



CCJP

CATHOLICS IN COALITION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

CCJP AGM Report 2013

We the members of CCJP knew 2013 was going to be a big year politically with the Federal Election due and the state of politics in Australia.

The election was rife with bitter comments, smear campaigns and parties trying to outdo one another's negativity. Asylum seekers and refugees were turned into casualties of the election year and used as tools with which to leverage a campaign. This was made worse by the misinformation proliferated by media and politicians, with incorrect terms such as *illegal* becoming commonplace.

Many Australians felt they faced an uninspiring choice on voting day. Huge issues such as inequality, poverty and unemployment were barely discussed and the election altogether lacked passion. (Ref. 'Just In Time' Nov)

The elections are over, the Coalition is in power. We are beginning to recognise what that means for our nation. Things are going to be different. We have already seen that difference in changes to Superannuation, cutting the starting school bonus for low-income families, the repeal of the carbon tax passing in the Lower House, dismissing of the Climate Commission, refusal to honour the commitments made with the States (with support from the Coalition) around education funding as outlined in the Gonski Report.

Yet there are signs of hope. The Climate Commission went to the people and asked for funding. And it came. They will continue, in spite of the Australian Government, to bring the best of science to our Australian situation and to keep informing our citizens who want to know. Other groups, like the Sydney Alliance, are gaining in strength as those individuals and groups, who want to be part of a more just society, are banding together to challenge all to take action on local and national issues.

And what of CCJP? We continued strongly during 2013. Our web page continues to be updated by Zhi and Cyril with suggestions for action and links with other organisations. It is clear from the monthly report of our web master that the number of visits is constant with peaks around the times that an email alert goes out.

The web page also holds edited transcripts from our monthly speakers. These seminars continue to be a major focus of the work of CCJP. How blessed we are with our speakers who share with us from their expertise and passion and continually challenge us to action. A constant from them has been how the energy they share with us is reciprocated.

We began this year by inviting Tim Battin who challenged us to become involved, even more than we are, with the election process. We picked up other justice issues with Samantha Seymour on the Federal cuts to welfare payments to single parents, the Politics of skilled labour migration with Chris Wright, Reforms in Education and Superannuation with Ben Spies-Butcher. Ben, once again spoke

on behalf of the marginalised as he asked us to reflect on what was 'class warfare' and what was a "fair deal" for all.

Jeff McMullen engaged us in looking anew at Aboriginal Issues particularly the Intervention and Constitutional Reform. Jack de Groot continued raising our awareness of health issues and their election connection. Maggie May inspired with her "People's Response to CSG and other Mining Issues". Susan Connolly helped renew our awareness of East Timor Issues. We finished the year with Maribeth Larkin SSS, visiting from the US, inspiring us with the importance of strengthening civil society and ways we can do that.

Every year I acknowledge the support CCJP receives from a number of Religious Congregations. We really would not still be functioning if it were not for their constant support. It is so much appreciated by the Working Party as it allows us to continue to do the work with some assurance the bills can be paid. This support is backed by those members who continue to faithfully pay membership fees and who give support in other ways.

I would particularly like to mention this year three of our members who have died. Glynn Preferment was a long time member of CCJP. He was on the door step every third Sunday, with most of his belongings in his back pack, to help set up chairs and fill us all in on his latest thoughts about current politics. His seeming mental illness was matched with a brilliant mind. His sudden death was a shock to us all, particularly his sister. We miss him. We had "grown accustomed to his face". He hated having his photo taken but agreed to be taken with me for last year's annual report.

Another of our members, Nola Gardner continued to stay in touch through her membership and occasional note when she was no longer able to come to the seminars. We were touched to learn that CCJP was remembered in her will.

George Sackelariou, with his wife Dianne, was a regular attendee at our Sunday Seminars until ageing and bad health gradually made it too difficult. George's early life in Romania left him with a strong commitment to Justice. His keen mind and insightful heart added much to our conversations whenever he spoke. We know he will be in God's ear on behalf of those suffering from the effects of war and violence

It is people like Glynn and Nola, with no great claims to fame or fortune, who epitomise the call to live and act for justice in the ordinariness of daily life and who inspire us to keep going on the journey no matter the obstacles.

Once again, a big thank you to the members of the Working Party. It is called that for a reason. They do the work. To Cecily May, our indefatigable Secretary, Margaret Hinchey, Maureen Watson, Christine Brenton, Adrienne and Terry Hannan, Marie Butcher, Anthony Klein and Rob Brian.

And last but not least, to you CCJP members some of whom have hung in with CCJP for the 25 years of our existence. Thank you for continuing to heed the call of Pope Francis: "A good Catholic meddles in politics, offering the best of (themselves) so that those who govern can govern".

Anne Lane

Convenor CCJP

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