approached from the angle of the gun becoming an idol. Below are two paragraphs from the article at:

www.parliamentofreligions.org/news/index.php/2013/01/9mm-golden-calves/?utm_source=Email+Updates&utm_campaign=bbb00b49f3-Newsletter_51&utm_medium=email

BACK IN 1990, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) issued this warning: "The religious community must ... take seriously the risk of idolatry that could result from an unwarranted fascination with guns, which overlooks or ignores the social consequences of their misuse." Two decades later, about 660,000 more Americans have been killed by guns, with a million more injured.

These figures convince me that what was a risk in 1990 has become our reality today: For too many, guns have become idols. They claim divine status; make promises of safety and security they cannot keep; transform people and neighbourhoods; create enemies; and require human sacrifice."

An idol's followers boldly claim divine status for it. Former NRA executive Warren Cassidy was clear when he boasted, "You would get a far better understanding [of the NRA] if you approached us as if you were approaching one of the great religions of the world." Not to be outdone, Charlton Heston, during a speech as NRA president, intoned, "Sacred stuff resides in that wooden stock and blued steel—something that gives the most common man [sic] the most uncommon of freedoms, when ordinary hands can possess such an extraordinary instrument that symbolizes the full measure of human dignity and liberty."

Do you know of other good 'case studies' of idolatry? What have you learned from them? Has this been a theme in your reflection on the worshipping community to which you belong? I think it also invites reflection on how worth and value in our society is constructed and promoted, and especially what are the idols that are wor(th)shipped'. This is one theme in the 'Public Theology – Who Needs It?'

Our practice of worship becomes an interpretive key to our individual and social life.

Has anyone been thinking about the similarities and difference between Australia and the United States when it comes to guns?

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one of the greatest social, economic and environmental challenges of our time. Human activity is causing the climate to change. This, in turn, is having an impact on Australia's rainfall, temperatures, bushfire frequency, health, heritage and biodiversity for current and future generations.

During the past 100 years, global average surface temperature increased by about 0.7 degrees Celcius. Since 1910 the average temperature of Australia has risen by about 1 degree Celcius. Although these increases sound small, they have a big impact on the world's climate.

Tips to Combat Climate Change

Things that we, as individuals, can all do:

- **Save hot water**
Keep showers as short as possible to save both water and the energy needed to heat the water. The 'egg timer' is still a good way to do this.
- **Switch off lights when they are not in use**
Saving electricity is a great way to help prevent climate change.
- **Sort out your recycling at home**
Recycling stops re-usable items from ending up in landfill and therefore decreases greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Plant trees**
Trees absorb carbon dioxide and help to reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- **Buy energy efficient appliances**
When buying a new electrical appliance, look for ones with higher energy efficiency ratings - they'll reduce your bills and carbon pollution.
- **Take public transport, ride or walk whenever you can**
Catching the bus or train, riding your bike or walking is better for the environment than travelling by car, especially for short journeys.
- **Save energy**
Hang your washing on the line instead of putting it in the dryer, so the sun and wind can dry it naturally.
Turn off appliances at the plug: You can save power by turning off electrical appliances at the plug, before you leave the house or when they are not being used. [The state government has a scheme to provide you (free!) with 'automatic switch off' of standby for TV and computers, but allows you to re-engage power when you 'switch on'.]
- **Drive better**
You can drive better to improve the fuel efficiency of your car by servicing your car regularly, driving in the right gear, using air-conditioning only when needed, not speeding and minimising your vehicle use.
- **Manage your own climate**
In winter make sure you are wearing warm clothes before turning up the heater. This helps to save electricity and gas.
- **Our Communities:**
Grassroots community preparation can be a potent force in affecting change from the ground up. Motivated people can make a difference in their neighbourhood for everyone to enjoy.
Every choice can make a difference and lead to community groundswell: from how you travel within the community, how you shop, advocating the green-friendly alternative to taking part in your neighbourhood. Learn how you can get involved with your community to make a low pollution future.

- **Our Schools [and Parishes]**

Teaching the next generation about climate change and its impacts is important to the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

The Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency's climate change character Marty, the spot-tailed quoll, will show you how to take action to combat climate change and tell you about the impacts of climate change and ways to adapt to it.

- **Our Offices:**

Business and home offices use a significant amount of electricity for heating and cooling, lighting, and operating equipment.

Here are a number of easy ways to protect the environment, fight climate change, and help make the air cleaner:

- 1 Manage your office equipment energy use better
- 2 look for Energy Star rating-qualified products for the office
- 3 What is your building's Energy Star rating?
- 4 Use less energy for your commute
- 5 5. Reduce, reuse, recycle
- 6 6. Use Green Power

With [additions], the above information was sourced by Bishop Philip Huggins from:

www.climatechange.gov.au; www.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/

The above efforts to reduce emissions can be made to seem very 'small beer' compared to the increase in Australia's emissions of 2% per year and that which will be associated with Australia's increasing coal export.

But actions like those listed above *are* important because they indicate a personal stand on the climate issue and reinforce it every day. If we each have a variety of things we do every day to reduce emissions then we become more and more tuned into what is at stake and this comes home every time we look at our children, grandchildren and with a little stretch of the imagination, our great grandchildren. What kind of world will we hand on to them? This is the principle of **intergenerational justice**.

The government website from which the 'tips' were taken also has an enormous amount of information about policies to reduce emissions. I hope it works in time. We contribute 1.5% to the total global emissions, which puts us in the top twenty emitters. More importantly we have the highest per capita emissions in the world – higher than the US.

The 'tips' are practical steps to help reduce emissions, raise our consciousness and call us to move towards a greatly reduced carbon economy. This is not fantasy land. Transitions Towns are one example of people just getting on with it. Daylesford is an example of people heading in this direction. One example of a real national plan comes from Beyond Zero Emission from The University of Melbourne : a ten year road map to 100% renewable energy, base load energy supplied by renewables, at \$8 per household per week. Kyrie Eleison!

AUSTRALIA DAY

Australia Day celebrations abounded. Fair enough, there is much to celebrate. I am very appreciative of living in Australia. Like many others I find it life giving. Not everyone does. Not just the two million living in poverty, but the binge (of) drinking to celebrate the day is a dreadful image of life in Australia. Yet it is a marketing success.

Amidst many contradictions, I am proud to live in what is still recognisable as a 'commonwealth'. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is its latest expression. I am proud of the spirit that shines in the effort to help each other in times of overwhelming flood and fire. I am proud of our multicultural society.

I am also proud of what many people contribute to our society and this includes what the churches contribute.

But we need a new day since the 26th January is not a day for all Australians. On that day in 1788 Captain Author Philip proclaimed British sovereignty over the eastern seaboard of Australia. Was this the only 'sovereignty' present in the land? What shall we make of the words in Genesis where it says that God created humankind, male and female, and gave them 'dominium' – sovereign power – over God's creation? Are these words applicable to the first people of the land? I notice that nowhere in the Bible is this 'original blessing' withdrawn by God. How then could this be changed by Captain Philip merely uttering a few words in the name of King George III?

From a Christian standpoint we should be looking for a national reconciliation with Aboriginal Australians, about the invasion and theft of their land and its consequences. (You may recall that this is the language used in Synod a couple of years ago.) I cannot possibly regard this as a mere symbolic reconciliation and certainly cannot contrast it to practical reconciliation, which any

reconciliation must be. There is blood - shed on both sides – that still cries out. It is not a matter of personal guilt. Rather, as a beneficiary of that injustice I want the whole story to be told and largely owned by us as a nation. This requires a wide consciousness raising effort across Australia, to which we can certainly contribute. A new day for Australia Day might be the day on which the Constitution includes a proper recognition of Aboriginal people.

I would not want ANZAC Day to be the new Australia Day. I reject the idea of Gallipoli as the 'birth' of the nation. To call such a death dealing misbegotten venture, a life giving 'birth' is Orwellian double-speak. I fear this will reach a crescendo by 2015.

Rev Canon Dr Stephen Ames
EO of the SRC