



# Presentation Society Justice Newsletter



Issue No. 4

## Dear Sisters and Associates

The Society Justice Committee welcomed Margaret Kelly as a visiting member, replacing Carmel Boyle, and Margaret will also be part of the final meeting for the year in December. Our meeting coincided with a *COOL Communities* environment seminar organised by the local parish and we were able to attend. We would recommend this seminar as an informative one with some every practical input. We each received a free bag of 'goodies' which contained, among other things, two compact fluorescent light

bulbs and a water efficient showerhead.

This newsletter contains another update on West Papua, information on Climate Change, continuation of bringing reconciliation to the fore, as well as developments in the political area regarding refugees and Temporary Protection Visas. Also included is a reflection on our earth as we prepare for the IPA Assembly in November.

*Joan Power, Annette Shears, Kathleen Tynan and Margaret Kelly*

## Day to Remember - 19 October *Sinking of Siev X*

On this day we remember the 350 people who died in the disaster of the Siev X in 2001, as well as families and all people who are forced to take treacherous journeys in the pursuit of freedom and safety.

[www.sievx.com](http://www.sievx.com)

## West Papua

We are pleased and grateful to say that, as a result of our suggested action to support West Papua (July 2003 edition) so far we have received \$962.80 towards medical cover for the six West Papuan students whose story follows.

We were particularly touched by the contribution forwarded by Bernie Telemai on behalf of our PNG Sisters. Bernie wrote, "This is the cheque that we send as contribution towards West Papua. All the Sisters decided to send K10.00 from our personal budget of K35.00 per month and we have changed it into Australian dollars." (AUD\$82.80)

Given the precarious situation of our Sisters in relation to West Papua, their prompt and generous response reflects their concern to do something very practical for their suffering near neighbours. Thank you PNG Sisters! Thank you, all contributors.

The fund is still open for contributions. Cheques may be made out to *Presentation Sisters* and sent to Kathleen Tynan at 245 Golden Four Drive, Bilinga Qld 4225.

## The Six Students Have Arrived!

Thanks to the boundless energies of the West Papua Central Highlands group which includes some Ballarat Mercies and Presentation Sister Genevieve Jeffrey, the six West Papuans took up residence in Ballarat in August. After a period of orientation they were billeted and welcomed to their respective schools. Two are at St Pat's College, two at Damascus and two at Loreto College.

Four mornings each week they are undertaking extensive language classes with a retired ACU couple and a Loreto Sister, all of whom have ESL expertise. The rest of their week is spent in their schools where they are undertaking Years 11 and 12 studies. It is hoped that at least one of them will commence Education studies at ACU with a scholarship offered by the University.

Medicare Private has been taken out for them and already some dental work has been required by one of the boys.

Sister Rita Hayes, one of the driving forces behind the venture, said that the biggest struggle has been to find a worshipping community for the young people. They are very committed Christians, not Catholic. Rita said of their rather lengthy and fervent Grace Before Meals, "You can say goodbye to a hot meal!"

## Conflict Continues in West Papua

The struggles in West Papua continue with almost daily reports of the changing situation in the Province.

Tensions have been riding high over the Central Government's move to create three provinces in Papua: West Irian Jaya, Central Irian Jaya and Papua.

(cont'd on page 4)

# Climate Change – Welcome to a Warmer World

**T**he World Climate Change Conference will be held in Moscow from 29 September to 3 October this year. The Conference is not an inter-governmental forum but does involve governments as well as NGOs, the scientific and corporate sectors.

The Conference's main goals are to involve the various sectors in a comprehensive discussion of the scientific aspects of natural and human-induced climate change. This will include looking at the impact of climate change on ecosystems, economies and human communities as well as seeking to find integrated approaches to reducing the human-induced interference on the climatic patterns of our planet. The website for the conference is [www.wccc2003.org/index\\_e.htm](http://www.wccc2003.org/index_e.htm)

## Taking the Earth's temperature

The most striking indication that the planet is changing, is that the average surface temperature has increased by about 0.6 degrees Celsius over the past 100 years. The warmest decade of last century was the 1990s, with 1998 being the warmest year on record.

Satellite data indicates that snow and ice cover is decreasing over the surface of the planet. As the planet warms, ice melts and water expands, causing the level of the oceans to rise. During last century, global average sea levels rose between 10 and 20 cms.

## What is to blame?

Emissions of greenhouse gases due to human activities continue to alter the atmosphere in ways that are expected to affect the climate. Although natural factors have contributed to the global warming in the first half of the 20th century, powerful computer models of the Earth's complex weather show that natural factors alone do not explain the warming in the second half of the 20th century. It seems certain that this trend will certainly continue throughout the 21st century.

## What are we pumping into the air?

Concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) have all increased markedly during the past 200 years as a result of human activities. Three-quarters of this increase in the past 20 years has been a result of burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. It is the greatest observed increase in CO<sub>2</sub> for at least 420,000 years. Between the late 1990s and 2020 global energy consumption is set to increase by 60%.

## Projecting into the 21st century

Compared to the 0.6 degree Celsius increase during the 20th century, temperatures are predicted to increase 1.4 to 5.8 degrees Celsius by 2100. Sea levels are also predicted to continue their rise – somewhere between 9 and 88 cms. An increase of this magnitude will submerge a number of island states, particularly in the Pacific region. The current trend forecasts continual growth of greenhouse gas concentrations, which will further accelerate the 'heating' of the planet.

## 1 October is Tuvalu Independence Day

Tuvalu is a cluster of nine islands in the South Pacific and is one of the world's smallest independent nations.

Coastal erosion and rising sea-levels seriously threaten the future of Tuvalu. As sea levels have risen, Tuvalu has experienced lowland flooding. Saltwater intrusion is adversely affecting its drinking water and food production. The islands of Tuvalu may be totally submerged within the next ten years. The people of Tuvalu have been forced to leave their homeland. In 2000, the Government of Tuvalu approached Australia to accept people from Tuvalu as "environmental refugees". The Australian Government refused the request. New Zealand has agreed to accept all 11,000 citizens of Tuvalu. Migration began in 2002.

## Australia and New Zealand are expected to be affected in the following ways:

- water supply will decrease due to projected drying trends;
- risk of floods as a result of increased intensity of heavy rains and tropical storms;
- some species will become endangered or extinct due to changes in habitat and environment;
- natural environments such as coral reefs and alpine regions will be greatly affected or disappear;
- agricultural production will be affected by changes in temperature, rainfall, pests and diseases; coastal urban developments face increasing risk from storm surges, rising sea level and floods;
- human health will be affected by changes in the distribution of pests and exposure to heat stress.

## The next step?

We have the power to make decisions about how we use energy in our homes. It can save money and help the environment. *COOL Communities*, a project of the Australian Greenhouse Office, suggest a number of easy ways we can reduce global warming in our daily living:

- Turn off lights when you leave a room or are not using them
- Replace standard incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs
- Don't drive when you can walk, use bus or train
- Compost all your organic waste
- Only heat or cool rooms you are using
- When buying new appliances look for ones with the highest energy-efficient star rating
- Cut hot water consumption by washing clothes in cold water
- When purchasing a new hot water system buy solar or high efficiency gas
- Support renewable energy – change to a *Greenpower* program such as Earth's Choice when paying for electricity
- Change the showerhead to a water-efficient showerhead.

# The Refugee Issue



Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock has recently announced changes to the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) program. The changes mean that people who arrive in Australia on visitor visas and then apply for refugee status will only be able to apply for a three-year visa, rather than permanent protection. At the end of three years they will have to justify their claim to asylum again or face deportation. TPV holders would not be able to leave Australia or bring family members to be reunited with them here.

Church groups and refugee advocates believe that these changes simply extend an unfair regime that divides families and keeps genuine refugees living in uncertainty.

Refugee Council of Australia Executive Director, Margaret Piper, said that the TPV system prolonged the suffering of refugees who were separated from their families and denied a sense of security and belonging.

## A FAIR GO?

A football player gets a three person tribunal presided over by a Queen's Counsel, plus two football experts, *to decide if he can play next week.*

An asylum seeker gets a tribunal of one who is not required to have legal training and who is employed by a department hostile to asylum seekers, *to decide his fate in life.*

The Labor Party, the Democrats and the Greens all oppose the new legislation. The following sample letter can be used as a basis to send letters to Ms Nicola Roxon, Shadow Minister for Immigration, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600:

Dear Ms Roxon

I am writing in relation to the changes to the current refugee regime that have been proposed by the Liberal Government. These changes mean that every on-shore protection visa applicant will be given a temporary protection visa before being given access to permanent protection.

While the system as it currently stands is grossly discriminatory and punishes the most vulnerable asylum seekers, an extension of the temporary protection regime is disastrous to all protection visa applicants.

- The current re-assessment of Afghan asylum seekers by the Department of Immigration, in relation to changes in the country-of-origin situation, is showing up all the difficulties with this kind of two stage determination process. It is virtually impossible to re-prove protection claims after three years away from one's country of origin. This amounts to a denial of natural justice, and an abuse of process by the Department of Immigration.
- The psychological damage to asylum seekers constantly living with uncertainty and the fear of being returned to a dangerous situation is enormous.
- The conditions placed on Temporary Protection Visas amount to making holders of these visas second class citizens. **They cannot access education, English classes, or family reunion.** They are effectively excluded from Australian society, and must take unskilled jobs because they lack English skills and education opportunities. Separated from their families, they are forced to live isolated lives.

I urge you to oppose these changes, and take a stand on this issue of the meaning of refuge and protection. Temporary protection is not protection and makes a mockery of our obligations under the Refugee Convention.

I also urge you to develop policy that is humane and responsible and affords permanent protection to Convention Refugees.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

(Your signature)

## West Papua (cont'd from page 1)

Analysts say that to split the Province, which is made up of migrant people from other Indonesian islands and local Indigenous people, would only bring great misery to the Papuans in general. The migrants support the Central Government's move and the local people remain determined to pursue the right to self-determination. Papuans understandably regard the proposed split as a decisive move to undermine their support for self-determination and their calls for dialogue on the future status of West Papua.

In recent weeks thousands of Indonesian military have been deployed in the West Papuan province to support the pro-central government policy. Fierce battles have ensued between the two groups and numbers of Indigenous people have been killed, many tortured and raped, and properties destroyed.

As we go to press, it is reported that the Indonesian Government has decided to shelve plans temporarily to split the Province into three. In the meantime, the dream of the Papuan people for the right to self-determination remains a dream.

# Getting Reconciliation on the Agenda Again

## Alarm over number of child abuse cases in Northern Territory

A recent broadcast of the ABC radio program PM (27 August 2003) highlighted some startling and distressing evidence regarding the incidence of child abuse in Aboriginal communities in the Top End. Child protection officers in the Northern Territory have revealed that they receive up to 50 cases of child abuse and neglect every fortnight and that last year nearly 200 children, mostly girls aged between four and fourteen, were diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases. Nearly all of these were from remote Aboriginal communities and had been abused or exploited by older men.

One child protection officer, Charlie King, said that after reading the report he “went to bed and wept”. He added “I think the community has lost faith in the child protection system and is not reporting these matters. When we fail our children we fail our futures. We must tackle this problem and tackle it immediately. And this is the sadness in it all - it takes a death before we actually deal with the problem and I’m saying let’s not wait for it, because it is not that far away.” He is now calling for an immediate government inquiry.

The Northern Territory Health Minister, Jane Aagaard, stated that there are significant levels of domestic violence and violence generally in remote communities and this meant that the issues in relation to child abuse and neglect were part of a larger picture affecting the whole community.

### Gaviotas - A place where an alternative sustainable living has become a reality

On the eastern plains of Columbia, in a place called Gaviotas, a community has made changes that point the way to an alternative future. In 1965 a group of Columbian scientists, artists, agronomists and engineers moved there and set about making a difference.

In 2003 the electricity needed for the community comes from the winds of the savannah. The type of windmill best suited to the area is shaped like a giant ‘sunflower’. Originally manufactured at Gaviotas there are now thousands throughout Central and South America. The creators are determined not to patent their invention, thus keeping costs down for others who wish to make similar windmills. Other local inventions include biogas heaters, a solar pressure cooker and a solar kettle. These too are being sold in other parts of Columbia.

Accessing water originally required considerable effort. The Gaviotas inventors devised a lightweight hydraulic pump that can be powered by children playing on swings or seesaws. Nearly 700 Columbian villages now use these pumps.

Meanwhile a large scale solar system heats and sterilizes water to make it suitable for drinking.

The greatest achievement is arguably in the area of forestry and agriculture. At the end of the 1980s Columbia’s embracing of free trade caused the local markets to be flooded with cheap food imports and driving local growers to grow cocoa instead.

In Gaviotas they searched for a plant that could survive the harsh soil of the plains and provide them with a living. They found a Caribbean pine which would grow if its roots were dipped in a fungus. This pine is a source of resin from which can be made turpentine, cosmetics, medicines and glue. Columbia was spending \$4 million a year importing such resins. Around 8000 trees were planted, in ever increasing circles. As the forest grew it provided shade for other seeds dropped by birds. The rainforest began to return as did its creatures. The resin produced by the Gaviotas trees replaced the imported resin and the pollution-free factory built to refine the resin won the 1997 United Nations World Zero Emissions award.

Gaviotas is entirely self sufficient in power and almost entirely in

She has instructed her Department to contact all those professionals who are involved in this area to remind them that they must report such incidents when they see them happening.

She also indicated that the government had recently launched a review of its child protection services and has invested an extra \$2.5 million in child and family services in the past two years.

She agreed that even though the NT Government has looked at this area and has made significant inroads, greater effort is required if the situation is to improve.

### Suggested Action

Write/email the minister, The Hon Jane Lesley Aagaard, Minister for Health and Community Service, Parliament House, Darwin NT 0800 (Email: jane.aagaard@nt.gov.au):

- affirming the steps taken by the NT Government to improve child and family services;
- requesting that the NT government make an even greater effort to improve the social and emotional well-being of children and families in remote communities.