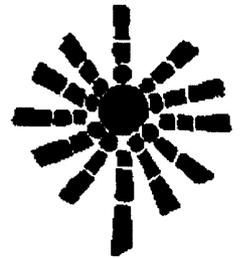


*NetAct*



VOTING FOR COMPASSION AND COURAGE  
A FAIR DEAL FOR ALL

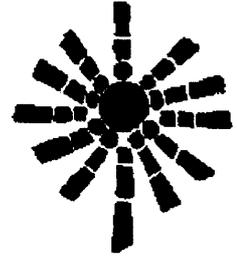
Australian Election 2019

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Welfare and Educational Agencies  
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# *NetAct*



18 April, 2019

Dear Leaders,

The approaching Federal Election has engendered much publicity. As Australians and as Christians, we are challenged to reflect on some of the values and issues we want our country to consider as we face this particular period in our history.

NetAct has prepared these reflection sheets in response to a number of current discussions. It seems that the human and Christian dimensions of these issues are often ignored in the ongoing debate and political wrangling. This is of particular concern in the current climate when conviction politics has been replaced by retail politics. Many are asking, not what are the values that underpin our decisions, but what sells most effectively and will be of greatest benefit to the individual. The recent budget is a classic example of this development.

To counter retail politics, the NetAct Kit invites communities to reflect on issues from the perspective of our humanity and our faith, rather than the from standpoint of political rhetoric. We hope that it will engender new conversations.

If you believe that it would be helpful, would you kindly distribute this Kit to your communities with an encouragement that it be distributed to parish, social justice and educational groups, discussed in community and social justice gatherings, or shared with friends.

Yours gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan Barnett ARSJ". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jan Barnett rsj

On behalf of the NetAct Committee

(Claude Mostowik msc, Karen Oxley jjn, Susan Connelly rsj, Suzette Clark rsc)

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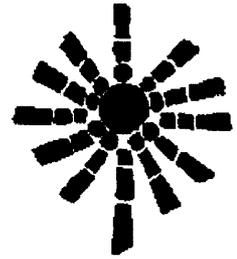
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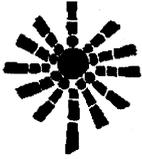
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### VOTING FOR COMPASSION AND COURAGE A FAIR DEAL FOR ALL

*As we prepare for the Federal Election, we are reminded of the values which we hope will guide us at this time – human dignity, human rights, the common good, ecological responsibility, a fair deal for all, and a preference for those ‘made’ poor. We know that global warming, the unprecedented number of people seeking asylum around the world, inequality, and economic injustice are clear calls to justice, compassion and courage in our time.*

We enter these weeks in the aftermath of the killings in Christchurch. Compassion, courage and a call for forgiveness were at the heart of New Zealand’s response. It is these values that challenge us as we prepare for our own elections.

In the Christian gospel, Jesus calls us to engage the society in which we live, and to do what we can to transform it in line with the values, which he proclaimed by word and example.

For Christians, the work of social transformation is not an optional extra. It stems from God’s own passion for those who are marginalised and suffering. And it involves every aspect of our lives.

*‘Everything is connected.  
Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined  
to a sincere love for our fellow human beings  
and an unwavering commitment  
to resolving the problems of society.’*

**Laudato Si  
Pope Francis 2015**

Such foundational belief is intrinsic to the teaching of the Catholic Church

*Considering the common good the following points are relevant:...*  
*to provide employment for as many workers as possible;*  
*to take care lest privileged groups arise even amongst the workers themselves;*  
*to maintain a balance between wages and prices;*  
*to make accessible the goods and services for a better life*  
*to as many persons as possible;*  
*either to eliminate or to keep within bounds the inequalities*  
*that exist between different sectors of the economy;*  
*to balance properly any increases in output,*  
*with advances in services provided to citizens,*  
*especially by public authority. (79)*

**Mater et Magistra,  
Pope John XX111, 1961**

The world we are part of today, asks each person to review seriously the way in which we prepare for a Federal Election. Today, all people of good will yearn for the values of justice, a fair deal for all, human decency and compassion within leadership. We want to leave the legacy of a just, peaceful and sustainable world for future generations.

At this time of an election we are invited to ask ourselves

- ***Who are the people about whom Jesus would be most concerned at this time?***
- ***How do we show respect and care for our planet earth and for the whole of Creation?***

*Mark Peel, a Melbourne social researcher puts it this way: ‘*

*The people in the present to whom we now need to listen  
are those who have already lost the most ...  
who have paid a price – in blasted hopes and dreams –  
for the comforts of others.  
We need to listen, not simply out of sympathy or compassion,  
but because they have much to tell us.  
‘Losers’ know things about the world that winners don’t.  
There are things that being privileged doesn’t teach you.  
From the lowest rung, you see things  
that aren’t visible from the top or the centre.*

**Dr Mark Peel,  
‘The Forgotten Lessons of the Past: Housing, Security and Justice’**

We trust that this Kit will assist you to consider which Parties/candidates would be most likely to work for structures and policies which would support these values and a sustainable way of living on earth. A real challenge for us all.

# VOTING FOR COMPASSION AND COURAGE

## A FAIR DEAL FOR ALL

*NetAct*

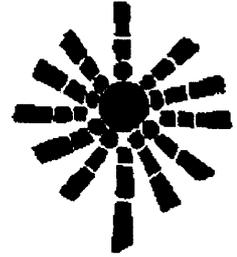


### **LIST OF PAPERS**

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1. Aboriginal Justice
2. Aboriginal Juvenile Justice
3. ABC
4. Asylum Seekers and Refugees
5. Budget
6. Caring for our Common Home
7. Education
8. Foreign Aid
9. Housing and Homelessness
10. Right to a Fair Trial – Witness K and Bernard Collaery
11. Uluru Statement of the Heart
12. West Papua

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# VOTING FOR COMPASSION AND COURAGE

## ABORIGINAL JUSTICE

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

As the 'first peoples' of Australia, Indigenous people hold a unique status in this land, which is not often acknowledged.

**Genuine equality** for indigenous peoples, as a basic human right, requires an **acknowledgement of their unique identity** and cultural heritage, and an active recognition of cultural differences.

The Constitution of a democratic nation **enshrines and safeguards the rights and dignity of its 'First Nations Peoples'**, and collaboration between Government and Indigenous people is essential to achieving this.

Self determination, as an effective policy (including **prevention, early intervention and social inclusion**) offers the way forward in providing real power to Indigenous people.

Genuine reconciliation requires truthful acknowledgment of our past history.

Everyone is entitled to the enjoyment of **human rights** without discrimination of any kind, (including on the basis of race).



### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

**Health:** There is still a seventeen-year difference between the life expectancy of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

**Education:** There has been an improvement in Year 12 according to the 2019 [Closing the Gap Report](#). Retention rates offer an important base for the future.

**Housing and Unemployment:** Serious problems in both areas continue throughout all Aboriginal communities, with ongoing generational effects.

**Services:** Inadequate policing, roads, water, electricity, sewerage, garbage disposal services are found across Indigenous communities – situations other Australian citizens would not tolerate.

**Imprisonment:** In the past decade, the incarceration rate for Indigenous men has more than doubled; [Indigenous youth now comprise more than 50 per cent of juveniles in detention](#) (despite being only 3% of the population); for Indigenous women, the rate of imprisonment is accelerating even faster – a 74% increase in the past 15 years.

**Imbalance in media reports:** Unbalanced media reporting reinforces the stereotyping and negative images of Indigenous people, with very little reporting of the success stories, or the culture and strength of leadership in many men and women.

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

**Aboriginal people continue to experience lower socio-economic outcomes** than other Australians, as well as significant levels of **discrimination**.

**Imbalance in media reporting** helps to ignite underlying racism, (including institutionalised racism), which still exists in our nation.

**Ongoing mandatory sentencing, imprisonment for fine defaults, "paperless" arrest laws, tough bail and parole conditions and punitive sentencing regimes** all contribute to high incarceration rates, along with funding cuts to frontline legal services and inadequate resourcing for much needed programs.

Debate continues around **Treaty and Constitutional Recognition**, often politicised for electoral advantage.

The Federal Government's current approach to Indigenous affairs is its **centralised, 'top-down' approach**. The contentious issue of the cashless welfare card is symptomatic of this. There is little consideration of the stigma, disempowerment, and punitive perceptions experienced by communities against the possible benefits of such a program.

Politicians lack the will to make indigenous issues a priority. Successful programs are often terminated because of short term funding and selective choosing of Indigenous leaders.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

### WE CAN LOBBY CANDIDATES:

To engage in a bi-partisan, formal collaboration with Indigenous peoples on matters affecting their social, cultural and economic interests, as well as their political status within the nation

To convince sympathetic politicians that **substantive constitutional change and structural reform**, can enable this ancient sovereignty to shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood

To **advance** consultation and decisions related to **Constitutional Change and Treaty to empower Indigenous people** to take a rightful place in their own country – where they have the power of their own destiny and their children can flourish. (Uluru Statement from the Heart)

To **entrench a vote** for both government and civil society so that meaningful involvement in decisions will be guaranteed

To **introduce effective long-term strategies to eliminate disadvantage**, and ensure the provision of adequate, recurrent funding without unfair conditions

To ensure that all **legislation, policies and programs** are consistent with **international human rights standards** and that accountability procedures are in place.

To **develop a sound framework**, which is people-centred and which recognises the social and cultural diversity of First Nations Peoples

To **build on the large body of research** already completed, and ensuring accountability, prior to the institution of new studies

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

**Inform** ourselves about the issues pertaining to **ongoing discrimination and racism around Treaty and Constitutional Change**

Invite representatives from **“the Aboriginal community”** to lead a **discussion** about issues related to Constitutional change

**Engage formally** and with family and friends in the consultations regarding both **Treaty and Constitutional Change**

**Promote a more balanced approach in reporting** (to eliminate discriminatory coverage and encourage education on current realities)

**Promote Diversionary/culturally appropriate programs** that work with young people to detect signs of problem behaviour to help divert young people from entering, or re-entering the juvenile justice system. This requires **adequate funding**, guaranteed for the long term and subject to independent review.

Develop a **bipartisan and community approach** to innovative juvenile justice.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

[https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru\\_Statement\\_From\\_The\\_Heart\\_0.PDF](https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru_Statement_From_The_Heart_0.PDF)  
[Justreinvest.org.au](http://Justreinvest.org.au)  
[www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au)  
[www.antar.org.au](http://www.antar.org.au)  
[www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au)  
[www.acsjc.org.au](http://www.acsjc.org.au)  
[www.erc.org.au](http://www.erc.org.au)

*We have our heroes.  
Albert Namatjira painted the  
soul of this nation.  
Vincent Lingiari  
put out his hand for Gough  
Whitlam to pour the sand of his  
country and say,  
'this is my country.'  
Cathy Freeman lit the torch  
of the Olympic games.*

*But every time we are lured  
into the light,  
we are mugged by the darkness  
of this country's history.  
**Of course, racism is killing  
the Australian Dream.***

*It is self evident that it's killing  
the Australian dream.  
**But we are better than that.***

*The people who stood up and  
supported Adam Goodes and  
said, 'no more;'  
they are better than that.  
The people who marched  
across the bridge for  
reconciliation;  
they are better than that.  
My wife who is not Indigenous  
is better than that.*

*And one day, I want to stand  
here and be able to say as  
proudly  
and sing as loudly  
as anyone else in this room,  
Australians **all**, let us rejoice.*

Stan Grant



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Your voice strengthens our voice

# VOTING WITH COMPASSION AND COURAGE

## ABORIGINAL JUVENILE IMPRISONMENT

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

Everyone is entitled to the enjoyment of **human rights** without discrimination of any kind, including on the basis of race.

**Genuine equality** for indigenous citizens, as a basic human right, requires an **acknowledgement of their unique identity** and cultural heritage, and an active recognition of cultural differences.

The principles of **prevention, early intervention and social inclusion** are fundamental to decision-making and service delivery.

**Effective policy** minimises the alienation and marginalisation of people.

**Justice Reinvestment with its focus on prevention and rehabilitation**, leads to community based and restorative justice programs, which record lower rates of re-offending.

*We need to be clear, when they talk about 'tough on crime' they mean 'tough on Aboriginal people'.*

Vickie Roach, Yuin Nation, Women's prison rights advocate

*We cannot flee persecution to another country because we are spiritually connected to our own ancestral lands. So jails and mental institutions are full of our people.*

Wadjularbinna Nullyarimma, Gungalidda Elder and member of Aboriginal Tent Embassy

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

#### **Numbers in Custody**

Aboriginal young people (aged 10 to 25) remain the [most over-represented group in our prison population](#). Half of our juvenile justice population is Aboriginal despite only making up 3% of the general population.

#### **Evidence**

We know that those most likely to end up in custody are poor; Aboriginal; with some disability; have experienced abuse or trauma; have a parent who has been in prison; are homeless; have problems with alcohol or other drugs. There is evidence to show that an [Indigenous juvenile is far more likely to be taken into custody](#) than a non-Aboriginal person guilty of the same offence.

#### **Reasons for increases in numbers**

The Bureau of Crime Statistics confirms that increased numbers are the consequence of poverty and tougher bail and sentencing policies.

#### **Limitations of the Bail Acts**

The **Bail Acts** across Australia have never reflected the interests of any young people, and are more onerous for indigenous juveniles. Their limitations have been exacerbated by ongoing amendments. Though the Bail Amendment Act 2014 required the bail authority to regard the 'presumption of innocence and the general right to liberty', the presumption of innocence has been gradually eroded.

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Putting young offenders in **custody is both expensive and ineffective**. More than half released from detention will re-offend. Detention also intensifies the need for greater support post-release.

**Prison has a ripple effect on every family**, especially if the member in prison was supporting the family.

**Policy based solely on law and order** results in demands for more detention centres at considerable cost, and with consequent cutting of costs to other services.

The 'political necessity' to appear tough on crime means that governments have invested little in alternative measures or programs.

Not only does the "law and order" approach not deter crime, but the cost to keep a juvenile in custody is in excess of \$150,000 a year.

It is clear then, that there exist **two policy goals in conflict**. We want to reduce the rate of juvenile Aboriginal imprisonment, yet we use imprisonment as the main means towards that end, despite numerous studies showing that it doesn't achieve that goal.



## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

### WE CAN LOBBY CANDIDATES:

To improve the quality of legal help available to young people so that they are able to articulate their defence in the culturally foreign environment of a courtroom

To change the bail acts to ensure that **juvenile-specific criteria** override the inflexible and punitive provisions of bail and repeat offenders' legislation

To adopt a bipartisan approach that makes a commitment to reinvesting funds into programs such as the community-based model being advocated by *Just Reinvest*, a program ideally suited to the particular circumstances of Indigenous communities

To reinvest a percentage of funds that would have been spent on law and order into early intervention, crime prevention and diversionary programs, thus creating savings in the criminal justice system. Such programs could reduce offending and re-offending rates by **assessing problems** facing particular communities, and **diverting funds** into areas, which can be tracked and reinvested

To invest in policies to keep all young people out of the criminal justice system and change the focus in youth detention centres to support and rehabilitation as a priority

To expand education in all juvenile detention centres to overcome the negative consequences on both education and outcomes and facility management for young people in detention

to invest in preventative and restorative programs.

## WHAT CAN WE DO AS A COMMUNITY?

### WE CAN BEGIN CONVERSATIONS

Research internationally has shown clearly that **reducing poverty** and all that goes with it will **reduce crime** and ultimately the number of people in gaols. An approach that builds skills and resilience is ultimately more cost effective than spending \$500 per day to keep a child locked up.

**Diversions, properly funded and culturally appropriate programs** that work with young people to detect signs of problem behaviour can help divert young people from entering, or re-entering the juvenile justice system.

Over-representation of Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system is a national crisis to which all governments must respond. All jurisdictions must address the root causes of Indigenous disadvantage, and rehabilitate young Indigenous people currently in the system.

Evidence-based policy can no longer be passed over in favour of short-term political gains. **We do not need another "law and order" election.**

There is need for **better trained and culturally informed police and judiciary**, properly resourced legal defence services, and working alternatives to incarceration.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Justreinvest.org.au](http://Justreinvest.org.au)

Australian Indigenous Law Review  
2010, Vol.14, Number 1.

Bail laws, 'The Law Report,'  
<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lawreport/stories/2010/3072759.htm> -  
[www.antar.org.au/nsw](http://www.antar.org.au/nsw)

## PHILOSOPHY OF JUST REINVEST

### GIVE THEM A LIFE NOT LIFE IN PRISON

*Just Reinvest NSW is committed to addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in custody.*

### WE CAN UNLOCK THE PATHWAY TO CHANGE

*Homelessness, child abuse, disability, high-risk drug and alcohol use, poor school attendance, a lack of appropriate services; violence, discrimination and poverty all act as precursors to young people becoming entrenched in the criminal justice system. These issues are difficult for Aboriginal young people to manage without help.*

### BUILD THEM A BRIGHTER FUTURE

*We aim to influence the New South Wales Government to shift spending that has been allocated for prisons towards community-based programs and services that address the factors that contribute to criminal behaviour in young people.*



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Your voice strengthens our voice

# IT'S OUR ABC

## PROTECTING THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

A **properly funded ABC**, which provides accurate information and honest analysis, is essential to the functioning of **democracy** in Australia.

The right to **legitimate criticism and dissent** is integral to a democratic society and should be reflected in the national broadcaster.

The commitment of the ABC is to the **public interest**. It is free of the commercial imperatives of the rest of the media, which serves the economic interests of owners, shareholders and advertisers.

Australia has among the highest rates of **concentrated media ownership** in the world. As that trend is growing, the maintenance of **the ABC is essential to media diversity**.

The ABC, through its cultural programs and programs linking all parts of Australia, is essential to our **evolving national identity**.

Radio Australia is one of Australia's most effective means of contributing **accurate information**. In an era of "fake news" this capacity is becoming more important.

The ABC promotes legitimate advocacy, principles of development and democracy in **South-east Asia** and elsewhere.

**More than 80% of Australians trust the ABC, compared to 57% trust of commercial media.**

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

#### FUNDING CUTS

ABC funding is 30% less than the levels of three decades ago. The ABC receives much less government support than most public broadcasters internationally.

Despite an announcement of a \$7.1 billion surplus and \$158 billion in tax cuts, the 2019 Federal Budget provides nothing more to the ABC. The assured three years' funding of \$43.7 million is minimal.

#### POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

The ABC board has been politicised, as it is appointed by the government of the day.

A 2018/2019 Senate Inquiry into questions of political interference in the ABC resulted in a final report split down party lines.

The Coalition's antagonism towards the ABC echoes that of right-wing media. Commentators, columnists and radio hosts join in unbalanced attacks on the ABC. These rants have been described as "Boringly repetitive. Dripping with poison".

Political and philosophical differences do not completely account for this negative focus. The commercial interests of privately owned media see in the ABC a challenge to their interests.

The opposition to the ABC is at root about **competition, profit and greed**.

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

The 2019 budget assists news gathering, but does not address the need for stability of operation, even in the near future.

Drastic cuts have reduced staff and programming capacity. Since 2014 there have been over 1000 redundancies. Australian drama on ABC has decreased by 25%.

Commentary, documentaries, music, religious affairs, language, local, shortwave, rural, cultural and regional services have all been severely cut during the same period.

**Threats to editorial independence reduce transparency and accountability.**

Honest reporting requires in-depth questioning and analysis.

The relentless hostility of some commercial media and their influence on government has resulted in undue official pressure on the ABC to refrain from such scrutiny. Thus it has failed to deliver adequate analysis, e.g. re asylum seekers, Manus and Nauru, West Papua.



## WHAT DO WE WANT?

### 1. AN INDEPENDENT ABC

Applications for Chair and Board must be sought publicly. Applicants to be interviewed and selected by a multi-party committee from both Federal Houses of Parliament. Those appointed must have some knowledge of broadcasting. (Such is not currently required.)

### 2. APPROPRIATE ABC FUNDING

Restoration of funding to the ABC at the levels, in real terms, being received in the late 1980's.

An end to the outsourcing of drama, comedy and science programs. In house productions give the ABC control over its productions. There is no proof that outsourcing is any cheaper or better than in-house production.

An end to the sale of any more ABC property.

### 3. SUPPORT OF THE ABC CHARTER

Political and financial support of the ABC to fulfil its mandate in this digital age.

Preservation of the ABC from the commercial competition and attacks.

Support of the ABC to undertake changes necessary to bring the best of radio and television to all of its networks in cities and the regions.

Recognition that, in a democracy, the national broadcaster's job is that of critic.

Acceptance by all sides of politics that when reporters ask politicians hard questions they are asking the people's questions.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

Read Senator Tim Storer's speech in Parliament on the ABC.

Congratulate him by using this contact form..

Contact your **Senators and Federal MP:**

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members/](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members)  
[Members](#)

Demand independence for the ABC, an end to political interference and appropriate funding.

Contact the media. Make known your thoughts clearly, briefly and regularly.

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

Watch the ABC.  
Listen to ABC Radio.

Learn the facts.

List advantages of the ABC.

Join Friends of the ABC

Share concerns on social media.



[www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au](http://www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au)



Fiona Katauskas

KATAUSKAS.

Eureka Street

Now you can see why we went to war.



No. With the ABC.

[www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au](http://www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au)

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Your voice strengthens our voice

# VOTING FOR COMPASSION AND COURAGE

## JUSTICE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

All members of the human family have equal dignity and inalienable rights as human beings.

In signing the 1951 Refugee Convention, Australia has acknowledged that states:

- Shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry, on refugees coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened (Article 31);
- Shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment with respect to assistance as is accorded to their nationals (Article 23);
- Shall issue to refugees lawfully staying in their territory travel documents for travel outside their territory (Article 28).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibits arbitrary detention of children except as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time (Article 37). It protects the right of children to remain under the care of their parents (Article 18), and recognises children's right to education (Article 28).

*"We can't deter people fleeing for their lives. They will come. The choice we have is how well we manage their arrival, and how humanely."*

Antonio Guterres, UN

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

#### ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Australian Government has violated its treaty obligations:

- detaining people in onshore and offshore detention centres for months and years without hope or future
- abdicating responsibility for those seeking protection by shunting them to off-shore islands under the rule of foreign countries.
- keeping babies, children and families in conditions which threaten health and security
- violating the UN provisions for the protection of asylum seekers, the care of children and the rights of all people.
- Violating human rights by forcibly removing families from homes, re-detaining asylum seekers and threatening and carrying out forced returns to country of origin, to face imprisonment and torture

#### REFUGEES

There have been **significant changes** to the determination of refugee status:

- the re-introduction of Temporary Protection Visas and the removal of government-funded legal assistance
- the 2018 re-assessment of Status Resolution Support Services for those deemed to be "Work Worthy" with **cuts to financial assistance and loss of accommodation.**

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

#### ASYLUM SEEKERS

It is clear that

- Abuse has occurred
- Refugees have died in offshore prisons
- Appropriate action has not been taken
- Abuse is institutionalised through bipartisan consensus.

By outsourcing its responsibilities for people fleeing for their lives, the Australian Government has failed to honour its obligations:

- to establish relevant human rights standards
- to act when complaints have been made,
- to oversee the behaviour of the company to whom it has outsourced the responsibility of Detention Centres.
- To protect those moved to transit centres on Manus
- To resettle all asylum seekers within a reasonable time frame
- To release all children

#### REFUGEES

- There have been delays in access to citizenship
- There has been denial of access to further education for those on Temporary Protection Visas.
- **SRSS is resulting in up to 12,000 people seeking asylum being stripped of financial support and essential services**
- The Job active program is not meeting the needs of refugees
- Refugees with disabilities are not receiving prompt and appropriate access to services
- There is on-going stress caused by the denial of family reunions.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

Both major parties say they will maintain offshore processing, offshore detention, third country resettlement and boat turnbacks. It is incumbent on us to continue to advocate for greater justice for refugees

### WE CAN LOBBY CANDIDATES FOR A SHIFT IN AUSTRALIA'S POLICY:

To honour our commitment to the UN Refugee Convention, and commit to UN provisions for the protection of asylum seekers, the care of children and the rights of all

To abandon the policy of offshore processing and boat turn backs

To amend legislation to ensure regular transparent review of on-shore detention to protect human rights and to prevent situations of indefinite detention

To increase negotiations with other countries towards an agreed regional solution, which recognises Australia's obligations

To increase the refugee resettlement program to an annual intake of 30,000 places, over the next 4 years

To take special note of the plight of the Rohingya people

To take special note of the plight of Syrian refugees

To develop a new approach to humanitarian family reunion, reducing existing processing times for family reunion applications

To abandon the reintroduction of temporary protection and convert all temporary visas into permanent protection visas.

To expedite the processing of citizenship applications as a matter of urgency

To reinstate Government-funded legal assistance

To peel back the extra discretionary powers given to the Immigration Minister that allow him to cancel visas, detain or re-detain asylum seekers without warning, send them to offshore detention and prevent reviews of visa decisions without proper procedure.

*"A person's dignity does not depend on their being a citizen, migrant or a refugee. Saving the life of someone fleeing war and poverty is an act of humanity." Pope Francis*

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

### WE CAN

Raise the issues in conversation with friends, with an emphasis on people in greatest need

Ensure our friends and relatives have an accurate understanding of the difference between the Governments immigration policy versus Australia's asylum seeker intake (The 2017/18 permanent immigration intake was 190,000 per annum. By contrast, the annual refugee resettlement program is less than 10% of this permanent immigration figure)

Promote a more humane and sophisticated approach to discussions, recognising that human rights must underpin decisions that are made

Engage in reflection on relevant questions, e.g. use of scapegoating, The role and responsibility of ordinary citizens

Invite guest speakers who can lead a discussion on the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, and on the current realities and injustices being suffered

Assist in practical ways – financially, as a volunteer, through prayer, and companionship/sponsorship.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Australian Human Rights Commission  
[www.humanrights.gov.au/](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/)

Refugee Council of Australia  
[www.refugeecouncil.org.au/](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/)

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council  
[www.acsjc.org.au#](http://www.acsjc.org.au#)

ACOSS:  
[www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au)

St Vincent de Paul Society:  
[www.vinnies.org.au#](http://www.vinnies.org.au#)



# NetAct

A Project of Catholic Social Justice, Welfare and Educational

Agencies

14 Yerrick Rd Lakemba NSW 2195. [Jan.Barnett@sosi.org.au](mailto:Jan.Barnett@sosi.org.au)

# AT THE SERVICE OF GREATER JUSTICE

## THE BUDGET 2019

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

The Federal Government plays an important role in maintaining **social cohesion and guaranteeing equity** in the community.

Distributive justice recognises that the **burdens of the community are to be shared** and reflect the reality that different members of society have varying abilities to contribute.

The Government plays a direct role in **redistributing the wealth in society towards those in greatest need**. The budget plays a vital role in this redistribution.

An effective taxation system **encourages socially and environmentally responsible outcomes**.

Federal revenue raised from taxes **supports vital social services** and contributes to the provision of services by State Governments.

An effective system **encourages balanced and sustainable growth**, in order to maintain current living standards, and increase the living standards of those less well off. It collects sufficient revenue to allow the Government to maintain funding commitments and expand commitments where necessary.

An effective budget **encourages job creation**.

Effective tax cuts to those who are poor drives economic growth.

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The Government has promised big tax breaks in this budget, but like the past three, this budget continues to favour upper middle class and wealthy Australians, with few long-term benefits for those on the lowest incomes:

- People on \$200,000 will get over \$224 a week,
- People on \$50k will get \$23 a week,
- People on \$25,000 (on pensions) get a one-off payment of \$75 (equivalent to \$1.40pw),
- People on \$15,000 (on Newstart) suffer unconscionable injustice
- Foreign aid has been reduced yet again (to 0.21% rather than 0.7%)

There has been **little** in this budget **to improve the situation for the 3 million people in poverty, the 116,427 homeless people** on the streets, nor for the **190,000 on the queue for social housing**.

The tax breaks for those who are wealthy will result in less being available for schools, hospitals, aged care, community support agencies, and environmental initiatives.

Little effort is made to address multinational corporate tax avoidance or the lack of effective resource rent taxes (e.g. oil and gas industry). Michael West

*“The vacuousness of this year's budget is matched only by the viciousness of the inequality it entrenches.”*

John Falzon

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

The effects of **growing inequality are real and corrosive in society**, and the budgets of the past three years have reinforced this trend.

**This budget continues Australia's record as a relatively low taxing and spending nation** compared to other OECD countries.

This budget equates the common good with the interests of affluent and well-off investors, and in a lesser way with small business. Everything else, such as a welfare system, health, education and wages, are seen as cost burdens to be kept strictly under control.

Every piece of evidence has demonstrated a severe disadvantage for low income Australians while the largesse is reserved for those who are wealthy.

**There seem to be two targets in the Coalition budget:**

- 1. The most vulnerable members of society – especially**
  - young unemployed people,
  - single parents,
  - low-paid families
  - Those needing medical attention,
  - Aboriginal people,
  - people with disabilities
  - Part-time and casual workers
- 2. The government's ideological targets:**
  - the ABC,
  - the CSIRO,
  - renewable energy sector,
  - foreign aid.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

### WE CAN LOBBY CANDIDATES:

To strengthen the tax system to ensure that those who can afford to contribute do so, that the policy encourages growth, offers taxpayers value for money, is fair to all and prioritises support for those who need it

Use the budget to target those in need – to avoid blaming the victim.

To develop a robust safety net for those unable to continue to work due to poor health or disability

To commit to removal of wasteful resources on subsidies and tax breaks for polluting industries

To take resolute action on corporate tax avoidance

To commit to reforming negative gearing and upper-class welfare

To strengthen again the support for regulatory agencies and statutory bodies to ensure the enforcement of just regulations

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

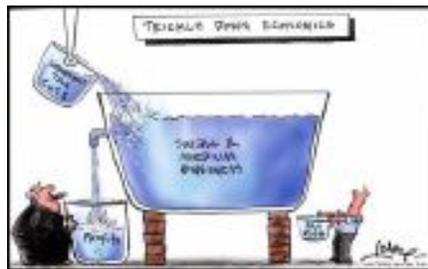
### WE CAN

Develop a habit and culture of looking at the taxation system as our contribution to a fair deal for all, rather than a tax burden.

Inform ourselves about the impact of the budget and about the causes and results of policies of the past ten years.

Raise the issues in conversation with friends, with an emphasis on people in greatest need

Promote a more sophisticated approach to budget analysis, which recognises that a fair deal must underpin decisions that are made



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Top 40 Tax Dodgers for 2019:  
<https://www.michaelwest.com.au>

ACOSS:  
[www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au)

St Vincent de Paul Society:  
[www.vinnies.org.au#](http://www.vinnies.org.au#)

Australian catholic social Justice Council  
[www.acsjc.org.au#](http://www.acsjc.org.au#)

We live in a post trickle-down theory world, where people are sensitised to government-enabled corporate excesses and have legitimate reason to doubt whether elected officials are capable and willing to serve their interests.

The lesson from the federal budgets of the past five years is that there are non-negotiables around the function of government to provide the conditions that ensure the flourishing of all.

***The credibility test for political parties – and the central question around fiscal policy – is no longer about economic growth, but growth for whom***

“A smaller government reflecting the needs of the middle class and poor is superior to a big government reflecting the needs of the privileged and powerful.”

(Robert Reich)

“Paying a lot of taxes just means you make a lot of money, and it is hard, frankly, to complain about that.”

Wealthy CEO



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# CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR EARTH

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

**All forms of life** – plant, animal and human – are fundamentally interconnected and inter-dependent.

**The conservation of the earth's resources** is vital for our own and the planet's survival.

**Future generations** have a right to inherit a healthily functioning and bio-diverse environment.

**All elements of the environment** have intrinsic value, irrespective of the extent to which they can be utilised by humans.

**The water cycle** is part of a broader ecosystem on which our food and industry depends and access to safe, clean water is a basic right for humans and other species.

**There needs to be a balance** between the priorities of environmental needs and social and economic costs.

**Protection of environmental resources** is fundamental to a healthy environment.

Australia owes it to the global community to support the Paris Agreement.

*“What we are doing to the environment is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.”*

— Chris Maser

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

**The Government continues to support the fossil fuel industries, despite the Paris Agreement** The 2019 budget includes an extra \$1.8 billion in subsidies, bringing it to \$9 billion a year by 2023.

**Climate change continues to exacerbate issues** of water, floods, fire and drought, devastating the country and livelihoods.

Governments **refuse to ban the Adani Mine**, which is anticipated to produce 2.3 billion tonnes of coal over the 60-year lease period. The approval of the Groundwater plan poses a direct danger to aquifers of the Great Artesian Basin.

**The Great Barrier Reef** is suffering **the worst coral-bleaching event in its history.**

**The Report of the Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission** describes the maladministration and negligence which has led to mass fish kills and devastation of the river system.

**Waterways are being contaminated** by run-off from businesses using chemically-based fertilisers and pesticides.

The **proposal** that S.A. **build a nuclear waste dump** on Aboriginal land, encapsulates the priority of economics over the environment.

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Australia currently has an economy that depends on **over-consumption of energy**, with the world's highest average emissions per person.

Our current production and consumption of **non-renewable resources** i.e. coal and oil, is **increasing exponentially.**

**Australia** is the **world's largest coal exporter**, and if Adani goes ahead, it will have the largest mine.

**Extreme weather events** and increasing temperatures have serious social, economic and health consequences, including serious displacement of populations.

**Mining has taken water** from rural supplies, contributed to pollution, and threatened rock structures.

**The privatisation of water supply** has led to decreased water security and also removed government responsibility for essential rights.

**Current laws are failing** to protect rivers, vanishing wildlife, reefs and forests, and enable companies to pollute with little responsibility to repair damage.

*For people it is convenient not to act. We have to make it inconvenient for them not to act. Nothing changes until the pain of not acting is high enough.* Anote Tong,

## WHAT DO WE WANT?

1. **Reduction of reliance on fossil and nuclear fuels** and conversion to renewable, cost-effective energy based on wind, solar and tidal technologies
2. **A new framework of national laws and Integration of legislation** which ensures strategic planning and development outcomes, which are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable
3. **An independent national Environmental Protection Authority** to promote regulation, better science and data collection, and a more strategic, transparent approach to environmental issues
4. **Restoration of healthy rivers** particularly the Murray-Darling system through co-operation between the Federal Government and other States to implement and improve the Murray Darling Basin Plan
5. **Greater water efficiency**
  - Technology in sympathy with natural ecosystems- so that water is used several times without depriving its ecosystem uses
  - Continued retro-fitting of homes with water-efficient shower heads, toilets, tanks and recycled water
6. **A moratorium imposed on Coal Seam Mining extraction** until a precautionary, considered and integrated strategy is developed – one which includes community consultation and independent scientific input.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

There are significant points of difference between the major parties. This is an area where voters can hope to influence policies.

### We can lobby candidates

1. To commit to the removal of wasteful resources on tax breaks and subsidies for polluting industries
2. To commit to strategies of rapid emissions reduction and a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, in order to keep the 1.5 limit within reach
3. To prioritise and fund clean, safe and affordable public and private electric transport
4. To institute greater flows of finance for adaptation and loss/damage
5. To call for fossil fuel divestment across organisations and communities
6. To promote strong policies that will ensure alignment and coordination of regulatory frameworks across all levels to Australia's Paris Commitment.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### The Climate Institute:

[www.climateinstitute.org.au](http://www.climateinstitute.org.au)

#### Catholic Earthcare Australia:

[www.catholicearthcareoz.net](http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net)

#### Coal Seam Gas Mining

[www.nwc.gov.au/www/html/2959-coal-seam-gas.asp?intSiteID=1](http://www.nwc.gov.au/www/html/2959-coal-seam-gas.asp?intSiteID=1)

#### OzGreen

[www.ozgreen.org](http://www.ozgreen.org)

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

1. Challenge with friends and family the limitations of the jobs and growth mantra
2. Carry out an energy audit to find where energy consumption could be reduced
3. Contribute to cleaner water by not using cleaning products containing phosphates and chemicals
4. Expand the use of solar
5. Implement recycling and composting
6. At community events, replace disposable cups, plates and cutlery with washable or compostable items
7. Encourage faith communities to reduce emissions and to support and stand in solidarity with communities already impacted by climate change
8. Encourage conversation around electric vehicles

*Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less, is the property of only a few: Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude.*

Pope Francis



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# VOTING FOR COMPASSION AND COURAGE

## JUSTICE FOR EDUCATION

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

It is our belief that **education is the right of every child.**

All students have the right to **equitable, intrinsically valuable, and accessible** education.

Quality education for all students is a **critical investment** that Australia makes for its future.

**Parents** have the primary **right and obligation** to ensure the best education for their children.

Both the **Commonwealth and State Governments** play a **critical role** in the provision of funding that is stable, long term and committed to all students.

An **equitable distribution of resources** takes into particular account the needs of students disadvantaged by social, economic, cultural or physical factors.

**The valuing of teachers** leads logically to the provision of adequate resources for ongoing teacher education, remuneration, and ongoing teacher development.

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

#### **Educational Standards**

Australian students have not improved their achievement on international tests for a decade, and are falling behind students in other advanced nations. Results in international tests like PISA [are declining](#) and [many children are missing](#) out at important milestones before, during and after school (OECD 2018).

#### **Funding for All**

The OECD 2018 **Education at a Glance** report has revealed that the Australian education sector falls below OECD averages in public education funding, access to early childhood education, class sizes and teacher workload.

#### **Wedge Politics**

**The increasing use** of wedge politics, through ideologically and politically driven attempts to create competition between sectors, has led to the polarisation of educational sectors, rather than a united commitment by educational bodies to achieve adequate funding for all educational institutions.

#### **TAFE Education**

Since being in Government, the Coalition has cut \$3 billion from vocational education and there are now 140,000 fewer apprentices than when it was elected. Vocational education continues to be privatised and TAFE disempowered.

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

#### **Impact of falling standards**

- Educational trends have led to **an emphasis on standardised tests** as the benchmark of a school's standards.
- Teacher shortage, particularly in specific subject areas, is exacerbated by the low status of, and limited career paths in, the teaching profession.  
(Deans of Education Study)

#### **Funding**

**Below average funding** in schools, as well as in early childhood, TAFE, Abstudy and in Adult Migrant Education Services have negatively impacted on students in disadvantaged groups, especially those in greatest need, and those with the least powerful voices. The shift towards privatisation in areas such as TAFE continues to undermine enrolments in vocational education.

#### **Educational divide**

Figures from the government's [MySchool website](#) show that selective high schools are among the most socio-educationally advantaged, surpassing even prestigious private schools.

#### **Polarisation of sectors**

Continuation of competition between sectors detracts from advocacy for the adequate provision of funding for all stages of schooling, from pre-school to post-compulsory education:



## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

### WE CAN LOBBY CANDIDATES:

To **commit explicitly to the adequate provision of funding for all stages of schooling**, from pre-school to post-compulsory education:

- comparable to **OECD standards**
- targeting **students who are disadvantaged**
- ensuring that **early childhood education** is accessible and affordable for the whole community
- Affording adequately funded **TAFE education**
- providing **equitable access to new technologies** (to overcome the digital divide between the information rich and the information poor)
- **compensating for differences** of social status, material wealth, geographic location and resource levels among schools
- affording access to **adequate health and welfare services** so that there is an effective interface between education and health

To provide for the **professional development of teachers** to meet rapidly changing demands and increase the status of the teaching profession.

to **reduce the commodification** of education, so that thinking about it in a purely market and individualistic paradigm can be replaced by a view of education that promotes both the individual and the common good.

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

Inform ourselves about **standards** of education in Australia and about the causes and results of policies of the past ten years

Support **increased funding to all schools** in conversation with friends, with an emphasis on students in greatest need

Promote a more **sophisticated approach** to education, which recognises that education is more than basic skills testing

Invite **guest speakers** who can lead a discussion on the vision, aims and practice in education today.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Catholic Education Commission

<https://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au>

Department of Education and Training

<https://www.education.gov.au>

Australian Education Union

<http://www.aeufederal.org.au>



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*A century from now,  
what shall be said of our journey  
in these times?  
And who shall the shapers have been?  
Who shall have shaped the future more?  
The hopeful dreamers  
who were strong enough  
to suffer for the dream?  
Or the fearful pessimists  
who were convinced  
that dreaming and hope  
are for sleepers only,  
not for those awake to the age?  
**A century from now,**  
shall hope and humour  
have been strong enough to enable living  
with unanswerable questions?  
Or shall the pain  
that a transitional age necessarily brings  
have caused a retreat to old answers  
that no longer acknowledge new  
questions?  
**A century from now,**  
we shall have indeed journeyed ...  
and real journeyers know  
that the direction is always chosen  
by those who make the journey.  
Who shall choose the direction?  
...So the question is still the same ...  
**A century from now,**  
what shall be said  
of our human journey in these times?  
And who shall the shapers have been?  
**Lilian Smith** The Journey, 1954*

# CHALLENGED TO COMPASSION AND COURAGE

## HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

We believe that **health** is a social good that is **basic to the fabric of society**, and that it is a **fundamental right of every person**.

We believe that a properly funded, universal health care system **protects the rights of all**.

It is **the responsibility of Government** to provide and fund quality health care programs and services.

A system, **funded from government, non-government and private sources**, is critical to quality care, based on equity, universality and ease of access.

A **person-centred system**, rather than one that is facility-centred, or primarily based on profit-making, is central to health as a social good.

Frail, chronically ill or marginalised persons have special needs, and any **system that disadvantages those on the margins undermines the rights of all**.

**Planning** for adequate health and aged care infrastructures and services **underpins services into the future**.

***“When we have sold all our public assets, where will future funds come from? There has to be another way at this time.”***

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

#### **Health and socio-economic status**

Levels of health for Australians are increasingly dependent on socio-economic status.

#### **Frontline services**

**\$182.2 million has been cut from frontline health services** through reductions in funds which provide money for drug and alcohol treatment and illness prevention.

#### **Medicare**

This budget **extends the freeze** on the **Medicare rebate**.

#### **Dental Health**

The government's **dental policy takes** over a billion dollars out of the system and **abolishes Medicare funded dental care**

#### **Indigenous health**

There is **no funding** for **specific Aboriginal-controlled services and programs**.

#### **Mental illness**

The government has invested an additional \$461 million in youth mental health and suicide prevention, but there is still a huge gap in funding for services for acute and chronic issues.

#### **Rural and regional Australia**

Decreasing numbers of rural health workers, and reduced access to healthcare, are critical issues.

#### **Government Funding**

Hospitals are being forced to cover funding shortfalls by raising hundreds of millions of dollars in external revenue.

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Levels of health continue to disadvantage poorer Australians. The **lowest 20%** of income earners experience the **highest levels of poor health outcomes**. The budget reinforces this through the cuts to health.

The freezing of the Medicare rebate means that over time, GPs will earn relatively less, while their costs will increase.

The current **lack of collaboration** between Federal and State Governments, and the non-government sectors is **exacerbating low outcomes**.

**Indigenous Australians** remain the **most disadvantaged group** in Australia as measured by life expectancy, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and access to services.

Evidence shows that **mental illness and substance dependency** frequently co-exist. **Integrated treatment and rehabilitation facilities** remain threatened.

Funding models and the demands of an ageing population continue to undermine infrastructures and services. Proposed cuts will impact particularly on smaller institutions.

Lack of adequate support for **rural people and their carers** are resulting in lower health outcomes.

**Hospital funding** remains inadequate, despite promised increases.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

The current debate over funding between Commonwealth and State has thrown the health debate into disarray. Increased funding is essential and cannot occur without collaboration. **Patient care must never take second place to politics.**

### WE CAN THEREFORE LOBBY CANDIDATES:

- To commit to **protection of the Medicare System**
- to commit to **negotiation based on health and social needs**, not political agenda
- to develop clear action plans that focus on **preventative health care** and **reducing inequalities** in health outcomes and services
- To commit to the development of a **mental health system** that ensures access to mental health care, especially for homeless people and those who find it difficult to engage with the health care system
- To make **access to aged care an entitlement** to those assessed as needing it
- To **broaden the criteria and services for rural and disadvantaged people**
- to **target Indigenous health** as a major priority

*“Indigenous health is a running sore at the heart of our nation.”*

Archbishop Coleridge

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

We can **share ideas** with our own family and community.

We can **work with like-minded groups**.

We can **investigate possibilities** in our area of influence and action.

We can **raise awareness** of Health issues by inviting Catholic Health Australia and community advocates and practitioners to speak with us.

We can **advocate** with religious and community groups to investigate realities and possibilities within their own sectors (N.B. on any given day, one in ten Australians in a hospital or aged care bed are being cared for by a Catholic health or aged care service).

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Catholic Health Care Services:  
[www.catholichealthcare.com.au](http://www.catholichealthcare.com.au)

Catholic Health Australia:  
[www.cha.org.au](http://www.cha.org.au)

ACOSS:  
[www.acoss.org.au](http://www.acoss.org.au)

St Vincent de Paul Society:  
[www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council  
[www.acsjc.org.au](http://www.acsjc.org.au)

***MAY GOD BLESS US WITH DISCOMFORT***

*at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may live deep within our hearts.*

***MAY GOD BLESS US WITH ANGER***

*at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may work for economic justice for all people.*

***MAY GOD BLESS US WITH TEARS***

*to shed for those who suffer from pain, hunger, homelessness and rejection, so that we may reach out our hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.*

***AND MAY GOD BLESS US WITH ENOUGH FOOLISHNESS***

*to believe that we can make a difference in the world so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.’*

Source: Education for Justice



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# VOTING FOR COMPASSION AND COURAGE

## HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

Poverty and homelessness are the problem, not **the people** experiencing it.

Every Australian has the **right to a home**.

**Adequate housing** is a basic human need and a fundamental human right.

*(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, No.25).*

**Affordable, appropriate and secure housing**, which offers safety, privacy and reasonable security of tenure, is fundamental to adequate housing provision.

Access to quality, affordable housing, which includes **accessibility to transport, employment and community services**, is central to community well-being, and provides a foundation for family and social stability.

The **role of Government is critical** in ensuring that the housing rights of people are met, particularly for those on low incomes and those with special needs.

Many factors lead to **homelessness**, but ultimately it is the result of **poverty**.



### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Australia has a population of about 25,000,000. Our most recent census revealed that over 116,000 people were experiencing homelessness, an almost 14% increase to the previous census. Over the same time period Australia's population rose by a smaller 8.8 per cent.

#### **Housing Stock**

There is an **insufficient supply** of affordable housing available for purchase. The waiting list for public housing in Australia now runs to 189,400 households.

#### **Housing Stress**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that almost one million households are now living in rental or mortgage stress, i.e. are **paying more than 30%** of gross income on recurrent housing costs.

Between 4% and 24% of dwellings were considered overcrowded, and between 7% and 26% under-utilised in 2016–17.

#### **Housing Affordability**

Housing is **the major cost** facing every vulnerable household.

#### **Homelessness**

For women in particular, domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness. Other causes include: lack of affordable housing, unemployment, poverty and low wages.

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

In the past fifty years, Australia has **moved from** a society where housing was seen as a **universal right**, to one where it is now predominantly viewed as a **safety net** for those most in need.

**Cutbacks in Commonwealth and state funding** have led to increased rental and mortgage stress, and a reduction in the number of services to assist those suffering financial stress, and domestic and family violence.

**Social problems** (violence, financial insecurity, unemployment, underemployment, delinquency, marriage breakdown, infirmity and old age) have been shown to be aggravated by the lack of, or inadequate, housing.

The **negative impact** of inadequate housing has exacerbated the need for spending on health, prisons, and welfare provisions. In many large housing estates, the lack of support systems has resulted in significant instability.

Governments have named **domestic violence** as a significant cause of homelessness, yet have failed to provide affordable housing to alleviate the problem.

We know that the continuing increase in **homelessness** can be related to the decrease in affordable housing.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

Housing will continue to be a critical issue, whichever Party wins power. Unless all candidates accept that housing is fundamental to a civil society, it will continue to be a growing financial and social burden for the whole community.

### WE CAN LOBBY CANDIDATES:

To commit to **realistic levels of funding** for housing, regardless of other calls made on revenue.

To **commit revenue** to create new, purpose-built, safe, affordable accommodation for vulnerable people, and especially the elderly, and disabled, victims of domestic violence, homeless indigenous Australians, and those suffering from mental health issues.

To **use the proceeds from the sale of public housing** to create new, purpose-built, safe, affordable accommodation to house elderly, long-term residents.

To develop **new models of cooperative housing** for low-income households.

To increase the level of social housing and **upgrade existing stock**.

To provide funding for public and community housing, and **incentives for the development of affordable housing** in the private market.

To implement **rent-setting in community housing**, targeting low-income households and to **increase rent allowance** in areas of need.

To legislate to guarantee **adequate protection (tenants and landlords)**.

To **invest in emergency housing** for those experiencing severe stress.

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

We can **share ideas** with our own community.

We can **work with like-minded groups**.

We can **investigate possibilities** in our area of influence and action.

We can **raise awareness** of housing issues by inviting community and social housing advocates and practitioners to speak with us.

We can **advocate** with religious and community groups to investigate housing possibilities within their own sectors.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

ACOSS:

<https://www.acoss.org.au/policy-priorities-for-the-next-govt-housing-homelessness/>

Churches Community Housing:

[www.churcheshousing.org.au](http://www.churcheshousing.org.au)

St Vincent de Paul Society:

[www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

[www.acsjc.org.au](http://www.acsjc.org.au)

## REMEMBER...

Poverty and homelessness are the problem, not **the people** experiencing it.

**The people we see on the street** are just the tip of the iceberg.

**Domestic violence** is one of the major causes of homelessness in Australia.

**Family homelessness** is a growing phenomenon. Homeless mothers and their children are disadvantaged and at risk.

There has been a large percentage increase in **elderly women** experiencing homelessness.

### Lobbying and advocacy work!!!

In November 2017, a small Working Group to End Homelessness in New York set out to get the word **Homelessness** into a United Nations document.

On 18 February 2019, this Priority Theme was accepted by all the Member States of the UN.



# NetAct

A Project of Catholic Social Justice, Welfare and Educational Agencies  
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# THE RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

## THE PERSECUTION OF WITNESS K AND BERNARD COLLAERY

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

There are minimum standards for a fair trial.

All people should be equal before the courts.

A defendant is entitled to be informed promptly of the charges and the evidence to be used against him or her.

A defendant is entitled to be given access to the detailed evidence and background to the charges.

The defendant is entitled to be tried 'without undue delay'.

Trials should be public except where there are clearly recognised matters of national security at risk.



*Bernard Collaery*

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

**The Australian government spied** on Timor-Leste in 2004 during negotiations about the sharing of the resources of the Timor Sea.

**The spy now known as "Witness K"** found out that officials who ordered the spying were lobbying for Woodside, the oil company involved. He complained to the spy agency and was advised to get a lawyer. He chose Bernard Collaery.

**When the Timorese government was advised of the spying,** they withdrew from the Treaty and began negotiations for the 2018 border.

**Two months after the border was finalised,** Witness K and Collaery were charged with making known state secrets.

**They had not received the brief of evidence** against them by April 2019, ten months after charges were laid.

**National Security Legislation** is being used to ensure secrecy. Magistrate's preliminary hearings have been postponed and delayed, and times and venues have been concealed. There is as yet no set date for the trial.

**The current prosecution of Witness K and Bernard Collaery does not meet the internationally accepted standards for a fair trial.**

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

**The right to a fair trial** is being denied Witness K and Bernard Collaery.

**National Security legislation** is being used to cover-up the economic espionage on Timor-Leste, which was illegal and fraudulent.

The prosecution **conceals the actions of those who ordered the illegal spying.**

The prosecution depicts **those who told the truth as criminals.**

The prosecution **weakens the rule of law.** It **establishes a precedent** which could affect future truth-tellers.

**The prosecution signals to the intelligence community** that reporting abuse of law threatens their reputation and livelihood.

The prosecution exposes Australia to **international condemnation.** It **erodes the Australian image** as a fair, law-abiding, honest and non-corruptible regional power.

The whole episode has **soured the relationship** with Timor-Leste.

Two Australian men of integrity are being **treated as criminals,** adversely affecting them, their families and wider circles, and their livelihood.

"If the material is so significant a danger to national security if disclosed, then the result should be that the proceedings are abandoned," retired Judge Anthony Whealy said.

## WHAT DO WE WANT?

**The immediate discontinuance of the prosecution** of Witness K and Bernard Collaery.

**An Australian government apology and reparations** to the two men.

**An investigation** into the illegal and fraudulent espionage against Timor-Leste in 2004 .

**An inquiry** into the relationship between ASIS activities in 2004 in Timor-Leste and the ongoing investigation into the Bali bombings at the same time.

**Greater media interest** in the Witness K case.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

**Call for the immediate discontinuance of the case.**

**Lobby Labor candidates.**

**Lobby** Mark Dreyfus QC, MP, the Shadow Attorney-General.

**Contact media:**

Newspapers  
Radio stations  
Television stations

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

**Find out more about the case.**

**Read articles:**  
<http://justly.info/>

**Use social media to let others know of this outrageous affair.**

**Contact family and friends.**

*“This is Australian politics' biggest scandal, and the most powerful people in the country are ensuring you know as little about it as possible.”*



*Canberra demonstration at first Magistrate's hearing 12 September 2018*

“Labor used to be the party that was sceptical of Australia's intelligence agencies. It's time for MPs to speak out on their party's collusion with the cover-up of the Witness K scandal — even if it means admitting Labor's own culpability in the affair.”

“Attorney-General Christian Porter has issued non-disclosure certificates to prevent the alleged secret information being revealed on the basis it is likely to prejudice national security. This tactic is central to the government's desire to prosecute K and Collaery out of sight of the media and the public. It obscures the question of the culpability of John Howard, Alexander Downer, David Irvine and a range of security officials in the illegal bugging of the East Timorese cabinet — and the feckless removal of counter-terrorism resources from Indonesia at a time of terrorist attacks against Australian targets there to enable it. But it also affords considerable procedural opportunities for Porter's lawyers to delay proceedings further.” (Bernard Keane) [Read more.](#)



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# VOTING FOR COMPASSION AND COURAGE

## ULURU STATEMENT OF THE HEART

*Moving the Uluru Statement forward can only happen if Indigenous and non-indigenous leaders come together in trust.*

*To find common ground, we must commit to trusting conversation, compassion and courage.*

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

The Uluru Statement of the Heart is an **invitation to all Australians to participate in a process of peace and reconciliation**, where we can speak the truth of our history, seek justice, and find healing for all.

A **constitutionally enshrined Voice to the Parliament** of Australia will enable the voices of First Nations Peoples to be heard, so that they can achieve **self-determination** over decisions that touch their lives, culture and communities.

**Just relationships** are created when we seek to listen, learn and walk together.

The Constitution of a democratic nation **enshrines and safeguards the rights and dignity of its 'First Nations Peoples'**, those at the very heart of what it means to be Australian.

The Makarrata Commission has been set up **to supervise a process of agreement-making** between governments and First Nations and where there is **truth-telling about Indigenous history** so that a movement for a better future for all Australians is made possible.

The **steps from Uluru to constitutional recognition** can only occur by the long and complex path of **prior legislative enactment and road testing of the model**.

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The **Uluru Statement of the Heart and the call for a Makarrata** (a coming together after a dispute) **has been rejected** by the Coalition Government without consultation or respect. The Opposition has stated that it will honour the call to move the Statement forward.

Some politicians **misrepresent the proposal** for an enshrined voice in Parliament as a demand for **"a third chamber of parliament."**

The Government's continuing **failure to 'close the gap'** indicates the breadth of current problems and the need for self-determination and a voice in decision-making.

**Across media reports, the ongoing misrepresentations and imbalance has led to confusion and misunderstanding**, reinforcing the stereotyping and negative images of Indigenous people.

*Indeed, our survival and liberation depend upon our recognition of the truth. If we cannot recognise the truth, then it cannot liberate us from untruth. To know the truth is to appropriate it, for it is not mainly reflection and theory. Truth is divine action entering our lives, creating the human action of liberation.*

James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

**Debate** continues around **Treaty and Constitutional Recognition**, and is characteristically politicised for electoral advantage.

**Imbalance in media reporting** helps to exacerbate underlying racism, (including institutionalised racism), which still exists in our nation.

The Uluru Statement of the Heart has heightened awareness of the contradictions between the **sovereign rights of First Nations and settler Australia's moral legitimacy**.

The Uluru Statement challenges the Federal Government's current approach to Indigenous affairs, which is **centralised and 'top-down'**. The contentious issue of the cashless welfare card is symptomatic of this.

The lack of political leadership is evidenced in the absence of appropriate political deliberation and ability to move towards to decision, which is appropriately principled and practicable.

**Aboriginal people continue to experience lower socio-economic outcomes** than other Australians, as well as significant levels of **discrimination**.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

### WE CAN LOBBY CANDIDATES:

To engage in a **bi-partisan, formal collaboration** with Indigenous peoples on the **Uluru Statement of the Heart**

To **recognise the sovereignty of First Peoples** and **establish a Commission** for treaty making, truth telling, justice and reconciliation

to **follow the roadmap of the interim report** of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition

To work sincerely and wholeheartedly to **advance** consultation and decisions related to **Constitutional Change and Treaty** and thus to **empower Indigenous people** to take a rightful place in their own country – where they have the power of their own destiny and their children can flourish

To **involve Aboriginal communities** on their **political status** within the nation, as well as on matters affecting their **social, cultural and economic interests**

To convince sympathetic colleagues that **substantive constitutional change and structural reform**, can enable this ancient sovereignty to shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood

To embark on the long journey towards an **entrenched bi-partisan vote** for both government and civil society so that meaningful involvement in decisions will be guaranteed

To ensure that all **legislation, policies and programs** are consistent with **international human rights standards** and that accountability procedures are in place.

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

*To achieve the Uluru Statement all must **listen to each other and work together**. This is the bridge over which divisions have existed.*

We can therefore:

**Inform** ourselves about the issues pertaining to **the Uluru Statement of the Heart**

Invite representatives from **"the Aboriginal community"** to lead a **discussion** about issues related to the Statement

**Engage formally** and with family and friends in the consultations regarding both **Treaty and Constitutional Change**

**Promote a more balanced approach in political and media** reports (to eliminate discriminatory coverage and encourage education on current realities)

Develop a **bipartisan and community approach to ongoing consultation** regarding the **Uluru Statement**

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Uluru Statement from the Heart  
[https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru\\_Statement\\_From\\_The\\_Heart\\_0.PDF](https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru_Statement_From_The_Heart_0.PDF)  
[Justreinvest.org.au](http://Justreinvest.org.au)  
[www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au)  
[www.antar.org.au](http://www.antar.org.au)  
[www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au)  
[www.acsjc.org.au](http://www.acsjc.org.au)  
[www.erc.org.au](http://www.erc.org.au)

*The Uluru Statement of the Heart eloquently reflects the emotions and feelings of the majority of Indigenous peoples. It tells the truth of a troubled past and calls for a **Makarrata** – a coming together in peace. It has called for a "truth-telling" about Australia's history which includes the (attempted) silencing of Australian languages. It is a demand to be heard as well as an invitation to speak together and listen to one another. In 2019 this invitation is still being rejected. The Uluru Statement's call for Makarrata was a call for peace.*



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# WEST PAPUA

## AN AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

### WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

Every person is made in the image and likeness of God.

Every person has the right to life, liberty and security of person, and freedom from torture and cruelty.

Every person has the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention.

Every adult has the right to engage in decisions affecting their nation, to freedom of opinion and expression, and to receive and impart information and ideas.

Every person has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Every person has the right to be educated and to work.

Every person has the right to express their own culture publicly.

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

#### ACT OF NO CHOICE

The 1969 takeover by Indonesia of Papua (now the provinces of Papua and West Papua) was conducted by the military gaining the forced agreement of just 1,022 people.

This illegitimate act lies at the root of all Papuan problems.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

People have been arrested and jailed for openly supporting a recent petition and for other acts of dissent, e.g. raising the Papuan flag.

There is constant low-level military and police harassment, intimidation and killing. Recent (2019) use of chemical weapons and ongoing military operations have forced over 30,000 people to flee in fear to neighbouring districts.

Foreign journalists are prevented from entry to the Papuan provinces.

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Over a half a million Papuan people have died violently since 1969.

The Papuan population continues to decrease, with Indonesian migrants now the dominant political and economic power.

Political dissent by Papuans is treated as terrorism.

Papuans are discriminated against in employment and education.

The people are treated as second-class citizens and are denied basic political, social and cultural rights.



A petition bearing 1.2 million signatures was recently smuggled out of Papua and delivered to the UN.

It demands a UN investigation into the human rights abuses in the Papuan provinces.

It also demands a fair and properly supervised referendum whereby the Papuan people can decide their future.



**INDONESIAN COLONIALISTS DO NOT ALLOW  
FREEDOM OF SPEECH OR DEMOCRACY IN**



**MASS ARRESTS  
FOR HOLDING A  
PEACEFUL CONFERENCE**



**SCHOOL CHILDREN  
MURDERED FOR  
PEACEFULLY PROTESTING**



## WHAT DO WE WANT?

**Intervention by the United Nations** through unfettered visits by Special Rapporteurs to report on human rights abuses.

An internationally supervised process of dialogue with Indonesia, including a **properly supervised referendum** in the Papuan provinces.

The establishment of stronger networks of **solidarity** in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

An impartial consideration by the Australian government of evidence of **human rights violations** by Indonesian security forces.

Independent **audit of Australian finance and training** of Indonesian police and military, especially Detachment 88, Brimob and Kopassus.

**Access to West Papua by journalists**, so that proper reporting of the situation can take place.

## WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

**Write to your local Federal MP.**  
**Write to your State's Senators.**  
[http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members/Members](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members)

Send short and respectful letters, preferably by snail mail, but by other means if necessary.

Print and include these reports:  
[West Papua is this generation's East Timor](#)

[Why nearly 2 million people are demanding a vote](#)

If sending by email, send the links.

In the letter, support the Papuan petition by insisting on its terms:  
**1. Admit UN to Papua to monitor human rights.**

**2. Implement an internationally accepted referendum on the future of the Papuan provinces.**

## WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

**Help people to understand that West Papua is not Papua New Guinea (PNG)**

Keep up with news about **West Papua** through websites, e.g.

[Free West Papua Campaign](#)  
Official Campaign site.

[Australia West Papua News](#)  
Daily updates on Papua.

Create a West Papua alert so you can be abreast of the little news that is released:

<https://www.google.com/alerts>

Go to [Reporters Without Borders](#), to the Indonesia section, and read about the prevention of reporting on West Papua.



*The island of New Guinea - Papuan provinces in the west, and Papua New Guinea in the east*



*Paniai massacre 2014*



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