



**CCJP**

CATHOLICS IN COALITION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

# **2012 Annual Report**

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# **CCJP Convenor's Report 2012**

This Convenor's Report is being written while devastating storms are sweeping through island countries of our Pacific region, our Foreign Minister, Bob Carr is in Sri Lanka offering support to train their Navy to stop people attempting to come to Australia, the United States are, once again, mourning the deaths of school children and arguing to either decrease or increase the number of guns in the hands of its citizens. Is the world any different at the end of 2012 than it was at the end of 2011? Sometimes it does not seem like it and yet, we at Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace have seen signs of change.

Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace (CCJP) has had a very eventful and challenging year during 2012. We continued to have excellent speakers at our Sunday Seminars, some of whom have returned for another visit after meeting us years ago. It is so often these speakers who leave us with a sense of hope that wonderful things are happening among many committed people

We began the year with Mick Gooda speaking on recognising Indigenous Peoples in our Constitution. It has still not happened but our Parliament has unanimously passed a determination for the process to take new bi-partisan energy next year. And while there are many statistics that show our Indigenous Peoples are disadvantaged, the "Better Futures" programme supported by State and Federal Governments, is having a measurable effect.

John Menadue AO helped us explore the advantages of a Pacific Solution for Refugees and gave us the language to speak with our family and friends to appeal to the "Better Angels" in us all. We looked at the economy from a justice perspective with Miriam Lyons and Robert Fitzgerald and the chances of long term reform with Michael Pusey.

The seminar that left us feeling very depressed and inspired at the same time was “The Unseen Victims of War” with Donna Mulhearn. Donna had recently returned from yet another visit to Iraq and had graphic words and pictures to go with her on-going plea that we notice the long term effect of war, particularly on innocent children, women, and men. This theme was supported by Denis Doherty and Hannah Middleton reminding us of the bigger picture of Australia’s place in international disputes.

We finished with Lesley Hughes talking about the effects of climate change on Biodiversity and the loss of species. Lesley helped us finish on a positive note believing that we can change things around as she spoke of the work of the Climate Commission.

Our range of topics is varied while staying with the issues CCJP has had a commitment to for years.

All the speakers express their appreciation of the work CCJP does as much as we appreciate them. We are so blessed to have these busy people prepared to spend a Sunday morning with us sharing their knowledge and passion. The names of these speakers and summaries of their talks are available on the website (<http://www.ccjpoz.org/>).

A big change for us this year has been the re-development of our web page. Our talented member Marie Butcher worked for years at keeping it current and we thank her sincerely. It seemed time to bring in the IT professionals to take the time and technical pressure off her. Luke Beuchat worked with us to get the site to our liking and then we found our pot of gold in Zhi Yan. Zhi came recommended to us as someone with the knowledge of the justice issues we were committed to, a clear mind and an ability to think strategically. The only problem was she was moving to Ireland the week after we met her! Thanks to the wonders of the internet, if we have things that need to go on the website or if Zhi has a suggestion, the action happens overnight so we truly have a current website.

We are so delighted how this arrangement is working for us. This has also enabled us to begin the process of putting all our membership activities online - an enormous saving in time and money.

Best of all, we are thrilled with the number of "hits" we receive each week which means the justice messages are getting to a wider audience . The work is made easier for Parish secretaries many of whom now advertise our seminars in their Sunday Bulletins after Zhi sends them the simple advertisement electronically. Those people who have registered to do so, receive a monthly email to let them know the topic of the next seminar, an action alert or a new key document added to the site.

All of this activity continues to require, and is made possible by, the hard work of our Working Party, the faithfulness of our members and the generosity of some Religious Congregations.

We still have more to do as we clarify who wants to be connected through the Internet and who wish to receive things in the mail. The other big question will be the on-going financial viability of the group when people can receive emails and have access to the website whether they are financial members or not.

Next year is a Federal election year. We will be working hard to ensure issues of justice stay on the agenda and that our members are well informed for conversations with friends and family as well as politicians. We will be particularly mindful of policies that affect Indigenous Australians, Asylum Seekers and our environment.

What has brought us to here and what we believe will continue to keep us going is the firm conviction we exist as an organisation for the sake of the least in our world and the life of our planet. It seems this is all Jesus asked of us.

We invite you to journey with us in 2013.

*Anne Lane  
Convenor*

# CCJP's Working Party in 2012



L to R: Margaret Hinchey,  
Anthony Klein, Anne Lane,  
Adrienne Hannan, Chris  
Brenton



L to R: Maureen Watson,  
Bill Byrne, Terry Hannan,  
Marie Butcher and Pauline  
Fogarty

Absent at this particular meeting were Cecily May, Rob Brian and Bernice Moore (below).



# Report from the letter-writing group

Our small group of writers have been at work again this year letting politicians know that we are listening and watching to ensure that fairness and justice are a priority for the members of CCJP.

Our first letter this year was to Bishop Saunders (of Broome W.A.) thanking him for his statement condemning the extension of the Northern Territory Intervention and income management to other areas.

The next letter went to the Hon. Chris Bowen (Minister for Immigration & Citizenship) stating our concern that Asylum Seekers/Refugees are being returned to detention indefinitely and without the right of appeal.

Next was a letter to the Prime Minister Julia Gillard regarding the legislation to re-instate off-shore processing of Asylum Seekers/Refugees.

In August a letter was sent to the Hon. Stephen Smith (Minister for Defence) supporting the campaign to ban Uranium weapons.

In November another [letter](#) was sent to the Prime Minister Julia Gillard (with a copy to the Attorney General the Hon. Nicola Roxon) regarding the plight of Asylum Seekers/Refugees, the government was congratulated for implementing a system of independent reviews of adverse security findings and encouraged to implement the Huston Report in full recognising the complexity of the situation and the need for regional co-operation.

Thank you to Anne and Bill Byrne for the concise notes they send and the suggestions they make, I would be lost without their support.

*Christine Brenton*

# Sunday Seminars

We were very lucky again in 2012 to have highly stimulating and expert speakers at our Sunday Seminars each month. Our speakers generously gave their time to inform us, to encourage dialogue, and to further CCJP's commitment to action on the various issues.



Our first speaker for the year was Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. Mick gave us some insight into his personal journey as the Commissioner and discussed constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as well as the process behind the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



In March, Dr Michael Pusey spoke about the trajectory of reform in Australia. In particular he discussed housing stress, deregulation of the labour market, shrinking real incomes and domination by the 'market trajectory' of politics and media.



In May, Miriam Lyons from the Centre for Policy Development discussed how Australia should build a sustainable, green economy.

*Photo: Miriam Lyons, Bernice Moore & Anne Lane*



Julian Disney, Chair of the Australian Press Council, spoke in June about the role of the Council as well as on freedom and fairness in the media.



In July, Robert Fitzgerald, a Commissioner with the Australian Government Productivity Commission, discussed whether fairness and justice could survive in a market economy.



Donna Mulhearn, activist and writer, spoke to us in August about the unseen victims of war in Iraq: those affected by the toxic legacy of depleted uranium weapons. She also spoke in captivating detail about everyday life in Baghdad.



In September, Denis Doherty and Hannah Middleton from the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition spoke to us about the US Marine presence in Australia. They also spoke about Australia's military strategy & spending.



Our second-last speaker for the year was John Menadue AO, who argued for much-needed reform of Australia's asylum seeker policies and discussed the political impasse.



Finally in December, Professor Lesley Hughes spoke about climate change and biodiversity.

## Occasional Papers

Some of the Sunday Seminar talks were fully transcribed and have been turned into CCJP's Occasional Papers. They were emailed or printed to those CCJP supporters who were also Occasional Paper subscribers. We have also decided to make them available to download on our website (on our 'Sunday Seminars' page). Here is the list of Occasional Papers:

[Constitutional Recognition of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders](#) - Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

[Can Fairness and Justice Survive in a Market Economy?](#) – Robert Fitzgerald AM, Commissioner, Australian Government Productivity Commission

[The Unseen Victims of War: the ongoing toxic legacy of the war in Iraq](#) - Donna Mulhearn

['The Marines are coming. Should we be worried?'](#) - Denis Doherty and Dr Hannah Middleton from the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition

[Refugees – appealing to our better angels](#) - John Menadue AO

## Seminar Summaries

For any talks that weren't turned into Occasional Papers, a summary of the talk can also be downloaded from the 'Sunday Seminars' page on the website. There are summaries for talks by Dr Michael Pusey, Miriam Lyons and Professor Julian Disney. A summary of Professor Lesley Hughes' talk will be available in early 2013.

## Photos from the Sunday Seminars in 2012



# CCJP Check Outs

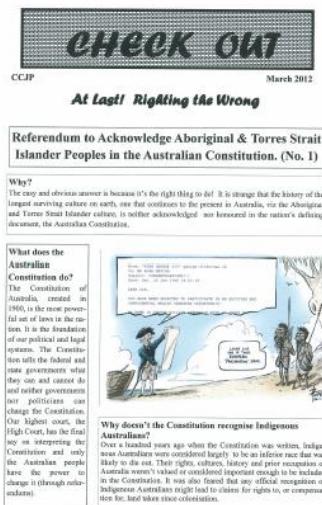
CCJP has published these invaluable little sheets since 1996. Many justice issues have been addressed to try to counteract the myths and falsehoods that are often portrayed in mainstream media and society. This year we published four editions of Check Out including an information sheet from the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW.

Schools, parishes and other groups are welcome to copy them for distribution. We appreciate the work of those who prepare the information for us and Maureen Fairbairn's work in formatting each issue.

Below is brief summary of each of the Check Outs published in 2012. These can be downloaded from the CCJP website – look under '[Publications](#)'.

## **At Last, Righting the Wrong! – Referendum to Acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Australian Constitution, Parts 1 and 2 (March 2012)**

(Part 1) The Australian Constitution was written over a hundred years ago when attitudes were very different to those today. Many Australians may not know that our Constitution still permits racial discrimination. For example, Section 25 of the Constitutions permits a State to disqualify members of a race from voting for that State's house of Parliament, and Section 51 gives the Commonwealth Parliament the power to make laws for the people of any race and carries the potential to be used in a manner adverse to Indigenous and other people on the basis of their ethnic background. This occurred through the NT Intervention legislation and the suppression of the Anti-Discrimination Act.



Another problem with the current Constitution is that it doesn't recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, despite their role as custodians of the world's

oldest continuing culture. Changing the Preamble of the Constitution to recognise Australia's indigenous peoples would be a positive step towards reconciliation and building a nation based on mutual respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians.

(Part 2) The Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians was appointed by the government. The Panel held many public consultations across Australia through 2011 and in early 2012 it delivered its recommendations to the government. The Panel recommended changing the Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, removing racist elements, and prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic or national origin.

The Constitution can only be changed through a referendum, where a national majority of voters in the majority of states must vote 'yes' to the proposed changes.

**CHECK OUT**

CCJP March 2012

**At Last! Righting the Wrong**

**Referendum to Acknowledge Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island Peoples in the Australian Constitution. (No. 2)**

**How is the Constitution changed?**  
In Australia the only way anything can be changed in the Constitution is through a referendum. A Constitutional referendum is when all voting age Australians vote 'yes' or 'no' to a proposed change. For a change to be accepted a national majority of voters in majority of states must vote 'yes'. Australia has had 44 referendums since Federation. In total we have voted 'yes' 34 times. Constitutional referendums and only voted 'yes' 8 times.

**Why was the 1967 referendum so controversial?**  
On 27 December 2010, following consultation from the public, the Prime Minister announced the appointment of the 20 member Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians. It was made up of Indigenous and community leaders, people with legal expertise and performance members. The Panel was co-chaired by Professor Tom Calma and Senator Pat Dodson. The Panel talked with thousands of people from across the country, holding over 200 public consultations across 84 communities in remote, regional and urban areas. At these consultations, over 4000 individuals and representatives of business, media, government and non-government organisations spoke to members of the Panel about their ideas or concerns for constitutional recognition.

**What changes has the Panel recommended?**  
The Panel completed its process and handed its Report to the Prime Minister in January 2012. The report's recommendations include changes to the Constitution which recognise the constitutional rights of Indigenous and Torres Strait Island peoples; remove racial racism; and prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic or national origin.

**What benefits will constitutional recognition have for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Australians?**  
Constitutional recognition would help make mutual trust and respect leading to stronger relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians.

## Our MDG promise and the 2012-13 Budget (May 2012)

As part of its commitments under the Millennium Development Goals, the Australian Government had promised to increase Australia's international aid spending to 0.5% of gross national income (GNI) by 2015. However on Budget night in May, the government announced that it would postpone this target by one year. Instead of increasing our international aid spending to 0.38% of GNI in 2013, it remains static at 0.35%. The consequences of this broken promise are extremely serious for the world's poor who in many cases simply cannot wait for life-saving aid. Australian aid is a critical part of the Australian government acting globally to defend the rights of the poor and needy.

**CHECK OUT**

CCJP May 2012

**Our Millennium Goals Promise and the Budget**

**What Will This Mean for the World's Poorest People?**  
In the lead up to the 2012 election, the Australian government has chosen to break a promise it made to the Australian public and to the world's poor. Our aid will continue to grow (and more on this over the page), but we will be saving fewer lives, helping fewer children receive basic education, helping fewer people get access to clean water and sanitation. The woman whose child can't afford school today will just have to wait another year. The community that is affected by hunger today will just have to wait. The woman who goes through the trials of pregnancy and childbirth without skilled assistance today, will the day wait because Australia needs a break.

**Millennium Development Goals**

1. Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

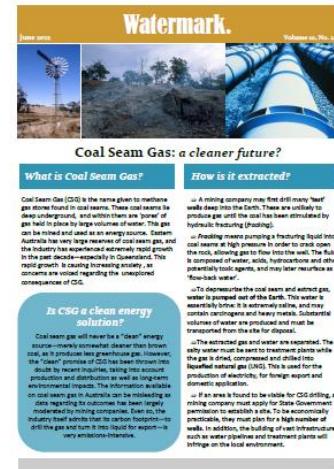
Source: [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)

**What Happened on Budget Night?**  
The Government decided not to increase its aid budget to the world's poorest people by 2015. Instead, it has decided to defer that commitment by one year. The Government's budget for 2012-13 shows that the Australian public will contribute \$3.6 billion less to the aid budget than it did last year. The budget also shows that a much smaller portion of our national income in the coming year will be used to assist the world's poorest people.

Fortunately there were some positives announced on the same night. The government announced its new 4-year Comprehensive Aid Policy Framework, which sets targets for what Australian aid intends to achieve as well as performance indicators for how this will be done. An Independent Evaluation Committee has been established to hold the aid program more accountable. A related piece of good news is that Australia has signed the international 'Sanitation and Water for All Partnership' which seeks to develop, implement and fund strategies to provide safe drinking water and decent sanitation to those who live without these.

## Coal Seam Gas and Fracking (August 2012)

Coal Seam Gas (CSG) is the name given to methane gas stores found in coal seams. These coal seams lie deep underground, and within them are 'pores' of gas held in place by large volumes of water. This gas can be mined and used as an energy source. The industry has experienced extremely rapid growth in the past decade, causing increasing anxiety as serious concerns are voiced about the unexplored consequences of CSG extraction (a process commonly known as 'fracking').



Some of these concerns relate to potential contamination of water sources and land by toxic chemicals used in the extraction process; high salt content in discharge water; the huge volumes of water needed for extraction; and ultimate the safety and health of communities and ecosystems. Food security is another concern, as CSG is often found beneath highly fertile soils currently used for farming. In 2012, there are 2,374 coal seam gas wells approved for Australian land, mostly in eastern Queensland.

# **Other publications**

On 24 October 2012, CCJP issued a press release in response to the seriously concerning situation on asylum seekers. The press release generated media coverage from Catholic Church Resources and Radio New Zealand.

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Nauru and Manus Island will fail says Catholic Group**

Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace met in Sydney this week under the title –*Refugees and Asylum Seekers: appealing to our better angels*.

Guest speaker John Menadue from the Centre for Policy Development said: “We have traded away our treasured ethos of a fair go and a welcome to the stranger and allowed ourselves, one of the richest countries on earth, to be consumed by fear and uncertainty.”

He went on to say, “Nauru and Manus Island in the past failed as most of the people eventually were given refugee status and brought to Australia. The same will happen this time. And the UNHCR will not cooperate with this policy.”

The Houston Report gave the Malaysia proposal an amber light which, with more work, could be given a green light supported as it is by the UNHCR. Mr Menadue said that at the heart of this report is the fact that unilateral action to deal with asylum seekers and refugees on the part of Australia is limited. If there is to be any lasting impact it is through regional cooperation and dialogue and capacity building.

Lack of political leadership and political opportunism gave us a political impasse that had to be resolved to restore public confidence and avoid if possible more deaths at sea.

“Unfortunately,” said Mr Menadue, “the political impasse has been broken by giving us Nauru and Manus rather than Malaysia. They can never be part of a regional solution.”

Earlier, in July 2012, CCJP was one of many advocacy groups that made a submission to the government's 'Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers', asking for fairer policies that treated asylum seekers in line with our international human rights obligations. CCJP's submission can be viewed at

<http://www.ccjpoz.org/attachments/db/ccj/50.pdf>

## Action Alerts and Petitions

Those of you on our email list would have received periodic 'action alerts' about petitions or actions that we thought you may like to support. Ten action alerts were sent throughout 2012, relating to:

- Letter-writing campaigns calling for:
  - o Fair policies for asylum seekers;
  - o Stopping the transport and storage of cluster munitions in Australia;
  - o Trade Minister Craig Emerson to stand up for Australia's rights in the areas of medicines, workers' rights, environmental protection and copyright laws during the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement negotiations;
  - o Woolworths to take responsibility for their pokie machines; and
  - o Bob Carr not to cut our overseas aid budget.
- Petitions calling for:
  - o Kraft Cadbury Australia to increase their range of Fairtrade certified products and help stop child slavery;
  - o Scrapping recent changes to WorkCover in NSW;
  - o Changing Australia's vote on depleted uranium weapons at the UN in October; and
  - o An inquiry into Australia's involvement in the invasion of Iraq.
- Interesting articles on poverty in Australia and on asylum seeker policy.

If you are not currently receiving our email alerts but would like to, email [ccjpweb@yahoo.com](mailto:ccjpweb@yahoo.com) and ask to be added to our emailing list.