



CHRISTIAN BROTHERS
OCEANIA PROVINCE

OCEANIA PROVINCE WEEKLY NEWS

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Waterhole Ceremony Brisbane



Peter Harney & Barry Buckley at the Waterhole Ceremony

On Monday 27 August at Viridian in Brisbane about 14 Brothers gathered with Mary Nelson from the extended Mt Archer Community, Ravina Waldren, David Miller, Sr Kay Mc Padden, (Brisbane Archdiocese Catholic Aboriginal Ministry) , Aboriginal Elder Sam Watson and Terry Fitzpatrick from Micah Projects.

The day began with Dale Murray (Director of the Youth Plus Institute which is responsible for the Flexible Learning Centres). Dale explained the philosophy of the schools and how they continue the work of Edmund Rice by working with young people who do not fit with mainstream schooling. The video clip Dale showed gave insights into how the Flexible Learning model and approach are empowering and supporting young people.

Phil Glendenning followed with a 15 minute talk from about the work of the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education in Homebush. Phil spoke about the impact of rising tides on the people of Kiribati, the plight of refugees sent back to Afghanistan by the Australian government and finished by explaining the Pyramid of Hate. By condoning negative comments and jokes about people from different racial and gender backgrounds, we all can contribute to racism. Not for politically correct reasons but out of respect for the dignity of others we come to realize that some words and expressions may be deeply offensive. What may seem harmless to us may be re-enforcing negative images and stereo-typing. Language reflects the understanding and attitude of the community.

For the last hour and a half people were invited into the Waterhole Ceremony. The ceremony has been designed by Youth Plus based on the Blanket Exercise of Canada's First Peoples.



Featured in the photo above are from left Phil Glendenning (ER Centre Homebush) Dale Murray (Youth Plus Director), Thelma Parker (Indigenous officer EREA) and Michelle Kelman Murray (Youth Plus New Initiatives Officer).

This is not a ritual but a dynamic process aimed at non-Indigenous people. The process invites people to reflect on European history of colonization and to show non- Indigenous people how this is still having negative consequences for many Indigenous people today. At the end of the ceremony people, the de-brief allowed people to express their insights and feelings.

In contrast to this, several Brothers went to see the wonderful performance "Dark Emu" by Bangara Dance Theatre which beautifully and powerfully told the evolution of the Australian landscape through Aboriginal eyes. It was based on the book by the same title by Bruce Pascoe.

Jim Darcy cfc



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Paul Noonan Conversation Evening

This year the **Paul Noonan conversation** centred on young adults within the Edmund Rice Movement and how they may continue to explore pathways in giving expression to an Edmund Rice spirit in their lives. Four of the young people gathered, shared their story of connection to the Edmund Rice Movement and how



it has changed them and those with whom they have connected. Adrienne Ringin told of her experience as a volunteer in Arusha Tanzania and working with the students from Edmund Rice Sinon in the 'Girls Club.' Her story related how in the mutual engagement of the 'girls club' discussions and activities, both her and her students were inspired to value their power as young women. Eve Chu Kruatayu, who as a student attendee of the homework help program at St Albans, Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services, spoke about the experience of being a refugee from a young girl's perspective. All present were deeply moved by Eve's story of leaving her homeland and

finding a new life here in Melbourne. As a Criminology student, she has a burning desire to help her own

community. Brianna Brown, an Edmund Rice Camps leader in both South Australia and Victoria, related a powerful story of establishing connection with a very troubled child and how through perseverance and the building of trust something truly mysterious and transformative can happen. Finally, Neil Blenkiron reflected on his experience of assisting with the Edmund Rice Food Van in St Kilda and how it's focus on the building of mutual relationships has transformed the small fragile community that gathers each Wednesday and Friday evening for a chat, a hot drink and a sandwich. While still somewhat overwhelmed with challenges, both those who experience food and home insecurity and their Edmund Rice friends gather to share a common humanity, that is both humble and compassionate. In this meeting is the building of community and a hope that is potentially transformative.



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The forming of 4 conversation circles where all were able to share their own stories of transformation followed. Shane Wood, Tim Moloney, Danny Moore and Geoff Whitefield facilitated the conversation circles.

Peter Hay
Province Formation Coordinator



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Fire Carriers Formation Experience

Recently the first Fire Carriers Formation Experience for 2018 was held at Edmund Rice Centre Amberley. The experience included participants from Edmund Rice Camps in Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. The 11 participants formed an inspiring community of wisdom, sharing, learning and generosity across the 3 days. The experience included the sharing of personal stories, a river walk, reflection on the deep connection to land held by our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, a ritual celebrating the story of the universe, consideration of coming to know Jesus anew, interaction with the Edmund Rice inspiration and spirituality and how our Edmund Rice mission involves advocacy held within a rights based approach.

Adrian Szabo (Edmund Rice Camps SA) and Brianna Brown (Edmund Rice Camps Victoria) assisted in the planning and facilitation of the experience. The contribution from Adrian and Brianna was outstanding as was the session on Advocacy and a Rights Based Approach to Ministry, led by Adrian Scerri (Edmund Rice Camps Victoria).

Another Fire Carriers Formation Experience is planned for Auckland in New Zealand in December. Participants from Edmund Rice Camps in Queensland and NSW and their counterparts in Auckland and Dunedin, as well as the Edmund Rice Justice Trust will be attending.

The hope of the Fire Carriers experience is the keeping of the fire of Edmund alight in Edmund Rice ministries through the up skilling of key leaders and volunteers. Given the experience of the Amberley Fire Carriers, the fire of Edmund will continue to burn brightly.

Peter Hay
Province Formation Coordinator

Child protection Sunday – 9 September 2018

Reflection by Andrew Hamilton SJ

If we want to protect our house from robbers, we might think of fitting our doors with strong locks, barring vulnerable windows and installing an alarm system that will ring at the local police station. That could deter robbers from breaking in.

Protecting people, however, demands more than that. Particularly in the case of children. To protect them we need to make a broad space in which children are free to run and play as they please, in which they can grow and explore the world, and in which they know that they will be listened to and are safe. In that space they will have the company of mature adults whose eyes and ears are open to notice potential dangers and to deal with them. Their care means that children can grow carefree.

Child Protection Sunday recalls to us our task of ensuring that children in our churches and schools can grow, talk and play safely. The day carries great weight because we know that in the Catholic Church too many people entrusted with the care of children exploited and abused them. Those protecting the house became bandits. Child Protection Sunday is a time for locks and alarms: for ensuring that proper protocols and safeguards are observed. More deeply it is a time for asking how better we can make the Church a welcoming space in which children can flourish.

The readings for today's Mass invite us to reflect on this task.



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The first reading, from Isaiah, addresses people whose faith is tested in hard times. Having been exiled from Israel, the land that God had promised them, they were dispirited and isolated. Their experience resonates with many Catholics today for whom the crimes of clerical sexual abuse of children and the devastating effects on the lives of its victims weigh heavily and sap their confidence and joy in living their faith. The burden is borne particularly by those who themselves have survived abuse or know and love those affected by it. Isaiah tells the people not to be afraid, because God is coming to save them. He then describes in vivid images what it means to be made whole – it is like the blind suddenly seeing, the deaf hearing, the lame walking freely. It is like a parched and waterless desert where jackals prey being transformed into a green and fertile land where rivers and streams flow. The images invite us first to imagine a church in which predators prowl, hopes die, children are unsafe and victims of abuse go unheard and unattended to. And then to imagine it as a place where children can safely grow and thrive, and people whose lives have been maimed can be welcomed, heard and come to walk freely.

In the second reading St James describes a world in which rich people exploit poor people because they are powerful enough to do so. He imagines a meal where the rich sit in the best places and leave the poor to stand or sit on the floor. He reminds his readers that the poor are rich in faith and belong to God's kingdom. His image reminds us of the sense of power and entitlement that people who abuse children often display, often associated with their priesthood or religious calling. It also reminds us of those who put the reputation and privileged place of the Church ahead of the safety of the vulnerable. That contrasts with the simple trust and faith of children in whom God's love for each human being stands out most clearly.

In Mark's story Jesus heals a man who is deaf and has a speech impediment. Jesus usually cures with a simple word sometimes accompanied by laying on hands. But he cures this man by putting his fingers into his ears and mouth. Jesus' touch brings healing and confidence to the man in the story. The story reminds us of the blessing and importance of physical expressions of love between parents and children in their growth to affectionate and healthy adults. Through gestures such as hugs they show their love and recognise that they themselves are deeply loved.

Jesus' encounter with this man also brings home to us the horror of the sexual abuse of children, where the innocent openness of children is exploited by gestures that are caricatures of affection. They destroy trust and mine the path to happy adulthood. To protect children we must ensure that they are treated with the respect and love that Jesus has modelled for us.

In Mark's story, too, the man is brought out a world of silence into one where he can hear and speak clearly, and so be able to participate fully in the life of the community. The Catholic community was also trapped in silence when responding to the sexual abuse of children. Children were not listened to, those who heard did not believe, or failed to report it, priests and Bishops tried to preserve public silence about it. This was a silent world in which children suffered. The Church to which Jesus calls us is one where people speak freely, children play safely, and life is lived transparently.

We pray for our children. May they be safe in families, schools and church, and have a voice that is heard. May they grow into faithful and loving adults who know that they are deeply loved.

Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ writes for Jesuit Communications and Jesuit Social Services.



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Cosmic Connection of the Heart

I believe with a lot of conviction that we all sense the cosmic connection through our hearts, be it visible or invisible. Letting the Spirit reveal to us the Divine power in our deepest heart in various expressions and experiences is a novelty. Philip Newell in his talks provoked a thought in me that I feel like sharing. I was stunned by this phrase that, *“whichever way you turn, the face of God is”*. It is a great manifestation to know that whatever thing I do, see, encounter, touch or feel, the expression of God’s face and shining. It was also a day to nurture my spiritual life. To know that am the unique manifestation of the Divine in spite of all odds, brokenness and weaknesses that I carry, is uplifting. By VICTOR



The **HEARTBEAT OF GOD**, what does this really mean? It was on 28th August when we had a chance to interact and listen to John Philip Newell a theologian and author of inspiring books. I may say he had what it takes to re-awaken the spirit in each of us; the re-birth of the spirit of God among each one of us. It was also a new way of experiencing God who is present in and around us-everything that is because the sacredness of each new born is an expression of God’s presence in the world once more. Therefore, to be able to experience the heartbeat of God, it is important to celebrate the sacredness of each new born person or creature with happiness. It was another way of saying that whichever way you turn, there is the face of God and therefore you only need to allow yourself to experience the sacred. By JOSEPHAT

During the workshop with Rev John Philip and Allie Newell, I was moved and inspired. Listening to him quote Julian of Norwich; *we are made by God, we are made of God*. It is through this truth, we can seek transformation and meaning. Being reborn is all about transforming and deepening our faith in the life of Jesus. To have passion will enable us to listen to our brothers and sisters through their heartbeat which is also God’s. I was touched when John Philip said that *the sacred gift of nature is our being and the sacred gift of grace is our well-being*. By DOMINIC

(An extract from the Novitiate Newsletter ISC Lusaka Zambia – August 2018)



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CRA Media Release



Australia's Neighbourhood – the Blue Pacific

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) represents over 150 congregations across Australia comprising approximately 7000 religious women and men of whom a number work in the Pacific or support a range of activities and projects across the Pacific Islands.

Our Members are seriously concerned that the Prime Minister will not attend this week's Pacific Islands Forum. As the largest and wealthiest member of this Forum it is of the utmost importance that Australia is a committed and engaged Pacific partner. The recent visit of the Prime Minister to Indonesia and his proposed absence from the Forum could be seen as an indication that the Pacific is not a priority for Australia.

In recent times the Pacific has become an arena for competing world powers who are, in the words of Samoa's Prime Minister, "doggedly pursuing strategies to widen and extend their reach and inculcating a far reaching sense of insecurity." Australia as the biggest investor of overseas aid, around \$261 million 2018-19, is in a unique position to support the Pacific Island States in their efforts to achieve peace, stability and security, although Australia's recent stringent cuts to overseas aid must contribute to their feelings of insecurity.

Of prime concern to the Leaders of Pacific Islands is climate change as, on an almost daily basis, they deal with the results of climate change – water shortages, increasingly damaging cyclones and storms, rising sea temperatures and the effects on fishing and crops. Australia's recent attempts to water down, or eliminate altogether, our commitment to the Paris Agreement and ignore the absolute necessity of reducing carbon emissions must leave these leaders in despair.

The members of Catholic Religious Australia ask that:

- the Prime Minister will re-consider his decision not to attend the Pacific Islands Forum
- Australia will commit to a stable and on-going policy of carbon reduction by at least 30% by 2030
- Australia will continue, through increased aid, engagement and dialogue, to support and enhance the lives of Pacific islanders.

CRA President, Sr Monica Cavanagh rsj, stated that members are very conscious of the fact that this Forum is being held on Nauru, a place where over 100 asylum seekers, and children, have been incarcerated indefinitely. The situation of Australia's asylum seekers detained on Pacific islands has contributed nothing to peace and stability in the Pacific. In the light of this CRA urgently requests Prime Minister Morrison to immediately remove all asylum seekers from Nauru and Manus Island and cease the on-going damage to the human beings who did nothing more than ask for a place of safety. The next group of asylum seekers may well be from Pacific nations overwhelmed by climate change – how will we respond?

The Forum on "Building a strong Pacific: Our Islands, Our People, Our Will" requires Australia's engagement at the highest level.

For immediate release

Further comment | Sr Libby Rogerson 0439 039 449 CRA Justice Committee