



HOLY SPIRIT SOCIAL JUSTICE

MAY 2021 EDITION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We wish to acknowledge that we are in the country of the Ngunnawal people. We pay respect to their elders. We acknowledge the memories of their ancestors and celebrate their continuing culture. We acknowledge the deep, spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing Journey of reconciliation. (NATSIC) 2014

FROM THE CHAIR

by Peter Peterson

It was great to see the interest that the draft social justice plan has generated to make some sense of our world today, and get a degree of order in our thinking and decision making. Without a plan this is very difficult because of the constant change, conflicting messages, misinformation and lack of leadership. We still need your help to get this plan right and keep it on track over time.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at peterimantpeterson@gmail.com

A MESSAGE FROM FR THONN

Social Justice looks at the secular side of life, asking us what our faith and commitment to God requires us to do in our everyday lives. The needs of others is often overwhelming and it is quite normal to wonder why it is this way and what one person, a group or the whole church could do to change it. The first thing, which we all can do, is educate ourselves about the issues and why the church cares about them. This bulletin gives a brief outline of some of those issues, along with a contact or a website for you to inquire further. This is just a snapshot of the suffering and pain which, as Good Samaritans, we are all called to recognise and help alleviate.

WHAT CAN I DO?

by Peter Knight

How do we make some sense of our world today and get a degree of order in our thinking and decision making? Without a plan, it is very difficult because of the constant change, conflicting messages, misinformation and lack of leadership.

The Social Justice group have a plan of action based on Pope Francis' recent encyclicals. But even he is being challenged by members of the broad church as high-up as Cardinals. So, who and what do we mere lay people believe? How do we control our emotions and actions so we can make rational and healthy decisions?

Alcoholics Anonymous members have a simple prayer to focus their thinking when they want to be calm. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, to change the things that

I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

We can use this way of coping when we become stressed, anxious, or plain emotional. We get a 'worry' in our head and can't get rid of it. We need to process this, 'give it a name' then ask: Can I do something about this? If no - then hand that problem over to God. If yes - then we need to take an action eg write a letter, sign a petition, protest, pray of course, support a group such as Vinnies or join us in the Social Justice Group.

HOMELESSNESS

by Alison Weeks

Homelessness happens to people for a wide variety of reasons, with joblessness and mental health issues being two of the most common. Whether a person has to remain homeless is something which we all decide. In Canberra, which has a much better record than the rest of Australia, the number of public (social) homes

has not increased over the last decade even as our population has exploded. It takes three years to get a public assisted home. Can you imagine living rough during a Canberra winter?

[St Vincent de Paul](#) reaches out with their night van with blankets, food, support and conversation and is about to launch its Sleep Out campaign:



[CatholicCare](#) runs a wonderful place for homeless women and their children at Lyneham, Mary MacKillop house, which is already full and needs our support:

For more information contact mackillophouse@catholiccare.cg.org.au



DISABILITY AND THE NDIS

by Leanne Johns

People with disabilities may be in danger of losing their innate right to be treated with respect and dignity under the proposed changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). One of the purposes of the NDIS when it was established was to ensure that people with disabilities were free to choose supports required to maximise their potential and help achieve their goals.

The changes proposed by the government involve mandatory independent assessments done by assessors who will not be National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) employees and who may not necessarily have any knowledge or experience of disability. Their reports would dictate what level of support people receive from the NDIS. Reports by their own doctors and other health professionals for people with disabilities will not necessarily be taken into account. There is much concern among those in the disability community that undertaking independent assessments is a cost-cutting exercise which will detrimentally change the lives of people with disabilities.

The government recently announced a pause in the rollout of independent assessments until more consultation can be made with state and territory disability ministers. This is an encouraging response and one which disability groups hope will result in a sensible and sound decision. As Pope Francis in his recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* states: "Amid the daily concerns of political life, "the smallest, the weakest, the poorest should touch our hearts: indeed, they have a 'right' to appeal to our heart and soul. They are our brothers and sisters, and as such we must love and care for them". (FT,194).

JOBSEEKER AFTER JOBKEEPER

by Paul Crowley

JobKeeper ended recently and people without jobs suddenly went back to payments below the poverty line, which both major political parties have allowed to continue for decades.

JobSeeker has increased by \$50 a fortnight, however there are many community and economic bodies arguing that for both social and economic reasons the rate should be increased to a much higher permanent rate. The new rate is now only 40% of the minimum wage.

The Federal Government has started a 'dub in a unemployed person who refuses work'. Welfare groups, business leaders and the Chief Executive of

the Council of Small Business Australia, Peter Strong, say this lacks compassion and understanding, as there are many legitimate reasons why people might turn a job down. In addition, job seekers will now need to apply for 15 jobs a month, rising to 20 from July.

I have personal experience about how stressful and confidence destroying it is, continually having to apply for jobs, often with no chance of getting them because you don't have the skills and experience for a particular job. Age discrimination is also a big issue.

More on this in the next edition.

OUR ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY

by Paul Crowley

There was an excellent program entitled "*Extinction With David Attenborough*" (available on ABC's iView)

aired on ABC recently which looks at the crisis in Biodiversity which is putting at risk all life with extinctions of species happening at a rapid pace.

"With a million species at risk of extinction, Sir David Attenborough explores how this crisis of biodiversity has consequences for us all, threatening food and water security, undermining our ability to control our climate and even putting us at greater risk of pandemic diseases."

I encourage you to watch this documentary.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000mn4n>

WOMEN

by Alison Weeks

Older women are the fastest growing group among the homeless. Women of all ages suffer from discrimination, sexual violence, unequal pay and poorer education. It is so hard to understand that 52 per cent of the population suffers just because they were born female. You have heard a lot of argument about these very issues in Australia recently and when you contemplate them, think about the legacy you are leaving your daughters and grand-daughters. Think too of how hard it must be to be a girl or woman in a war-torn country, or in a poor country where you are sold into sexual slavery or tricked into working for almost nothing in a clothing factory. Does the Catholic Church treat women fairly? Good works start in the home but we also reach out to women around the world through Caritas: which works to empower women with education, better health and facilities with which they can make a living.

