

# INFORM-ACTION

Newsletter of the Social Action Office - Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes Queensland

## Global Warming

### *When will we reach the point of no return?*

Climate Change is a topic that has been hotly debated for years. Almost every publication carries an article; nearly every television channel presents some program on the topic. For years we've been presented with two opposing points of view on the topic. One side asserts that the changes in our climate that we are currently experiencing are just part of the cycle of nature and there is nothing unusual happening. The other side, however, asserts just as strongly that we need to do something about this phenomenon and do it NOW. The Church in Australia, having come late to this issue, launched a Conference on Climate Change in Canberra in November 2005.

In actual fact, most scientists now agree with the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (IPCC) instituted after the Rio Earth Summit, that the rate of global warming is much faster than had been predicted and that human intervention is the cause. And in the face of this, many of us continue to blithely drive our cars and use energy produced by fossil fuels without a second thought. To slow the rate of carbon dioxide emissions, the greatest cause of global warming, we need to reduce our rate of consumption of coal, oil and natural gas.

Governments of highly industrialised countries like Australia have subscribed to the idea of 'carbon offsets' and carbon credits. In actual practice, this means giving a licence to their citizens and companies to continue releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to the detriment of all, especially the less industrialised countries. Our governments would do better to clean up their act.

In the current debate, governments are advocating the use of nuclear energy to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Nuclear reactors are now being touted as the 'new' clean energy source, no matter that an enormous quantity of fossil fuel is needed at the initial phase of mining, milling and enriching the uranium. Who remembers Chernobyl? There are even some who believe that the damage caused by nuclear accidents is trivial compared with the disaster that will happen if we continue our unrestricted use of fossil fuels.



Many scientists believe that 20 years will bring us to the point of no return. Some believe it is fewer than 20. Others advocate a change to nuclear energy as simply an interim measure while we work to develop other viable energy sources that use neither nuclear nor fossil fuels.

Meanwhile, on the West Bengal coast of India, several villages have already been lost to rising sea levels and thousands of climate refugees have swelled the already huge population of Calcutta. In the Pacific, the people of Tuvalu, Kiribati and other low-lying island-states are trying to find countries to accept them as the sea claims their land.

Ironically, countries whose affluent lifestyles have directly contributed to the desperate situation in which these people find themselves have been slow to accept these climate refugees.

Our whole contemporary economic and cultural model is based on encouraging people to consume. No wonder there are some who argue that our individual efforts to use energy-efficient lighting and household appliances and to

restrict the use of our cars are useless. To take such action would result in less consumption! The god of economic growth is exposed for what it is.

The call to "ecological conversion" was sounded by Pope John Paul II in 2001, and strongly re-iterated at the Climate Change Conference in Canberra in November 2005. We know from our scientists that dramatic impacts are predicted for Australia. However, we can no longer restrict our view to our own backyard. As Christians, as global citizens, we need to do our part. How do we persuade EVERYONE that each of us must take action now? Governments included!

*Annette Shears pbvm*

#### References:

- New Internationalist*, July 2006
- A Big Fix*, Ian Lowe 2005, Black Inc, Schwartz Publishing, Melbourne
- Is Nuclear power Clean and Green?* Sean McDonagh in *Vocation for Justice*, Spring 2006
- <http://conservation.catholic.org/ecologicalcrisis.htm>
- <http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/conference.html>

# Roads to Peace

When so much suffering caused through violence is broadcast into our homes from around the globe (and massive conflicts in places like the Congo go unreported) I am reminded of something that Mother Theresa and Jean Vanier once exhorted an audience to do with regards to peace – *it must start with each of you, in your own hearts and homes*. This is the challenge of our times, to begin the path to peace within ourselves and our small communities so that such conflict does not take hold of our hearts.

The **SAO Peace Circle** came together to see what practical initiatives we could support to facilitate the growth of peace in our communities and some wonderful opportunities have presented themselves to us in the forms of Brendan McKeague and Fr John Dear. In collaboration with partners *Pace e Bene* and the Toowoomba CJPC and with the kind support of the Mercy Foundation, the SAO is putting on two workshops in October in Brisbane and Toowoomba exploring non-violence and paths to peace. Facilitator Brendan McKeague is well known in Australia and the *Engage* program is designed to build understandings in ourselves and capacities to build peace in our communities. Contact the SAO to register for these ground-breaking, peace-making 3 day programs. The cost is \$200 and includes the *Engage* book when you register with a deposit. See box to the right for more details.

In late February 2007 Fr John Dear, renowned Jesuit peace

activist and writer, will be in Brisbane for a couple of public events. One event will likely be a day-long retreat and the other an evening talk. So, mark down 28 February and 1 March 2007 in your diaries!

Angela Ballard  
for the SAO Peace Circle

## *Interested in developing a culture of peace in your community?*

**Wanted: 40 people** in SE Qld to commit to  
peacebuilding

### **When and Where?**

Lourdes Hill College, Hawthorne, **Brisbane**: Thursday  
19 October (evening) to Sunday 22 October 2006

**Toowoomba** (venue TBA): Thursday 26 October to  
Sunday 29 October 2006

Numbers are strictly limited (20 per workshop).  
Preference will be given to those prepared to take  
the program back into their communities.

Contact: Angela Ballard at [angela@sao.criq.org.au](mailto:angela@sao.criq.org.au)  
or (07) 3891 5866 or Mark Copland at  
[justice@twb.catholic.org.au](mailto:justice@twb.catholic.org.au) or (07) 4631 0895

# Working to make Indigenous poverty history

At the last meeting of the **SAO Indigenous Issues Circle** the group looked at the **MAKE Indigenous POVERTY HISTORY** campaign through a report back from the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) State meeting where Graeme Mundine introduced the campaign showing some very good videos. A *Nine Days of Prayer* leaflet from the campaign was enthusiastically received and an eight session workshop paper was also made available. Armbands and T-shirts were on display and for sale.

At Justice Place there is a display board of the *Make Poverty History* campaign but it will change in time to the Indigenous slant on the *Campaign to halve poverty by 2015*. The **MAKE Indigenous POVERTY HISTORY** campaign will be launched in Brisbane on 22 September in the city.

The group considered partnerships and future directions from the indigenisation of the eight Millennium Goals. New resources are available at [http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/indigenous\\_poverty](http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/indigenous_poverty).



**Indigenous**  
**MAKE POVERTY HISTORY.**

Graeme Mundine will deliver the *Common Wealth for the Common Good* Address on Tuesday 17 October (see enclosed flyer). SAO and CJPC are partners already in this initiative.

The general campaign *Halving world poverty by 2015* has launched another video named “What can one Church do?” which may be useful to view in the future to assist with campaigning through church groups and particularly our own constituency.

Wendy Flannery rsm, a member of the Indigenous Issues Circle, is a member of the Sorry Day Planning Committee (King George Square) representing SAO.

Kay McPadden rsj  
for the SAO Indigenous Issues Circle

# The impending death of pay equity with barely a whimper

What follows may well sound a bit dry and a bit dense too. It is also not likely to make the six o'clock news or *A Current Affair* but yet it heralds the passing away of principles that had only just begun to redress some of the inequities of our society. Can we challenge ourselves to understand how easily such hard won gains are lost?

In the complexities of the rollout of the new IR laws there is one substantial impact that so far has only attracted the interest of academics and unions. There is little "trickle down" understanding to the media, commentators or the general public. Perhaps this is because it relates to principles which the fast buck, consumer-driven culture pays little or no heed to.

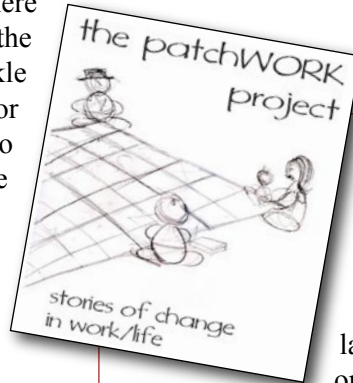
The principle of equal pay for equal work – pay equity for all – took around a hundred years of agitation to actualise, often through the campaign for equal pay for women. But now the award system with its emphasis on equity is being dismantled bit by bit. It is being replaced by a new regime where it is illegal for workers to share or compare the contents of their AWAs (Australian Workplace Agreements) and more difficult for Unions to operate to ensure workers rights. So there are now no effective checks and balances to ensure that people are paid fairly and equitably for equal work. This is despite the law directing the new Minimum Wage Commission to do so.

This signals a "forward to the past" where women especially are most vulnerable because work done mostly by women (such as care professions like child and aged care) is still undervalued. The principles that underpin and support the pay conditions of many people will be eroded away within

a very short time once they no longer have the protection of an equity-based award wage fixing system.

The challenge now is on for principled employers; to begin (again) a costly and time-consuming process where the various types of work are classified and valued to ensure fairness to all employees as well as reward for merit.

Angela Ballard  
SAO Project Officer



## Get involved in Story Circles around IR Issues

The Social Action Office now invites concerned religious, laypeople and their groups and organisations to participate in "the patchWORK project" which seeks to elicit and unpack experience and stories of change from all perspectives in the new IR, welfare to work and independent contracting environments. If you know of any stories or people whose work/life has changed in recent times please get involved in patchWORK. It is through reflection and action together that we can make a difference in the lives of those most impacted.

For more information on this project go to [http://sao.clriq.org.au/ir\\_campaign/ir\\_patchwork.html](http://sao.clriq.org.au/ir_campaign/ir_patchwork.html) or contact Angela Ballard at [angela@sao.clriq.org.au](mailto:angela@sao.clriq.org.au) or phone (07) 3891 5866.

# Working to reduce global warming

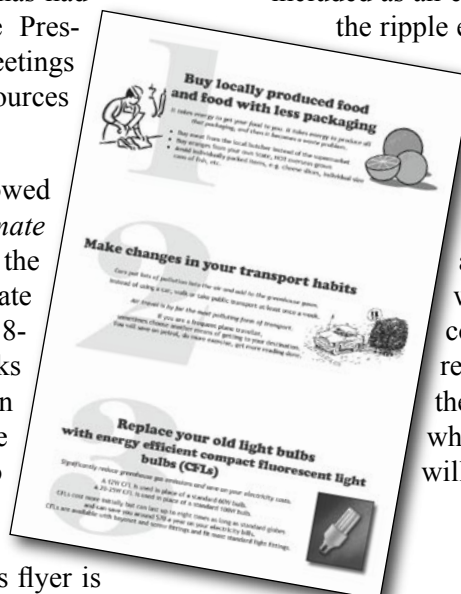
The SAO Climate Change Circle has had two interesting gatherings at the Presentation Centre, Clayfield. At both meetings there has been a beneficial sharing of resources and renewal of our internal energy.

At our first meeting Annette Shears showed a PowerPoint presentation on *Climate Change – Global Warming* based on the Catholic Earthcare Australia Climate Change Conference (held in Canberra 18-20 November 2005) and on other books and scientific reports. After discussion it was agreed that we would produce a flyer in the form of an invitation to recipients to make a commitment to at least one of three lines of action to slow down our race to global warming. This flyer is

included as an enclosure with this newsletter. We hope that the ripple effect of our promotion will get a multitude of people taking small steps consistently with very positive results for our planet.

Our further endeavours will be directed to analysing and taking action re the growing movement to promote nuclear energy as a cleaner alternative. In this we look to working in conjunction with PolMin and conservation groups to lobby for support for renewable sources of energy. We keep in mind the prospect of State and Federal elections when politicians are most apt to listen and we will be developing our time-line accordingly.

Janice Howard osu  
for the SAO Climate Change Circle



## Hot Air How nigh's the end?

*Griffith Review 12  
Winter 2006*

Griffith University in  
conjunction with ABC Books



A very readable introduction to measurable changes occurring on our planet. Though not a scientific journal, authors, journalists, environmentalists, agriculturalists, marine researchers, ecologists, archaeologists and historians present different sides to the debate.

Climate change is shown in its historical context with the probable sociological consequences of our expanding dependence on fossil fuels, coal, oil, uranium, powering electricity and transport, creating an ever-growing accumulation of waste and pollution.

HOT AIR is a wake up call for anyone ignorant of the issues related to global warming. It could help to propel us into serious consideration/action. It is possible to change community attitudes which enable political reform, and create a future sustainable society. The process has already begun.

*Nickie Filipo rscj*

## Dreaming from the Heart

In early October Indigenous people from all over Australia will gather in beautiful Alice Springs NT with non-Indigenous friends for the 7th National Assembly *Dreaming from the Heart* and to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to Alice Springs in 1986.



In preparation for this event Message Sticks have passed through Australian parishes, schools and communities for over 12 months, calling us all to take up the challenges of the Pope's message and inviting us to gather again in Alice Springs to share in reconciliation with one another the moving Spirit within us all. Please keep this important event in your prayers.

## 2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification: [www.iydd2006.org/](http://www.iydd2006.org/)



### AUGUST

- 15 End of World War II in the Pacific 1945
- 16 Wave Hill Station NT returned to the Gurindji People 1975
- 18 Vietnam Veterans Day
- 23 International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition
- 25 World Migration Day
- 26 *MV Tampa* rescues 433 asylum seekers from a sinking vessel. Australian Government refuses them entry and sends troops to prevent disembarkation. 2001
- 27 Refugee and Migrant Sunday
- 27 Dom Helder Camara died 1999
- 30 East Timor's Independence Ballot 1999

### SEPTEMBER

- 1 National Wattle Day
- 2 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991
- 7 National Threatened Species Day
- 9 A Day with Margaret Wheatley 9.30am-4.30pm at Mt Alvernia College, Kedron (Contact QCEC 07 3224 3306)
- 12 Death of Steve Biko 1977
- 15 Racial Hatred Act Australia 1995
- 16 International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
- 21 International Day of Peace
- 22 Launch of *Make Indigenous Poverty History* campaign in Brisbane
- 24 Social Justice Sunday
- 24 Aung San Suu Kyi (Burma) forms National League for Democracy 1988
- 28 Death of John Pat in Roeburne Prison WA 1983 initiated the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

### OCTOBER

- 2 Mahatma Ghandi born 1869
- 3 Day of Jewish and Christian Dialogue
- 4 St Francis of Assisi - World Animal Welfare Day
- 7 Celebration of 20th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to Alice Springs
- 10 Treaty on the Exploration and Use of Outer Space 1967
- 11 Opening Session of Vatican Council II 1962
- 13 International Water Week
- 14 Earth Healing Fair at Four Winds (Contact 07 3425 3138)
- 15 World Rural Women's Day
- 17 *Common Wealth for the Common Good* Address 7.30pm 2nd floor TL&C Building, 16 Peel Street, South Brisbane (see enclosed flyer)
- 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 19 Sinking of Siev X
- 24 United Nations Day
- 26 Uluru handed back to traditional owners, the Mutijuli People 1985