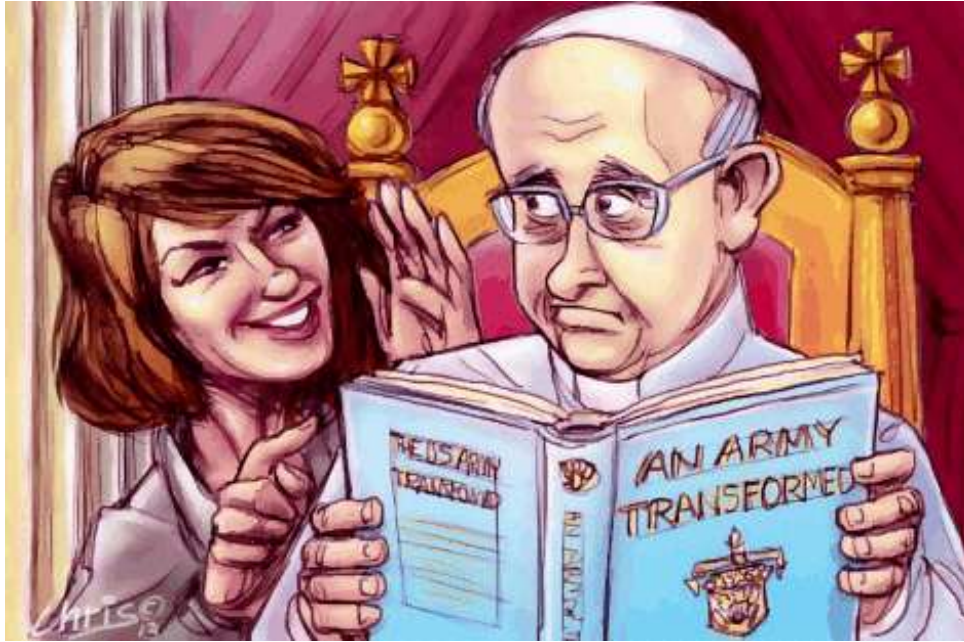


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Dollar bulletproofs US economy

ECONOMICS

David James

The extraordinary stand off in America over the budget shutdown is harming the credibility of the United States economy and the American dollar. Hundreds of thousands of government employees, many of them poorly paid and financially vulnerable, are out of work. There are increasing concerns that the Congress will not allow the \$17 trillion debt ceiling to be raised, which may result in America defaulting for the first time in its history.

And the reaction of the markets? To rush into US dollars, causing the greenback to rise. If that sounds contradictory, it is. Yet it is also quite logical. Because if there is one currency in the world that is not in danger of becoming untradeable, it is the US dollar.

Consider some of the basic sums. America's economy is \$16 trillion a year. America's debt ceiling is \$17 trillion in total. The trade in the US dollar is about \$4 trillion a day. That means that in just over four days, the global capital markets transact the equivalent of America's entire government debt. True, much of that activity is derivatives and other forms of meta money. But there is no risk of the market for American dollars drying up, which means that a default by the American government is, while significant, not especially relevant to what happens with the global trade in US dollars.

America is fond of claiming exceptionalism, which is usually little more than a revealing indication of the nation's questionable attitude to moral accountability. But in one area America most definitely is exceptional: the global currency markets. The US dollar is the world's reserve currency, and consequently America can make economic and fiscal choices that are not available to any other country.

If, for example, a Latin American nation or a South East Asian nation defaulted on its debt, the currency would collapse, then the banking system would collapse because debt held in foreign currencies could not be paid. Then the whole economy would collapse. Indeed, that is exactly what happened during the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s and the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s.

But the American dollar rules the world, and so America has options no other country enjoys. What, then, are the likely consequences of the current political stand off? What most matters in global capital markets are financial or economic signals, which are interpreted by traders to change pricing of different kinds of assets. The signal being sent to the markets is that the world economy is still in a fragile state and that the American economic recovery, which is at best stuttering, is yet to convince.

The main reason that the global financial system is still fragile is that it is so unbalanced. World GDP is about \$US70 trillion, which is about 18 days trade in the

global financial markets. Annual transactions in the global capital markets are about \$1400 trillion, 20 times world GDP. The financial system has become a Leviathan sitting atop the 'real' economy, taking its signals from that 'real' economic world, but at the same time influencing what happens in the 'real' world.

Traders try to work out what everyone expects the markets to do, then look for ways to exploit the predicted outcome (which is one reason why predicted outcomes rarely eventuate; traders put in counter bets against them which often create the opposite result). In this case, the predicted outcome is that the US dollar will fall because of doubts over its safety, stock markets will fall as investors head for the exits and interest rates will stay low because the US Federal Reserve will continue its aggressive printing of money (quantitative easing). Some or all of that may occur, but it also may not, because large bets will be made against it.

What is certain is that the stand off will have a negative effect on American business. American business leaders are mostly siding with President Barack Obama in his battle with the House Republicans. The President midweek hosted 14 chief executives from the nation's biggest financial firms. The Chamber of Commerce, a business advocacy group, has sent a letter to Congress signed by about 250 business groups urging no shutdown and warning that a debt ceiling crisis could lead to an economic disaster.

This is resulting in what might be described as a civil war in America's business community. The so called Tea Party Republicans are in large part being funded by right wing business figures who are determined to push an anti-government political agenda. This is intimidating more moderate Republicans, who are worried that such heavy funding will affect their chances of being pre-selected if they are not seen to co-operate. Right wing business interests, in other words, are driving the political agenda.

Yet businesses that are less ideological are aghast at the implications of the shutdown. It is usually their preference not to be politically partisan, but Obama seems determined to draw them into the political arena. One of the outcomes of the stand off is that business in America may become more politically engaged.

Exasperated American's note to crazypants Republicans

INTERNATIONAL

Jim McDermott

So federal government services were shut down at midnight EST Monday night. At least 800,000 jobs have been furloughed (i.e no work, no pay); another one million will be forced to continue working without pay until the shutdown is resolved.

And all this, because the House Republicans don't like the Affordable Care Act.

That's right — the House Republicans shut down the government because they oppose universal health care. Which for the rest of the world, is the equivalent of crazypants gibberspeak.

Seriously, House Republicans, what are you thinking? The bill passed almost four years ago. If you were looking for a mandate to overturn it, you had the 2012 election, in which, oh wait, you got served (and pretty handily). Even the Supreme Court has validated the law as constitutional. The Supreme Cour! They've got Scalia!

Plus, it's a law to provide universal health care. Think about that: you're opposing people's right to have health coverage. It's the social justice equivalent of opposing Disneyland — in fact it's weirder, because you can at least imagine someone saying they don't like giant smiling mice. Who in their right mind would say 'I just don't like the idea of people having health care'?

Now, maybe we shouldn't be surprised. I mean, we watched grade schoolers get gunned down almost a year ago and still you guys (and many of your Democrat colleagues) couldn't agree to basic background checks and a ban on assault weapons. And btw, over 50 per cent of Americans wanted these measures.

Read that again, boyo, because the last time over 50 per cent of Americans wanted stronger gun laws was in Eighteen Twenty NEVER. But still you didn't pass it.

(Oh, and in case you're counting, there have quite a few shootings since then, including one a few weeks ago in your own backyard. But no, please, protect my right to be mentally ill or pissed off or just plain bored and still be able to purchase an AK-47 for a little *aw shucks boys will be boys* random gunplay. Please.)

It's been nice, too, these first few days of the shutdown, to see so many of you on television mocking those of us who claimed the skies would be rent and plagues of locusts would fall if you shut down the government. You really showed us. Especially the nine million low-income women and children at risk who have stopped receiving the supplemental vouchers they need to buy food. I mean, who really NEEDS food? I'm sure sitting in front of the television watching *The Voice* is sustenance enough. (I know my sister says Adam Levine is a meal all by himself.)

And speaking of my sister, here's an interesting comparison: when her children have temper tantrums, they have to spend time on the naughty step. (Don't ask me, but it works.) But when you guys have temper tantrums, nine billion women and children don't get to eat. Isn't that hilarious?

Seriously, you have to wonder, for a party that opposes universal health care, has no problems with the entire population being armed, and also last week voted to cut food stamps — because nothing signals real concern for the neediest like preventing them from having both health care and that which they need to stay healthy — what exactly is the master plan here? Because it seems we're more in Joker territory than Batman here.

My guess is, you're having a cull. Survival of the fittest, 21st century style. Existence as an obstacle course of bullets and injury avoidance, slathered in a thick savoury dressing of enforced self-loathing. The perfect way to wipe out the deficit-feeding drags on our economy — you know, leeches like the deadbeat poor, children, immigrants and the elderly (oh and totally coincidentally also a disproportionate percentage of the non-white population of our country).

It's definitely an interesting political strategy, especially after the last election. But hey, as Thomas Merton liked to say, 'Being a saint means eliminating the little guy.' (Oh wait, I think that was Chairman Mao.)

Seriously, though, be who you are. The copy really does write itself. Get out the posters and start the cheers: 'We're well, we're white, we're wealthy, go deal with it!' ('Also, we're weaponised!')

Seriously, my friends — and I hope that we are all friends down deep where it really matters — how does any of this work for you? Because it really does seem crazy pants atrociously godawful. And it'd be nicer not to be that if we could.

Abbott's mixed messages for Indonesia

INTERNATIONAL

Pat Walsh

President SBY, now in his ninth year as the democratically elected president of the Indonesian republic, must have had a quiet smile to himself on Monday when he met with Tony Abbott, Australia's latest prime minister, the fifth since he took office. The scene had a touch about it of the Queen in Helen Mirren's movie of that name telling the young Tony Blair 'you are my tenth prime minister'.

Though Abbott wants us to think he is pioneering something novel, the visit also had a touch about it of the ingratiating Soeharto days when Paul Keating made Jakarta his first overseas port of call.

The President, who has gone out of his way to befriend Australia and has no intention of spoiling that legacy in his last year in office, accommodated Abbott. He did not repeat his Foreign Minister's rejection of Abbott's tow back the boats policy. And the two leaders agreed that the trafficking of asylum seekers by boat to Australia was a problem for both Australia and Indonesia and that beating the practice will require more work both bilaterally and through the multi-lateral Bali process.

Abbott, for his part, reaffirmed Canberra's 'total respect for Indonesia's sovereignty and territorial integrity'. This is code for saying that Australia rejects any talk of secession in West Papua, an issue that was also discussed. The pledge also implies that Australia will not unilaterally tow boats back to Indonesia without Indonesia's cooperation. But judging by the hostile reception the idea has so far received from Indonesian MPs and others, that cooperation is not likely.

Observing the Indonesian coverage of the visit, I was bothered by three things.

First, thanks to the way the issue has been presented by Australia, Indonesian public reaction has been defensive. Indonesians feel that Australia is blaming them for the flow of boats. They feel that proposals to pay for intelligence, to buy boats so they cannot be used by people smugglers and so on are 'unilateral' (i.e. pushy) and *pongah* (conceited) and suggest that Australia has to step in because Indonesia is not doing its job. They also think it's unfair for affluent Australia to force boat people back to Indonesia which already has plenty of problems. One letter writer even suggested Indonesia will have to set an island aside to accommodate the influx of returnees.

The issue is not high on Indonesia's agenda and a good outcome of the Abbott visit has been to highlight the matter more sharply here. It's also true that Indonesia could do much more. Its successful containment of terrorism, done in concert with Australia, shows that it could break up the organised crime rings that profit from the people smuggling trade. Perceptions of being dictated to, however, will only generate push back when consultation and collaboration are needed.

Canberra could learn from Australia's enviable record of partnering Indonesia constructively in community development.

Second, the issue is being misrepresented in Indonesia. Reporting on the Abbott visit, the Indonesian media have repeatedly described asylum seekers as illegal immigrants using the Indonesian term *imigran gelap*. *Gelap* means dark and suggests activity that is shadowy and suspicious. The Abbott Government uses similar language and is happy to see the issue defined this way. It allows a humanitarian and human rights issue to be reduced to one of criminality, justifies tough action and absolves one of a duty of care for those legitimately seeking sanctuary.

Indonesia is not a signatory to the UN refugee convention. Refugees in Indonesia cannot legally work, move around freely or educate their children. A report on the issue by Human Rights Watch in June this year was entitled 'Barely Surviving'. It details detention, poor treatment, abuse and exploitation of refugees in Indonesia.

Lastly, I suspect that the Prime Minister's visit has left Indonesians with a poor impression of Australia. Dewi Fortuna Anwar, political adviser to Indonesia's Vice President Boediono, described the Abbott policy as 'callous' and asked where was the humanitarian dimension in all this. Educated in Australia like Boediono, she expects better. Abbott's heavy handedness also contrasts sharply with the sensitive way Jakarta's popular governor, Jokowi, is managing complex change, for which Indonesians feel genuine enthusiasm.

The business and boats orientation of the visit has left the impression that an Abbott led Australia sees the national interest principally in narrow, if not selfish, economic terms. It would have helped if, in addition to the boat issue, Australia's relatively generous formal immigration and refugee intake policy had also been highlighted during the PM's visit. Maybe next time Abbott might include not just business leaders in his delegation but some of Australia's respected migrant and humanitarian leaders who can explain to Indonesians that there is more to Australia than they saw this time.

In the meantime, Indonesians will be clear about two things: that Australia is open for business, as Abbott declared on election night, but closed tight to desperate boat people fleeing war and persecution.

The film about Indonesia that Tony Abbott must see

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

***The Act of Killing* (MA). Director: Joshua Oppenheimer. 159 minutes**

The timing of this 2012 documentary's theatrical release in Australia is intriguing. It coincidentally follows on the heels of Prime Minister Tony Abbott's triumphal visit to Indonesia, and his meeting there with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, to discuss among other things bilateral strategies for dealing with the 'problem' of asylum seekers and related humanitarian issues. The sprawling and occasionally surreal documentary *The Act of Killing* is a greatly unsettling film in its own right, but against this contemporary geopolitical backdrop it is nothing short of frightening.

American-British filmmaker Oppenheimer turns his camera on Anwar Congo, who in 1965 went from plying the black market trade in movie tickets to running an anti-communist death squad during the transition to the New Order military dictatorship of Suharto. Congo personally executed some 1000 people, in gruesome fashion. Oppenheimer invites him and his cohorts to relive those days, and they do so, via candid interviews, frank conversations that are captured by the fly-on-the-wall Oppenheimer — and through the ebullient production of films that recreate their exploits in the style of Hollywood westerns, musicals, mafia and war films.

The dapper and charismatic Congo is clearly, deeply disturbed; traumatised, yet oblivious to his trauma, or unable to name it. He blithely demonstrates the sadistic method of garrotting prisoners that he devised, after beheading them proved to be too messy. He is genuinely perplexed by the nightmares that keep him awake at night, and admits to having used drugs and alcohol to help him 'forget'. Not just to forget though, but to 'fly', and in fact to 'dance'; at which point he proceeds to perform an elegant cha-cha on the very ground where many of his executions took place, grinning for the camera as it follows this performance for excruciatingly long moments.

The Act of Killing is both gruelling and compelling, due largely to the experience of watching Congo draw closer to appreciating the unassailable evil of his past. Re-enacting a massacre, and witnessing the re-traumatisation of the villagers who have been enlisted as extras; participating in an execution scenario, with himself portraying the victim; these experiences trigger palpable, empathetic responses in Congo that he is unable to recognise, let alone deal with. These eventually bring the horrors he has swallowed for so long, literally to the brink of regurgitation. This is a deeply disturbing portrait of corrupted humanity coming face to face with its own nature.

Yet Congo's growth, such as it is, stands in pointed contrast with the staunch

hubris of others in the film. One of his former colleagues displays a dispassionate pragmatism that is the closest thing this documentary offers to pure evil. He is well aware of the extent of the cruelty that they were responsible for, and the lies they told to justify it. He in fact encourages Congo to accept and embrace that reality, not in the pursuit of absolution but simply for the sake of his own mental wellbeing. Challenged by Oppenheimer about morality, he scoffs; the Geneva Convention, he opines, is merely 'today's morality'; morality is changeable, and in Indonesia the end justified the means. 'Take me to The Hague', he says, in haughty tones that suggest he might well have added, 'I dare you'.

There is a cautionary tale in all of this, for modern governments engaging with Indonesia on bilateral strategies relating to humanitarian issues. Congo is shown to appear on a breakfast television talk show, where the young female host commends his 'achievements', to the rapturous applause of the studio audience. Congo is revered to the point of celebrity, as the founding father of the vast right-wing paramilitary group the Pancasila Youth. Many of his death squad contemporaries hold positions of power and influence. *The Act of Killing* demonstrates a direct continuum between the evils of the past and the present political reality.

In Australia the reality of ongoing Indigenous disadvantage is proof of the effect of past atrocities on the structure of ensuing society. Likewise, despite some democratic progress in recent times, Indonesia's unhealed past remains a source of serious human rights [problems](#). On both counts, the Abbott Government would do well to take note.

Suicide silence and stigma

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

Silence is golden. But it can also be leaden. And sometimes it kills, like steel in the heart. That is certainly the case with suicide where those who die are wrapped in silence and those who mourn them are immured in silence. A stigma attaches to suicide and to those close to it.

The stigma was originally a mark branded on criminals or slaves, excluding them from respectable society. Metaphorically it refers to the experience of those who are associated with a deed or condition that arouses bewilderment and terror. It usually touches the dark and mysterious borderlines between life and death, between sterility and fecundity. People fear coming too close to it lest it be contagious, and hesitate to talk about it.

In many societies leprosy is seen as a stigma. Lepers are driven outside the village, and their exclusion often extends to their families.

A stigma also attaches to suicide. It disconnects the person from life, from intimate relationships with friends and family and from society. If we shudder at suicide, we do so because those who take their lives appear to look at what life has to offer but then decide to turn their back on it.

That is why in Rome and in Christian times people who took their own lives were buried outside the communal graveyards and without the prayers that farewelled the dead of the community. The symbolism was clear. They had separated themselves from society and its shared life; now society separated itself from them. And by implication it also marginalised those closely associated with suicide.

The stigma of suicide isolates the people marked by it and affects the way they see themselves and the way they are seen by others. It makes conversation difficult, compounding feelings of isolation and separation from others. Relationships often break under the strain, and family members sometimes take their own lives. Those who survive are left with the memory of an action that seems meaningless. They are unable to share their feelings. Suicide disconnects them from their friend who died; the stigma attaching to suicide separates them from others.

Because suicide so defies the search for meaning, the meanings people make for themselves are often single and thin. They may explain it in terms of callousness, mental illness, of neglect by themselves or other family members, or by significant events in a person's history. Since single explanations are brittle, they are often defended tenaciously. If the meaning I have given to a friend's suicide is wrong, I might be responsible for it. So I cannot afford to contemplate that possibility, precisely because I fear it may be true.

All this leaves relatives and close friends vulnerable and tightly defended, unable to find release from the strong feelings that lie hidden and suppressed. They remain disconnected, unable to speak to one another. In a family this cycle of disconnection may deepen and further enclose its members.

If people are to thrive this cycle must be reversed and the stigma deprived of its power and mystique. The power of stigma is maintained by silence. It can be broken only by talking about it.

But all the factors that lock in silence resist conversation. To speak about suicide requires great trust, and trust can often be built only by skilled and trustworthy mediators of conversation.

That is why counselling and guided conversation with others who have also suffered the loss of family members through suicide are important if people are to flourish. They dispel fear and help people move out of the separation imposed by suicide. They may then reconnect imaginatively with the person who has died, and be open to communicate with others and to face society.

In Australia over 2000 suicides are recorded each year. The people whom those deaths affect intimately are estimated at more than 12,000. These deaths and their consequences affect the whole Australian community. The prosperity and flourishing of any society depend on the easy and trusting connections people make with each other. Suicide vaporises those connections at enormous cost to survivors and to society.

Reconnection is a long journey. It requires time and trustworthy companions who are skilled in listening and encouraging conversation. That is why community agencies like [Support After Suicide](#) ...Ž that can respond quickly to the needs of people, can stay with them for the long haul, and can provide a range of conversations adapted for different needs and stages are so important. They help dispel the stigma of suicide and they help heal society.

Blessed are the whistleblowers

CREATIVE

Gillian Bouras

My grandfather fought in France and Belgium during the First World War. He was 23, and in the artillery, which fact rendered his experiences long-distance and comparatively impersonal. He did what he was told to do, came safely home, and then never talked much about his war.

My father was a veteran of the Second World War, and also only 23 when he took part in an amphibious landing on Borneo, the horrifying details of which my brother learned only a month or two before Dad's death at the age of 89. Having somehow got safely off the beach, Dad became forward scout in the jungle, and would later occasionally recall a few hair-raising moments, sufficient to make siblings and self realise we had had a very good chance of never experiencing the vicissitudes of this vale of tears.

I don't recall these stories in detail, but I do recall my mother telling me what Dad had said to her. *If you knew what I had to do under orders, you would leave me.* She didn't want to leave him; she never asked.

My second son has been in the Greek Army for nearly 20 years; he was 19 when he joined up. Duty in the Bosnia of 1997, when he, too, was 23, was bad enough, but he has not seen active service. Thank God.

I initially tried to talk him out of the army idea.

'What will you do if you receive orders that go against your conscience?'

'I'll worry about that when the time comes.'

The reply of a very young man, one who had yet to learn that the whole of life is a learning curve, and that many a googly will be bowled at us before we are done.

'It'll be too late then.'

I had to accept, though, that there was nothing I could do.

I remain interested in matters military, and was bemused by the fact that Bradley Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison for releasing evidence of US army atrocities into the public domain. The people who committed these crimes have received sentences that are almost ludicrous in their lightness. Manning has said he did not want to harm or betray his country, but followed his conscience in making shocking acts known to the world. His orders, however, involved secrecy, and President Obama, a lawyer himself, has stated that Manning broke the law.

There is a case, however, for breaking laws that are dubious. And for disobeying

orders of a similar kind.

Legal minds have given a great deal of attention to the concept of Superior Orders, which became so important at the time of the post-war Nuremberg Trials that a significant ruling became known as the Nuremberg Defence. Nazi war criminals pleaded that they had been only obeying orders, but the ruling disallowed this plea: 'The fact that a person acted pursuant to the order of his Government or of his superior does not relieve him of responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him.'

Manning clearly felt that a moral choice was possible. He made that choice, and started suffering for it at least three years ago. And will continue to suffer, unless he receives a presidential pardon.

The Australian forces have what they call a Defence Whistleblower Scheme. The public and members of the defence forces are able to report misconduct, unethical behaviour, fraud, breaches of security, unlawful discrimination, misuse of defence resources, and practices that could jeopardise occupational health and safety. So I suppose that the Australian equivalent of Bradley Manning, whistleblower, would have the whistle blown on him in his turn for *breaches of security*.

There seems to be no place for nuance here, no acknowledgement that people grow and alter and so change their minds about all sorts of issues. The group rules, and the individual who does not fit or obey, is bound to suffer.

As it happens, 2 October is the International Day of Non-Violence, which coincides with the birthday of Gandhi, and is a National Holiday in India. Gandhi pioneered the concept of political non-violence and the notion of passive resistance. He, too, inevitably suffered and paid the highest price because of his moral choices.

A great many people, like Gandhi, desire a non-violent world, a world in which whistleblowers and thoughtful, idealistic individuals are honoured rather than punished. It may be a sign of hope that here in Greece, the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, an organisation dedicated to the practice of violence against immigrants to Greece, is finally being brought to account. Gandhi died violently in 1948. But we have to keep believing in his ideas. And hoping.

Abbott nails Jakarta

AUSTRALIA

Tony Kevin

Tony Abbott did handsomely in Jakarta. In just a few hours, he held frank but clearly warm private talks with President Yudhoyono, at a level of generality appropriate to discussion at head-of-government level. He delivered well-tempered public messages of apology and Australian respect for Indonesian sovereignty at the subsequent state dinner.

The major cloud that had hung over the visit in its last preparatory days — the vexed issue of intemperate Australian responses to uncontrolled asylum-seeker boat departures from Indonesia — was deftly dispelled.

We know little about the private talks apart from what was reported as said by the two leaders in their subsequent brief joint press appearance. Abbott was fulsome on his respect for Indonesian sovereignty. He said they had agreed that people smuggling issues needed to be discussed bilaterally as well as in the Bali Process multilateral context. Fairfax's Michael Bachelard described this as an Indonesian concession. I think this was more a courteous olive-branch.

The envisaged bilateral talks between Scott Morrison and his Indonesian counterpart won't shake the parameters established of pledged Australian respect for Indonesian sovereignty on the people smuggling issue. Morrison will have little if any room to press in these subsidiary-level 'technical' talks the kinds of unreasonable demands of Indonesia that he and Alexander Downer have been publicly articulating in Australia in recent weeks.

I doubt that there will be any more attempts by Australian ships operating under Operation Sovereign Borders orders to take passengers from intercepted boats back to the Indonesian 12 mile limit, as happened twice last week. OSB ships will also now patrol further back from the Indonesian contiguous zone, as they used to under the previous Labor governments. Australian-organised rescues of boats reporting distress will still take place in these international waters that are in the Indonesian search and rescue zone, but there will be less bullying of the under-resourced Indonesian search and rescue agency BASARNAS to take control of those rescues.

Hopefully, there will be fewer deaths as a result. Both sides will want to move on from the three disturbing events of last week (two imposed returns of boat passengers, and one tragic sinking).

Nor are we likely to hear much more about Australia buying boats or buying information about people smuggling in Indonesia. Both proposals were sharp affronts to Indonesian sovereignty.

Morrison and Downer lost last night, but Australia didn't. The national interest

will be well served by the PM's deft handling of a difficult situation. Abbott, bolstered by the presence of an authoritative Australian business delegation, was able convincingly to pitch the message that the bilateral relationship is much bigger and more important than the people smuggling issue, which he implicitly admitted had been mishandled by Australia.

He did not say this in so many words in public: in fact his approach was quite Javanese in its subtlety. In apologising for past Australian policy errors on the beef trade curtailment and restarting the people-smuggler trade, he made indirect apology for Australian heavy-handed rhetoric on people smuggling — a point the Indonesians well understood and graciously accepted.

Finally, a word on Operation Sovereign Borders. The second weekly media conference held yesterday saw a well-detailed Australian rescue response timeline by Admiral Binskin, the acting CEO of OSB. Binskin's timeline reflected well on the agencies concerned, primarily the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

Following a very early morning phonecall to Australian police from a concerned relative in Australia who had been phoned from the boat, agencies moved quickly to establish the boat's coordinates and mobilise rescue responses. BASARNAS was asked to take charge but declined. The fact that the boat had moved (drifted?) quite quickly back into a position 8nm from the Java shore, in shallow waters, limited what AMSA could do to help. The boat's final tragic foundering was in waves just 50m from shore. Many women and children died.

Still puzzling are multiple first-hand survivor accounts of many calls made 'to the embassy' over up to 26 hours before the sinking. Though Binskin said firmly that Australian Embassy in Jakarta records had been checked and there was no record of any such calls, I do not think these bereaved and distraught survivors had reason to lie. I think somebody was called. Possibly, another number not part of the embassy call recording system. FOI enquiries may in time elucidate more on this.

As to the two returned boatloads of passengers from two intercepted and subsequently destroyed boats, by *HMAS Ballarat* on Thursday and *ACV Triton* on Friday, Morrison refused to give any operational details. We know in the first case there were distress calls. We don't know if there were in the second case. Possibly the commander of *Triton* assessed the intercepted boat on the high seas as unseaworthy — he would be entitled under maritime law to make that judgement. Again, FOI may establish the facts here.

Leaving the two passenger groups at Indonesia's 12nm limit was an ill-judged move, provocative and demeaning to Indonesia. OSB is lucky the Indonesians cooperated. There is no surety that they will do so again, after last night's successful outcome in Jakarta. In effect, I predict, Operation Sovereign Borders will quietly revert to similar operating procedures as for Border Protection Command and AMSA before the change of government. Thank you for sorting this

out, Prime Minister, in the national interest.

Cardinals meeting consultative Pope

RELIGION

Brian Lucas

A consultative group of cardinals will meet with Pope Francis on 1 October. There is eagerness among the world's press for access to the meeting and clear expectations of radical shifts in church policy. Fr Thomas Rosica, from Canadian Salt and Light Television, and a splendid collaborator with the Vatican Press Office, hosed them down: 'It would be unwise to make large investments of funds and personnel to cover an event which is first and foremost a series of private meetings between cardinals and the Pope.'

Some clues about how Francis might approach such a unique consultation can be found in his [interview](#) with Fr Antonio Spadaro SJ for a group of international Jesuit magazines. The parts dealing with moral issues were widely reported by the world's press. For those who have taken the trouble to read the whole 12,000 words, there are some other surprising comments. Some have particular relevance, perhaps, to an incoming Australian Government with some of the cabinet well versed in Jesuit thinking and spirituality.

The spirituality of the Jesuit founder, St Ignatius of Loyola, speaks of discernment, finding one's way through life according to what one understands to be God's will. Francis admits his style of government as a Jesuit Provincial at the beginning 'had many faults'. He did not always do the necessary consultation and was perceived as authoritarian. Just as Australians are watching how a new federal government consults and discerns, so Catholics world-wide will wonder how the Pope's Jesuit formation will influence this consultation with the cardinals.

According to Pope Francis, 'uncertainty is in every true discernment'. Things are not always as they first appear. Wide and generous consultation with those most knowledgeable, usually those most affected, is essential. He rejects the approach of those who suggest that one should not consult too much — decide by yourself. Rather, it is through discussion that one arrives at the best decisions.

The story is sometimes told among those involved in corporate governance of the board that was wrestling with a difficult problem. One member suggested bringing in an expert. Another was resistant until he knew what the expert would say. Those in positions of power need to give permission to their advisers to tell the truth. The worst thing you can do when consulting is to listen only to voices that please. The worst thing one can do when asked to give an opinion is to tell others what you think they want to hear.

We trust that the cardinals will be able to say what they believe with humility and honesty. The fact that some have already engaged in a wide consultation among their constituencies is a positive sign.

For Francis, discernment about issues that one faces, and problems to be

solved, requires firsthand experience: 'When it comes to social issues, it is one thing to have a meeting to study the problem of drugs in a slum neighbourhood and quite another thing to go there, live there, and understand the problem from the inside and study it.' His advice to those who exercise power, and so presumably to himself, is to be humble and leave room for doubt. 'If one has all the answers to all the questions — that is proof that God is not with him'.

The discerning leader will slow things down, be patient, gather the data, listen carefully to those who have something to say before making decisions. This is the exercise of authority and is not authoritarian.

Francis admits that humans, in search of themselves, make mistakes. 'The Church has experienced times of brilliance, like that of Thomas Aquinas, but the Church has lived also times of decline in its ability to think.' He warns against confusing the genius of Aquinas with the age of decadent Thomist commentaries. 'Unfortunately, I studied philosophy from textbooks that came from decadent or largely bankrupt Thomism,' he says.

Francis is opening up a new way of doing business within the Church and appears open to the possibility of a less centralised bureaucracy. He does not like the denunciations for unorthodoxy being sent to Rome and wants these issues handled locally. In a sentence accidentally omitted from the *America* magazine translation he says, 'It is necessary to broaden the opportunities for a stronger presence of women in the Church.'

He has defended himself against those within the Catholic Church obsessed with particular moral issues and insisting he speak more about them. He says explicitly, 'I have never been a right-winger'.

This is not to say that moral truth is changeable at whim. Wrong is still wrong even when everyone is wrong. Predictably, some ecclesiastical voices were quick to explain that the Pope's interview was not meant to change Catholic teaching. Moral teaching is about what is good. Knowing what can and cannot change, with respect to particular actions, in particular historical circumstances, and in the light of new knowledge and understanding, is a real exercise in discerning the good here and now.

For some Catholics infallibility is confused with omniscience. Francis gives a good explanation of why it is important to consult the faithful:

The people itself constitutes a subject. And the church is the people of God on the journey through history, with joys and sorrows. Thinking with the church, therefore, is my way of being a part of this people. And all the faithful, considered as a whole, are infallible in matters of belief, and the people display this *infallibilitas in credendo*, this infallibility in believing, through a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together. This is what I understand today as the 'thinking with the church' of which St Ignatius speaks.

The group of cardinals has a unique opportunity and a serious responsibility helping Francis understand what the people of God are thinking and expecting.

A conversation in the wind

CREATIVE

Bai Helin

At Longqiao Bar

Those high-stemmed glasses hanging in the air
Those throats containing sands and shreds of gold
Those hips freely twisting and turning, with their accessories
Those melodious whistlings and hoarse roars
Those arms that swing and shine, the bunches of hair tightly bundled
Those shaking floorboards and heart-beatings on the shoes
Those eyes let loose at midnight, bottles tipsy
Those people: what's the difference between them and you
But those people: they are different from themselves by day
Those who pull a long face at home
Those who have been blown out onto the streets from home
Those who enter by the glass and exit by it, too
Those who lean against the bar table and stand by the pillars
Those who wear the uniforms and look dubious
Those who live off the flowers and the commotion
Those who, suppressed, are behind the city that quickly darkens
Those who roam the Longqiao Bar
Those who are thin and tall, bent double like a cat
Those who you love and do not understand
Those who suck on the lipstick
Those who smoke and drink, sitting in a corner
Those who lose much and gain little
Those who want to be forgotten and taken away
Those who you love but who don't love you
Those who don't love you and do not know you
Those not knowing you some of whom have noticed you

Those who, having noticed you, do not understand you
Those who do not understand you, looking at you
Those who are looking at you and do not find it odd
Those people, who are not surprised that you are crouching over the bar table
Drawing ants at sixes and sevens

A fake rattan chair

For long, I wanted to get a chair
Not the wooden kind, but the rattan one
It would be best if it were the old kind, shiny with wear
With a solid support
Like the one my old dad had used when I was little
Now, however, there is no one
Who would go to that length with the handiwork
One summer, I was finally able to secure one
The kind made of artificial plastic
As its seat and back, hard to come by, perfectly
Fitted my buttocks and my thin, long body
I didn't haggle over the price and, in one go
I shouldered it back to my rented room
Sitting it near the window
At first, I was daily wondering
How to sit in it
(A bit a la Calvino)
To read, to sun myself and to think some 'hard' questions
However, apart from doing that in it a couple of times
Reading a couple of pages by Paulo Coelho and Yu Jian
I'd soon left it to one side
Now the fake rattan chair in a black-coated iron frame
Had retired before its time
Like a weary housekeeper. In it, there is a mess consisting of

An old attached case, four unwashed clothes, three sticks of trousers

Two mobile phones, a number of poetry collections and a copy of *The Golden Rose*

As well as a white bra, just removed
From my girlfriend's breasts

Every day one has to live

Every day one has to live

Not everything a liar tells may be lies

And a good person may inevitably go wordless one day

Should nothing untoward happen

Kids may be born in forty weeks

Every day one has to live

Every day one has to go out, to praise

And to quarrel when home. Every day is a struggle

Clothes get dirty and socks, unwashed, get worn

And they may rebel in a toilet basin

Every day one has to live

Sometimes, hope runs counter to things

And sometimes, you may nod on a bus

Forgetting to get off. It's quite normal

As you may begin to grow weary

Every day one has to live

Sometimes you may commit a mistake before you discover

You yourself have been gutted by life, your brains, though, still filled with

One plan after another, apart from desires

And sometimes you have to put your emotions under control

Every day one has to live

You have to slow down and go places occasionally

Such as the vicinity of the railway station, the old rundown residential district

Where, the day is like a whore

Being whiled away and forgotten, by more people

The pedagogical poem

'I want to do whatever I want to
Why pretend what you are not?'
I have never thought of this before
Probably because I did not even know what
I had been thinking of. However, it was not till my son was born
That I realised, on a sudden, why I had been so spineless
Over the last thirty years
And why I had lived so unwonderfully
Is it because I've been so concerned for others?
Why can't I burst into tears if I want to, not afraid
Of waking people up in their midnight sleep or noon siesta?
Why can't I go to sleep when I want to, not caring
Whether in bed or in sofa or over anyone?
Why can't I laugh out loud when I want to, awake
Or in a dream, or in a certain
Serious meeting, or even on a funereal occasion?
I have finally realised that I have been so unhappy
For the near-half of my life because
I have never been well concerned for myself

The location

Every morning when I pass through here
The most beautiful location of the city
On my way to work, I feel very much like writing poetry
For example, about the bending riverbank
About the weeping willows
Or, at least, about the rushing river waters
Because the city has its most beautiful location here
Known as 'the Bund in Mianyang'

And because below the bank of the weeping willows
Is the Fujiang, ah, Mother River of this city
However, although I have been here for two months
I have not been able to write a poem, a beautiful poem
Because I can never work out
Why the location here, known as 'Sea over Sea', with good food and
entertainment

Is parked with the good cars of the city officials
With not a single shadow of an ordinary citizen
When I go through here every evening on my way home

Hypocrisy

When my gums bled, I kept wondering
If it's the food
Till I found that it's the brush
When husbands and wives quarrelled, I put it down to
Personality clashes
It's not till I got married that I found it's a tradition
I have always thought that writing pretentious poetry
Is a lack of skills
Till I found that it's hypocrisy

A conversation in the wind

We were drinking tea
By the riverbank
An old man was flying a kite
Walking to and fro amidst the crowd at the edge of the square
The season having entered into a deep winter. Despite the sun
The wind that blew still felt cold
You said that the old man was 90
Who kept doing physical exercises on a daily basis or he flew the kite alone
I had wanted to say that the sun was a heater
And the kite was like a paper plane

Two young girls were skating in a distance
A Chihuahua was roaring at another big dog
A middle-aged woman was practicing Tai Chi nearby
We were having a conversation in the wind, about
The futilities of poetry, and criticism of the realities

Seven pointers for stopping the boats ethically

AUSTRALIA

Frank Brennan

Is there any ethical discussion to be had about stopping the boats, or is it just a matter of whatever it takes?

There is no doubt that the 2008 reforms instituted by the Rudd Government contributed to a sharp increase in the arrival of boat people. The annual arrivals continued to spiral upwards — from 2856, to 6689, a brief drop to 4730, then up to 17,271, and then up again to 25,145. By the time Kevin Rudd had become prime minister for the second time in June 2013 the boat arrivals were running at 3300 per month (40,000 per annum).

There was intelligence available that the people smuggling networks were now so adept at plying their trade in Indonesia that the numbers could escalate even further. These increases were not related to increased global refugee flows nor to new refugee-producing situations in the region. There had been at least 900 deaths at sea since the 2008 reforms. Something had to be done — not just for crass political gain but for sound ethical reasons.

Having supported most of the 2008 reforms and having been a critic of the Malaysia Solution because of its unethical or unworkable treatment of unaccompanied minors, I had been trying since the Houston Panel reported in August 2012 to [formulate](#) a workable and ethical proposal for stopping, or at least, slowing the boats. The focus needed to be on Indonesia, the main transit country.

The day after Rudd was re-elected prime minister I spoke at a long-arranged National Asylum [Summit](#) . I proposed the need for a regional agreement involving at least Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia which, with UNHCR backing, could provide basic protection and processing for asylum seekers transiting Malaysia and Indonesia. Asylum seekers headed for Australia could then be intercepted and screened to determine that none was in direct flight from persecution in Indonesia. They could then be flown back safely to Indonesia and placed at the end of a real queue.

I conceded that such an agreement would take many months, if not years, to negotiate and implement. Admittedly, it did not provide a short term solution to stopping the boats. Provided the necessary screening was done, I would not rule out the suggestion put by former Foreign Minister Alexander Downer on Monday: 'Australia would fly back to Indonesia anyone who arrived here by boat without a visa. In exchange, Australia would take, one for one, UNHCR approved refugees from refugee camps in Indonesia.'

Rudd's pre-election agreements negotiated with PNG and Nauru and first announced on 19 July 2013 were aimed at stopping the boats. It was the equivalent of a 'shock and awe' measure, threatening dreadful outcomes for

people, hopefully deterring them from even considering getting on a boat. During the election campaign, both major parties tried to convince the electors they would be able to design policies which stopped the boats.

During its last year in office, Labor had increased the humanitarian component of our migration program from 13,750 to 20,000 places — with 12,000 of those places being allocated to refugees offshore, 8000 being available for refugees onshore and the special humanitarian program. The Coalition initially supported the increase but reversed this commitment during the campaign. The Abbott Government says it will provide only 2750 places for onshore applicants.

During the election campaign, I set out [six recommendations](#) for the way forward, trying to give the 'shock and awe' response greater ethical coherence following upon some parliamentary scrutiny. These recommendations now need to be considered in the cold light of post-election day.

First, Tony Abbott should open discussions in Jakarta this week with an eye to a negotiated agreement with both Indonesia and Malaysia aimed at upstream improvement of processing and protection.

Second, the Abbott Government should return to its previous commitment to increase the humanitarian quota to 20,000.

Third, Scott Morrison should order an ethical reassessment of the plight of those who came by boat to Australia after the Rudd announcement of 19 July 2013 without notice of the new shock and awe policy, bearing in mind the admission by Minister Tony Burke on 22 August 2013: 'First week after the announcement, the figures remained very high, but let's not forget those figures include people who are already at sea.'

Fourth, Morrison should undertake to care for unaccompanied minors who arrive in Australia's territorial waters until they can be safely resettled or safely returned to their family or to the guardians in transit from whom they were separated.

Fifth, Morrison should institute safeguards, including a transparent complaints mechanism, in PNG and Nauru consistent with the safeguards recommended by the Houston Panel for both Pacific processing countries and for Malaysia under the Malaysia Solution.

Sixth, when Parliament convenes, Abbott should promptly introduce a bill detailing the measures aimed at stopping the boats, thereby putting beyond legal doubt the 'shock and awe measures' implemented on the eve of the election campaign without parliamentary scrutiny, and locking in the major political parties so that petty party point scoring might cease. The debate on the bill will allow both sides of the Chamber to purge themselves of the hypocrisy that has accompanied Labor's unctuous condemnation of John Howard's Pacific Solution and the Coalition's unctuous condemnation of Julia Gillard's Malaysia Solution.

The bill would undoubtedly win the support of all major political parties.

I would now add a **seventh** condition. Last Tuesday, seven West Papuan asylum seekers reached Boigu Island in the Torres Strait. Without any determination of their refugee claims, they were removed to PNG on Thursday. The Coalition's policy on asylum seekers published during the election campaign states, 'The Coalition will work with our regional partners to address the secondary movement of asylum seekers into our region as a transit point to illegally enter Australia through the establishment of a comprehensive Regional Deterrence Framework'.

These Papuans were not engaged in secondary movement. They were in direct flight from persecution. The Abbott Government should recommit to our obligation under the Refugees Convention to grant asylum to refugees who have entered Australia in direct flight from persecution.

Syrians counting on Australian aid

INTERNATIONAL

Mark Green

Shayma, 20 years old, was waiting in the crowd to receive her kits, holding her baby boy in her arms. Her face showed the signs of worry and exhaustion. The little boy looked very thin and undernourished. She said, 'His name is Jean and he is seven months old. I know he seems very small considering his age. We are very poor. Since we arrived here, my husband hasn't been able to find any job. We have no income at all. We live exclusively on the humanitarian aid we received.'
(Caritas Lebanon)

The ongoing conflict in Syria has led to one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world today.

The UNHCR released a statement announcing that the number of Syrian refugees has now exceeded 2 million. This is an increase of almost 1.8 million since the same time a year ago. Approximately 52 per cent are estimated to be children, 17 years old or younger. More than 100,000 people have died, and over 8.3 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. As many as 4.25 million Syrians may be internally displaced, and continue to struggle with frequent power cuts, lack of water supplies and shortages of basic commodities.

The need for a peaceful solution is great. In that part of the world, where the host populations in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey are under increasing pressure, missile strikes will not bring about peace for the future.

My own children are aged three, two and four months. Shayma's experience described above touches a deep chord. In her shoes, what would I do? How would it be if no door opened for us after fleeing everything we once knew? We might feel blessed to have our lives. But could you feel hope for the future?

Caritas partners in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey are delivering humanitarian support to more than 100,000 Syrian refugees. But it's the future facing Syria's children that impacts me the most. According to the UNHCR, women and children make up three quarters of the refugee population, and many children are making the journey alone. The vast majority of refugees are reliant on aid, most arriving with little more than the clothes on their backs.

The numbers alone are daunting enough. When you begin to think of each individual's experience of devastation, you can begin to imagine the collective weight of suffering. Sadly, most of the stories we will never know.

I was heartened when I read the opening remarks of Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's Statement at the United Nations High Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals. Minister Bishop said:

As we approach 2015, it is right that we celebrate the enormous progress that

has been made in poverty eradication globally since 2000. But there is much more to do to achieve the ultimate goal ... 'leave no-one behind'. We must ensure development is benefiting those most in need and most vulnerable.

I pondered whether Bishop's remarks could provide a lens of hope for interpreting the new Australian Government's announcements about the direction of our Foreign Aid program. At the very end of the election campaign, the Coalition announced plans to cut \$4.5 billion in aid over the next four years. Last week, Prime Minister Abbott announced that AusAID would be 'integrated' back into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with the aim to 'more closely align' aid with the Government's diplomatic arm and trade.

This will be a complex process and will take time. Reports and evaluations demonstrate that Australia's foreign aid program is successful and effective. As it drives development, our foreign aid program can also support foreign policy — it has done for decades. Yet it is vital to ensure the millions of people living in poverty, like Shayma and so many others in Syria, have a place at the table. We must not ignore the needs of those lying at our gates simply because their communities do not hold trade or economic interests for us.

As Bishop and the new Government map out AusAID's priorities I hope they give due consideration to the success of sustainable long-term development programs in fighting poverty and building peace and security. I also hope they remain realistic and honest in the need to address systemic and structural causes of poverty and hunger.

According to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference 2013/14 Social Justice Statement '[Lazarus at our gate](#)', there are more than 870 million people, 12 per cent of the global population, who are undernourished. Of these, 852 million live in developing countries. In the developing world, 500 million smallholder and family farms produce 80 per cent of the food consumed. Yet increasingly these farmers find themselves forced to grow produce for export markets and are no longer producing enough food for their families and local consumption.

I hope that our successful aid program remains a priority for our Government. It will require the head and the heart, but as we forge an international development plan and partake in and lead the world in global fora, we need to ensure it is not just the world's major economies who enter our gates, but that we prioritise, hear and respond to the cries of the world's most vulnerable women, men and children who remain outside.

People like Shayma and her baby boy, and the millions of other Syrians who have fled conflict, persecution and war, desperately need to know that we will not leave them behind.

School sport's level playing field under threat

AUSTRALIA

Michael Mullins

Five of Sydney's prestigious GPS schools have boycotted competition with another member of their association, The Scots College. The five accuse Scots of offering sports scholarships, in breach of the GPS [code of ethics](#), which stipulates that 'financial assistance to talented sportsmen shall not form part of the enrolment strategy of any member school'.

Scots principal Ian Lambert [denies](#) the school awards sports scholarships as such, and refused to tell Fairfax Media whether any premiership-winning basketball players were on a bursary or scholarship, citing privacy reasons.

Callers to talkback radio [claim](#) the practice of recruiting gifted sports people is widespread. The head of another GPS school — Kings — [admits](#) his school has 'offered inducements to a few good sportsmen' and that 'schools have long learnt the rhetoric needed to defend the deliberate importation of gifted sportsmen'.

The five GPS schools are taking their stand in an attempt to preserve the 'level playing field' that is necessary to ensure that everybody plays by the same rules and there is no external factor affecting the ability of players to compete fairly. It's about protecting amateur sport in schools from the professionalisation and commodification that has come to dominate sport in Australia and overseas.

Fairfax reports that Scots has embarked upon a program of 'buying' students of sports star quality in order to promote an ethos of winning ahead of the more traditional values that encourage the participation of all students. The school is equipped with a new high-performance centre and has a dedicated director of sports science who worked with controversial Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles rugby league consultant Stephen Dank. It would seem that it has moved far beyond what the GPS code refers to as 'the spirit of the amateur' that 'should remain the ideal'.

If teenagers with sporting talent are being 'bought' for the purpose of boosting the school's brand and business, it has to be seen as an exercise in human trafficking. Arguably pressure is being placed on these minors to produce a marketable commodity, and that's child exploitation. It's an altogether different activity to 'playing' a 'game', which is what school sport has traditionally been about.

Amateur sport stresses participation and promotes the development of character, resilience and teamwork ahead of winning. It is opposed to the commodification of sport that is associated with the cultivation of an elite of highly paid athletes equipped to perform at a high level. Many would-be amateur sports people are not up to the standard of the professionals and are relegated to a passive spectator role in front of a TV screen. That's not what schools are

educating students for.

Holy Feast of the AFL Grand Final

AUSTRALIA

Michael McVeigh

This weekend, followers of the One True Religion around Australia will gather for the AFL Grand Final (with apologies to Rugby League Protestants who will celebrate their special day next weekend).

The Feast of the Grand Final has a great deal in common with celebrations in our other religious traditions. Events such as Christmas and Easter, or perhaps saints' feast days, are celebrations of the stories that help fashion the identity of Christians. Telling these stories each year helps us create our own new stories about the values or beliefs we follow. The Grand Final has its own stories that tell us about ourselves, as well as rituals that personalise those stories for each of us.

It starts with the game itself. The Grand Final isn't like other football games. Small moments in a Grand Final have the power to resonate through the years. Think of the 'Jesaulenko you beauty' mark in 1970, Kevin Bartlett's roving goals in 1980, the groggy Dermott Brereton being escorted from the field in 1989, Gary Ablett's moments of brilliance in defeat in that same game, Michael Long's running bounces in 1993, Leo Barry's mark to seal the game in 2005, and many other great moments.

These stories capture something of the deeper meaning the game has to people. They celebrate the physical skill required to reach the top, and the fact that skill alone is not enough, that winning requires a combination of luck, timing and environment. These are messages that speak to people's experiences beyond the game itself.

Of course, the stories on the field aren't always fully representative of our society. For one thing, it's a decidedly masculine story that's being told. The AFL's MCG temple, like some other religious spaces, almost completely excludes women from participating. Generating stories that can inspire and inform across genders is an issue for all sports, but for codes such as the AFL and Rugby League — which don't even have elite professional women's competitions — it's particularly problematic.

We do need to bring more female stories to the AFL religion. For starters, our broadcasters could at least include more women in their coverage of the games. Although we have some great female journalists such as Caroline Wilson, chief football writer for *The Age*, we could be told more stories of women's involvement *in* the game.

But as the familiar *Footy Show* theme tells us, 'it's more than a game'. The Feast of the AFL Grand Final is as much about the rituals and the traditions that grow up among the people in the pews as it is about what happens in the temple of the MCG. These events are more reflective of our broader society, with women

welcomed equally in the cheering alongside men, along with people of various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

I'll be organising a barbecue with my friends on Saturday, and even that event will have its own obligatory rituals. We'll be putting our money into a jar and making predictions before the game as to which team will win, the margin, the first goal kicker and the Norm Smith Medallist.

We'll also add some other predictions to the list, which depend on the teams that are playing — such as the time of the game when we'll see the first shot of Jeff Kennett on television (my prediction: the ten minute mark of the first quarter), or the first time we'll see Ryan Crowley wrestling with another player (prediction: before the first bounce). There'll be kick to kick on the street at halftime, and someone's car will inevitably get hit by a football.

At some point during the second or third quarter, those more interested in socialising will retreat to another room, leaving the 'true believers' to their worshipping. They might come back before the end, if the conversation allows.

The weather this weekend looks like it's going to be terrible, but unlike a month ago, that won't be enough to stop people from gathering for their barbecues. Grand Final Day marks the turning of another season in Australian life — from the winter months, when our time is spent indoors and our mood is often more introspective, to the summer months when the weather allows us outside, and our mood becomes more social.

It will be followed over the next few weeks by the Spring Racing Carnival, various music and cultural festivals, weddings and baptisms, then the rush to Christmas and New Year.

If there's an underlying theme of Grand Final Day, it's the celebration of a time of reflection giving way to a time of action; of overcoming the testing winter and launching ourselves into the abundant summer. Easter in Australia loses some of its 'new life' symbolism in the southern hemisphere, coming as it does in autumn. The Grand Final doesn't make up for that loss, but the themes are still there in a smaller way.

Al Shabaab's grisly PR pitch

INTERNATIONAL

Evan Ellis

When my now wife attended an international conference of students in Uganda, the young African delegation denounced Western depictions of Africa as 'the violent continent'. Such one-dimensional caricature is easily lampooned in the above viral video by the NGO Mama Hope.

The seasoned Africa-watcher Laura Seay went further than attacking Hollywood, and took issue with Western media outlets, [asking](#) last year 'Why is there so much bad reporting on Africa?'

She answered, 'Many major Western media outlets assign one correspondent for the entire continent ... This is insane. Africa is a continent of 54 distinct states, all with multiple languages and ethnic groups and unique political dynamics. Nowhere else in the world — not even in undercovered Latin America — would one person be expected to report on so many complicated situations.'

I haven't seen any coverage of the al Shabaab terrorist attack on a Nairobi shopping mall that I would call bad. However I take her point. And I also take the point of the student delegates in Uganda. When was the last time Africa made our nightly news bulletins for a story that didn't involve guns?

In the case of the Westgate mall massacre though, news agencies aren't the only instigators of the wall to wall coverage. With the death toll climbing at the time of writing to 72, we are witnessing what Dr Laura Hammond [calls](#) 'performative violence'.

Last week most Australians had not heard of al Shabaab. Few outside of defence and diplomatic circles would recall our modest [participation](#) in the African Union push to undercut al Shabaab's power base within Somalia. But after a grisly four-day 'performance', complete with social media strategy, this has changed. And while Australians were not the intended audience, the attack was deliberate and carefully thought out with the media in mind.

It was a massacre made for media consumption.

Al Shabaab is only one of the many toxic legacies of Somalia's political instability. The pointy end of the Horn of Africa, Somalia has consistently [ranked](#) as the most failed state in the Fund for Peace's Failed State Index. Called the most lawless place on the planet, the chaos has been cruel to the civilian population.

By way of illustration, when my father turns 60 he will be nearly a decade older than the average life expectancy in Somalia. My newborn son was born into a country with an infant mortality rate 20 times better than Somalia. In 2011 alone a quarter of a million people died from starvation.

Somalia is grim. And yet last year was a relatively good year for Somalia. The African Union pushed al Shabaab out of their main strongholds, a lethal famine finally ended (although two million people still suffer from food insecurity), piracy dramatically fell and a UN brokered peace process brought in the first internationally recognised government in 20 years.

Faced with marginalisation, al Shabaab's attack may have been an attempt for renewed relevancy. This makes Kenya's response critical to not only its own future but Somalia's and by extension the entire Horn of Africa.

The last thing they should do is seek revenge. Kenya has a history of [heavy handedness](#) towards its Somali minorities and their sympathisers. In light of the recent outrage it might be tempted to continue in this mould. However this would only [strengthen](#) the terrorist movement that has recently suffered significant strategic losses.

A better way forward was hinted at by a remarkable four-year-old English boy [caught up](#) in the carnage. The youngster told a gunman point blank, 'You're a bad man, let us leave.' Presumably shocked, the al Shabaab gunmen gave him chocolates, asked for his forgiveness and let him and his family escape.

I don't mean to suggest that Kenyan security forces should pursue terrorists to verbal them. Rather a measured, discriminate response that eschewed collective punishment and prioritised the safety and security of all Kenyans would allow the government to draw a line between the 'bad men' and themselves. Included in this latter category would be the many people inside Somalia and the Somali Diaspora horrified at recent events.

Not only would this strengthen the Kenyan government's response by tapping into the legitimacy that comes from morally informed action. It would also deny oxygen to the al Shabaab movement, which could only help protect the tentative gains Somalia has started to make.

Politicising the bimbo

CREATIVE

Ellena Savage

Sometimes people hurl insults at your face. And unless they are hurled from a moving vehicle or are accompanied by a flying bar stool, they are usually embedded in some sort of insult sandwich, buffered with slices of wisdom and self-criticism to soften the blow of having an insult hurled at your face. But it never softens the blow.

One insult sandwich that has been consistently hurled at me is that the insulter thought I was dumb until they discovered I wasn't. Whatever that's supposed to mean. *I used to think you were a bimbo and then you surprised me by actually being intelligent.* Crazy, that you thought a young woman was a stupid idiot and then she turned out to be a human being!

There is something so off about this particular comment that I've never really forgiven those insulters. For me, the use of 'bimbo' and its associative terms is an unpardonably sexist way of interpreting certain female traits. Traits like giggling, using fun language, and dressing up to reference cultural tropes that have been consistently undermined as being about silly women. Because there's nothing worse than a silly woman.

For me, the silly woman, the bimbo, is an important space for feminist interrogation. It's a cultural space that contains the history of how working-class women have historically fashioned themselves to fit, unthreateningly, within masculine culture, yet have been consistently rejected by it any way. It's time to politicise the bimbo.

One time, one of my brothers counted the number of times I hedged the word 'like' in a description I foggily recounted over dinner. He was playing the role of brother-menace, and in the process insinuated that I was lesser, intellectually inadequate, a bimbo. It's fine — siblings are cruel players in this game of life, and I dish it out just as bad. But what this gesture was really about, was the idea that the means through which identity is fashioned or expressed equates to a differentiated human capacity, and an implied sliding scale of human value.

As if to say that when I utter 'like' as a hedge instead of 'um' or 'ah', as is the fashion among older males (and which are equally arbitrary speech hedges), it's because I don't possess the intellectual capacity to speak like an older male. Socially speaking, this idea classes most young female and queer people (those who are most likely to employ these speech patterns) as intellectually incapable.

The category of bimbo is largely indescribable. It can't simply be a category of stupidity, because there are stupid people at all facets of society. It can't be a fixation on appearances, either, because most ambitious and respected type-A people (who would never be labelled bimbos) are also the most body-obsessed. Is

it a fixation on consumer goods? If it is, that would mean the majority of people who live under a capitalist economy are bimbos, because this is a culture that exists to serve the majority's consumerist fixation.

The category of bimbo is about demeaning women who are required to alter themselves to fit somewhere within a male-dominated culture, and possibly don't have access to the kinds of cultural resources to do it in a 'classy' way. What I find most compelling about the bimbo category, and why I reference it in my own cultural identity, is that within it is embedded a culture of ridiculing the social norms that exclude a large chunk of women because of their gender and class. And it does so with a sense of humour.

There are female modes of speech in most languages I'm familiar with, even where they're not formally taught. Women speak less than men do, and use fewer authoritative phrases. Power dynamics between genders play out in normal conversations all the time. But bimbo-speak (whose origins come from the Valley-speak sociolect) claims its own norms, which possesses huge scope for self-ridicule and comic social criticism.

It is this cultural autonomy of the bimbo that poses a threat to dominant masculine authority. Knowingly acting dumb to call out the stupidity of one's superiors is hugely threatening. If there's an in-joke that doesn't include the dominant folks, how will they know if they're getting laughed at?

One of my favourite words to use is 'literally', to comically modify a statement. The use of 'literally' to emphasise a point is derided as improper usage because it is an inversion of the standard, or older, definition. 'I literally died!' or 'My head literally exploded!' are examples of the word being used as comic hyperbole, and this usage is a prominent feature of young, female vernacular. Most major dictionaries have updated their definitions to include this vernacular usage, much to the dismay of the self-fashioned vanguard of the reification of class barriers.

By the way, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Jane Austin, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and James Joyce, the English language's most blighted bimbos, all used 'literally' in this way. What morons.

The pleasure of using a mode of speech, or rather, not affecting one's native mode of speech to appease a kind of person who means to privilege the privileged, is unparalleled. Test it out some time: speak in a natural-feeling, playful kind of way to someone who's scared of bimbos, and then watch their brains literally explode.

Because when a listener struggles to understand that when I say I 'literally died' and yet clearly am still alive, that I am using language in a playful and maybe even ironic way, it's not their fault. They are probably just suffering from some kind of intellectual incapacity. Which I won't judge them for. Because I am a silly woman.

Marring the Cardinal's image

MEDIA

Andrew Hamilton

Cardinal George Pell is an inviting subject for an extended essay. He is well-known, expresses strong views succinctly, and has equally strong admirers and detractors. That always guarantees a lively response.

David Marr is a splendid essayist, and his [Quarterly Essay](#) displays his habitual virtues. It is elegantly written, is structured around a strong and colourfully told story, and brings home powerfully the sufferings of the victims of clerical sexual abuse and the failures of the Catholic Church in meeting them.

It is unfair, but that is the nature of this kind of essay.

Marr follows the path of Pell from schooldays to seminary, study in Rome and Oxford, parish work and responsibility for Catholic education in Ballarat, through to his consecration successively as Auxiliary Bishop in Melbourne, Archbishop of Melbourne, Archbishop of Sydney, and Cardinal with strong connections in Rome.

He interweaves this story with the incidence and response to clerical sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. Pell was later accused of sexual abuse when he was a seminarian and the charge found unproven; he worked in the same circles as Gerald Ridsdale (the convicted child molester who abused children while working as a Catholic priest), met victims and heard accusations of clergy in his episcopal role, and introduced a framework for dealing with accusations and compensating victims in Melbourne.

The story Marr tells is of a man who was always committed to defend the Church and faith against its enemies, and whose main care was always to promote the church and its interests. He ruled his dioceses strongly, and consistently attacked what he saw as the evils of the day and the secularism from which they flowed. According to Marr, in dealing with sexual abuse his concern was to limit the exposure of the Church, and he displayed little empathy with victims.

Marr portrays Pell and the Church as terminally engulfed in the morass of sexual abuse, his campaign against the evils of secularist society now bereft of credibility. He sees his story as finally a tragedy flowing out of a blind commitment to celibacy.

The limitations of Marr's account are the obverse of its virtues. It is not a dispassionate judgment but a prosecution brief. It sifts Pell's motives and words but not those of his critics, and simplifies complexities. The details of the essay are designed to imply character. Churches are empty or full depending on the needs of the plot; Pell does not speak but booms. If a cock crows in a distant farmyard it crows for the Cardinal alone. This makes for engaging reading, but also asks for careful judgment.

As a Catholic priest I shall leave judgment on Marr's handling of Church sexual abuse to others more credible. But I am not convinced that the Royal Commission was seen as a cataclysmic defeat by Pell or other bishops, nor consequently that their agenda was quite as single-mindedly about control as Marr suggests.

Apart from Marr's concluding remarks about the effects of celibacy, which seemed to me gratuitous and to reflect Marr's own concerns more than Pell's, his account is confined to the public person. It is not empathetic. So it left me, as good essays should, asking a further question: what else must there be to explain the trust placed in Pell by bishops and popes, the responsible positions he has held, his hold on the popular imagination, the warm associations he has formed with so many significant Australians, the way in which he has polarised Catholics, and the directions in which he has wanted to take the Catholic Church in Australia?

To answer that question from the evidence that Marr provides, it may help to empathise with the vision that inspired Pell to become a priest. He was attracted to the warrior's dream of defending the Catholic Church and faith against its foes at a time of peril. In the 1950s the peril from Communism seemed real and the image of a persecuted church was resonant.

The single-mindedness of the warrior who leads people to war for a righteous cause can be an attractive one, especially to young men. In the Christian world it has been honoured in people like Athanasius, Thomas More and Joan of Arc, in secular terms in Bolivar and Mandela, and in sporting terms in indomitable players like Michael Voss and Darryn Lockyer.

In the 1950s Catholics could see Communism as an enemy. But in the churches that Pell came to lead, his identification of secularism as the enemy was not widely shared. Nor did many accept his diagnosis that the diminishment and discontents of the Catholic Church came from compromise with prevailing secular attitudes, reflected in disagreements over matters of faith and morals. But it is not difficult to see why he believed it.

Certainly he was right to recognise that the future of the Church could not be built on members of religious congregations or on the ageing educated Catholics who had been inspired by the Vatican Council. He saw the future to lie with younger clergy and with young Catholic leaders who shared his combative loyalty to the Church and identified with the struggle against secularism. He encouraged their growth.

Pell's vision and strategy were well received in Rome but they needed to be commended if they were to shape Australian church culture. That is always the challenge when fighting against the tide. Warriors seek followers and not a reflective community. They become impatient with people who seem to be half-hearted and to undermine the campaign.

But if a church culture is to be changed people need to be encouraged and persuaded. Indeed if Catholics feel disapproved of by their leaders they become

timid and resentful. In Melbourne, at least, far too many Catholic conversations focused on the Archbishop and on his latest doings instead of focusing on what people could do without approval. These conversations took up all the oxygen that could have been used for living. Little changed.

If I imagine myself in Pell's position, I might be finally disappointed that after years of struggle, the city churches that he has led look so little different from the other capital city churches, and that the battle against secularism must now be fought from the lowlands of sexual abuse against artillery firing down from the high moral ground.

But as with other indomitable warriors I have great respect for a man who has shown such pertinacity and endurance in fighting a cause that has always been against the tide and the times.

Mythologising family history

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

***Stories We Tell* (M). Director: Sarah Polley. Starring: Michael Polley, John Buchan, Mark Polley, Joanna Polley. 109 minutes**

Every family has its stories. Some more than others. For a family to air its dirty laundry in public might come across as the ultimate in self-indulgence. That *Stories We a Tell* manages to avoid this is no mean feat.

In it, Canadian actor and filmmaker Sarah Polley turns her camera on members of her own family, and asks them to recount their family history in their own words. She speaks with each one at length, separate from each other in order to avoid cross pollination, and attempts to layer these occasionally inconsistent accounts into a cogent whole that might illuminate one of the large unresolved dramas of their life together.

She approaches the subject with great humility. Polley herself is in fact at the centre of the story, yet for the most part she hovers at the periphery, while her brothers, sisters, father, and friends and associates of the family sit squarely, boldly, in the camera's gaze. The candidness of the interviewees is utterly compelling, a symptom no doubt of the intimacy they share with the filmmaker, Polley. But *Stories We Tell* does not feel voyeuristic or exploitative. Polley invites us to join them at the table, not to peep through windows and listen at cracks.

Polley's quest is for truth, yet there is also a self-awareness to the film that highlights the artifice that takes place whenever someone sits down to tell a story, even a true one. The variable reliability of memory, the mythologising of characters and events, and the desire to please or shock or move the listener all shape the way in which a story is told. *Stories We Tell* manufactures nostalgia through use of home video-style recreations, and several times Polley is shown asking her father to repeat phrases to enhance the emotional impact.

For much of the film Polley is barely seen on camera, except to catch her still-waters expression in response to some of her father's more poignant utterances, or to re-enact certain key scenes. Yet the questions she asks of those whom she loves most in the world are bound up in her very existence. Later in the film one of her brothers challenges her as to her motives for making the film. In response Polley wonders if her motives are entirely selfless, despite her self-effacing approach. Her honesty is disarming.

Polley is clearly desperate to make sense of her family history, but she approaches the subject with great patience, like an anthropologist who has a deep love for those whom she is studying. At the start of the film she instructs her interviewees simply to start from the start and tell it how it was. She no doubt hopes to find clues in the detail, but she also dignifies each participant by allowing

them to have a voice.

Late in the film one of her subjects insists that his version of the story is the only relevant one; that all the others are peripheral and obfuscatory. This is pretty nearsighted, and denies the fact that the waves of consequence unite all they touch in the same turbulent waters. But Polley allows even this statement to stand without judgement. At the very least it highlights how fiercely this 'character' feels and possesses these memories even now.

He's right about one thing. The one best placed to reveal the truth is the one who is no longer alive to do so. At the top of every tree that *Stories We Tell* climbs is Polley's mother, Diana, dead some years. She is spoken about endlessly, yet by the end of the film seems just as distant and enigmatic as she did at the start. It could be that Polley has failed in her attempt to reveal truth. Then again maybe the truth of the life of a family is found in all of its stories, and all versions of those stories, told and retold with abiding love or endless, inevitable loss.

Problems with jihadi tourism

INTERNATIONAL

Binoy Kampmark

In 2011, it was revealed in WikiLeaks cables that the United Nations special envoy to Somalia was so concerned about rebels linked to al-Qaeda that he urged the United States to initiate strikes against targets in the region. 'Stating that the threat is critical, Ould-Abdallah urged targeted operations on terrorists in Somalia.' The British proved slow on the point, though the director-general of MI5, Jonathan Evans, [warned](#) about threats in 2010.

These have not proven to be hollow. Sixty-seven individuals lie dead after the President of Kenya Uhuru Kenyatta formally declared the siege over. The attackers on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi were linked to a Somali based outfit calling itself al-Shabaab, a standing affiliate of al-Qaeda operating in the Horn of Africa. They have been said by Kenyan army chief Julius Karangi to be an eclectic following of recruits. 'We have sufficient intelligence that this is global terrorism.'

British and US connections have been suggested. This is not as surprising as it seems. Samantha Lewthwaite, married to the 7 July suicide bomber Jermaine Lindsay, has been elusive in East Africa after allegedly being involved in a streak of bombings in Mombasa. Her presence looms, though a direct link has not been proven. As do, it has been suggested, the Minnesota Martyrs, a US based Somali group which has been [recruiting](#) in the state.

Outfits like al-Shabaab tend to find local areas of recruitment in Somalia dry. Their market lies elsewhere, among the 1.5 million Somalis who live outside the country. The theme of radicalisation rings better from a distance.

The reasoning behind 'recruitment drives' varies. The imagery of holy war and the trammelling of holy sacred land by the enemy are powerful, though not always accurate. Drone-warfare and Western involvement stemming from Yemen to Waziristan figure highly on the list. Videos are released showing recruitment and imminent glorious death. As for the attack on the Westgate shopping mall, Kenya's involvement in targeting al-Shabaab in Somalia and creating a buffer was seen as the trigger point.

Jihadi tourism is big business, oiled by a global recruit base from which various diasporas can be tapped. In the Somali instance, investigations have taken place in Minnesota, home to 32,000 Somalis in what has been termed 'Little Mogadishu'. The FBI has been particular keen on the Minneapolis-Mogadishu link, have been [involved](#) in a six-year investigation called Operation Rhino. The US Attorney for Minnesota has an estimate that 20 young men left for Somalia between 2007 and 2009. Convictions have also been secured in some instances for terrorism offences related to conspiracy and the supply of material support.

The Somali case is far from unique. The Afghanistan and Iraqi conflicts netted

their fair share of foreign recruits in the fight against US-led forces. Most recently Syrians have found themselves conspicuously involved in various sides of the seemingly interminable conflict. [According](#) to the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, between 140 to 600 Europeans have gone to fight in Syria since the conflict began in early 2011 'representing 7–11 per cent of the foreign fighter total'.

ASIO has also counted some 100 figures whom they suspect are directly involved, with the number possibly being [as high as 200](#) . In the [words](#) of former Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr, 'We are all aware of it and I probably can't go further because I can't comment on matters of security and intelligence but the relevant agencies are fully appraised of this.'

The situation is not entirely gloomy. Various western governments have implemented strategies to curb this global radicalisation of grievance. The United Kingdom has been running the Channel anti-radicalisation [program](#) since April 2007 to target youths at risk of involvement with extremist groups. It should be noted that, while the majority of those in attendance are Muslim, 10 per cent of cases have involved individuals from the far right. There are 500 individuals who have been said to be of immediate interest from a larger group of 2500.

In the United States, Muslim leadership has been [enhanced](#) by such groups as the Islamic Society for North America (ISNA), an organisation powerful in its condemnation of the Nairobi attacks. A formidable partnership with Jewish leaders has also been sought, promoting Abrahamic links between synagogue and mosque.

Groups like al-Shabaab are sustained by a range of factors, some opportunistic, and others systemic to the youth in question. Nor have unwise foreign interventions, some of them ongoing, helped. Authorities must accept that a global, jihadi franchise is only as effective as its inspiration. Most Somalis in the diaspora repudiate the attacks in Nairobi. Expatriate Somalis [fear](#) retaliation for the actions of the few. While images of radicalisation remain, the processes and programs seeking to defang the radical forces are already under way.

Border protection silence is deadly

AUSTRALIA

Tony Kevin

'This briefing is not about providing shipping news to people smugglers.' — Scott Morrison, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, first Operation Sovereign Borders briefing on 23 September 2013

'It will be a tougher approach ... our responsibility [to stop the boats] is absolute.' — Morrison

'That [question] goes to operational matters ... you will not be getting commentary from this podium [Morrison] or that podium [Lt-Gen Angus Campbell, commander of OSB] either way on these matters.' — Morrison

No questions were put to either the minister or the operational commander about safety-of-life-at-sea (SOLAS) or search-and-rescue (SAR) obligations and protocols governing Operation Sovereign Borders. This is deeply regrettable, because around 1100 asylum seekers drowned in the past four years in this same Australian Border Protection Command theatre of operations. And during the election campaign, both major parties made much of their humanitarian concern to stop the drownings, by stopping the boats.

Neither Morrison nor Campbell offered any words on this on Monday. No media present asked any questions that might have triggered useful responses on it. Nor did Labor's official commentators (Chris Bowen or Tony Burke) say anything on the drownings issue in their reported responses to this first briefing.

Deaths at sea have apparently dropped off the major party radar screens completely — at least until the next maritime tragedy, which both parties will no doubt exploit to score points off the other.

To their credit, both Senator Sarah Hanson-Young and Labor leadership candidate Bill Shorten addressed it. Hanson-Young, condemning OSB secrecy, [commented](#) that 'people's lives are involved in these kinds of operations'. Shorten [said](#) that it would be 'a disgrace' if the new system did not disclose details of drownings. 'I can't imagine who dreamed that up, not telling anyone about deaths at sea ... If a boat sinks ... I don't think the government has a right to not tell people that this tragedy has occurred.'

Let's look at practicalities. How will OSB handle issues of its public accountability for safety of life at sea?

We don't know yet where at sea OSB proposes to intercept boats. We do know that asylum seekers often carry mobile phones which they sometimes use to send distress calls en route to 999, Australian Federal Police, Australian Maritime Safety Authority, or relatives in Australia. These phones work reliably within 40 nautical miles of Christmas Island, according to a recent media [report](#). We are told that

passengers use these phones to report back to people smugglers when they are about to be intercepted by an Australian vessel. It is all very public.

Is OSB going to put a gag on phone call records to 999 or AMSA or AFP or families in Australia, which are publicly accountable and retrievable data?

AMSA is part of the 15-government-agency committee advising OSB. How will AMSA satisfy itself that interception procedures following a distress call from an asylum-seeker boat accord with Australia's obligations under the UN SOLAS and SAR Conventions, and with AMSA's own operational manuals for SAR?

How will we know when and whether OSB is honouring its legal maritime safety obligations? These questions are not moot or otiose. Australia's maritime safety obligations were repeatedly violated during Operation Relex, the 2001 precursor to Operation Sovereign Borders and in many ways its model.

We did not find out until a year later in 2002 — thanks to the persistence of Senators Cook, Faulkner, Collins and Bartlett in the Senate Ad Hoc Committee into a Certain Maritime Incident — just how repeatedly and seriously those obligations were being violated by ADF ships' commanders and those instructing them from shore.

Recall the history of the *Palapa*, the boat rescued by *Tampa* after its distress signals were ignored for two days by Australian Coastwatch. Recall *SIEV 4*, the children overboard boat, subject initially to dangerous attempts by *HMAS Adelaide* to coerce it into turning back, and later left to founder, with passengers and an ADF boarding party having to jump in the water before any rescue of passengers was allowed to happen. Recall *SIEV X*. Recall the many other incidents in 2001 where SOLAS obligations were compromised, that came to light in the Senate Committee. Recall the dangerous incidents over the past four years. Do we want to go back to all that?

Consider the rights and obligations of ADF ships' commanders taking part in OSB. Morrison [said](#) that decisions about turning back the boats would be 'operational decisions for those operationally in control of implementing the Government's policies ... These are decisions politicians would only be involved in where policy guidance is sought'.

To me, that last caveat sounds ominous. Can ADF ships' commanders be secure in the knowledge that their SOLAS obligations will never be compromised by inappropriate 'policy' guidance from shore, from the political or force commander level? Watching the minister's and force commander's demeanour in their first OSB briefing, I feel no such confidence. Are these men desperate to win, at whatever the cost to those who serve under them?

Will ADF ships' commanders have what they are supposed to have under law — decision-making autonomy in putting SOLAS legal obligations at the forefront of their operational decisions in attempted turnback operations? Do they know that

their careers will not suffer if they properly put protection of human life at sea first?

Do we not need now — before turnback operations get seriously underway, because this will require Indonesian assent — to hear explicit general public assurances from the minister and force commander on these crucial professional questions? Or will this be evaded on the spurious argument that it will help the people smugglers?

I hope that these questions — crucial for the integrity of OSB and the protection of the ADF's professionalism — will be explored at the next media briefing. OSB must aspire to be a legally accountable, no deaths operation.

The ethics of paternalism in Aboriginal policy

MARGARET DOOLEY AWARD

Callum Denness

Following the abuse received by Adam Goodes from a teenage spectator in the AFL's Indigenous round, and the subsequent remarks made by Eddie McGuire, the country became embroiled in a debate about racism in modern Australia. The debate was about words — 'ape' was the pejorative used by the Collingwood spectator — and in our rush to condemn, defend or make sense of the ensuing debate yet more words were spilled across newspaper columns, blog posts, broadcast media and social media.

Meanwhile, the Northern Territory introduced its Mandatory Alcohol Treatment Bill which, if passed, will see more Aboriginal people incarcerated. We were too busy describing the modern face of racism to notice.

The importance of words cannot be diminished but newspapers and bulletins can hold only so many. While plenty were dedicated to the story of McGuire, the teenage girl and Goodes, none mentioned that in 20 years the proportion of Aboriginal people held in custody has grown from one in seven to one in four. The introduction of laws which would criminalise alcohol consumption and introduce more Aboriginal people to jail made the news but did not incite the passions of the commentariat or public, being devoid of sport stars and television personalities.

Perhaps that's not so surprising. After all, this is not the first law which disproportionately affects Aboriginal people, and it won't be the last.

Of course there is nothing in the legislation passed by the NT Government which explicitly singles out Aboriginal people. The laws, if passed without amendments, will mean that anyone convicted of their third offence of public drunkenness will be mandatorily detained in treatment centres. Having scrapped the banned drinkers list — a policy which prevented problem drinkers from purchasing alcohol — in the name of liberty, the Government has enthusiastically committed itself to a policy which will lock more people up.

What is public drunkenness anyway? It is just one of a suite of laws that exists in the statute book of each state that are governed by police discretion, and a handy way of taking people into custody when they've done nothing wrong. When a drunk person trespasses, urinates, causes criminal damage, abuses others or police officers, they have broken the law. When they have done none of the above, there is the public drunkenness offence.

Give police tools to act out their prejudices and they will do so: Aboriginal people are targeted with impunity. In 2002, 19 per cent of all Indigenous custody incidents were for public drunkenness. In the Northern Territory 92 per cent of all public drunkenness incidents involved Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people are 42 times more likely to be in custody for public drunkenness than non-Aboriginal

people, though according to the 2004—5 National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, rates of high level alcohol consumption among Aboriginal people are commensurate with non-Aboriginal people at around 15 per cent.

Nationwide, 26.7 per cent of our prison population are Aboriginal, despite representing just 2.6 per cent of the population. Western Australia imprisons Aboriginal people at a rate greater than South Africa jailed black people during apartheid.

Against these statistics, the 1991 Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended public drunkenness be decriminalised. That hasn't happened, and rates of imprisonment among Aboriginal people have grown in the years since the report was handed down.

The inherent racism of Australians is often used to explain away this generational mess of failed policy but this unsophisticated response is unsatisfactory and obscures analysis of why and how this failure has occurred, and therefore how to solve it. Besides, no matter how much money is thrown towards programs aimed towards addressing Aboriginal disadvantage, it's not enough. It's never enough. Though every billion dollars spent is matched with the finest of intentions, things still haven't gotten better for Aboriginal people.

Fine intentions. What do they describe? Often they describe the desire to see Aboriginal people achieve the same standard of health, education and opportunity as every other Australian. Rarely do these fine intentions ever actually include handing power to Aboriginal people to achieve these goals.

Fine intentions amount to, in a word, paternalism, which philosophers including John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant have critiqued. Mill held a person's ability to make their own decisions should never be overruled, even if it were for the individual's own physical or moral good, while Kant believed paternalism to violate the dignity of human beings; that paternalism interfered with people's individual will in such a way that people were not treated as equals, but as 'immature children unable to distinguish between what is truly useful or harmful to them'.

For decades, from the earliest days of colonisation, to Aboriginal protection boards, the Stolen Generations, the Northern Territory intervention, and its successor, the Stronger Futures legislation, a common thread has weaved through Aboriginal policy: the patronising and corrosive notion that governments know better.

The Intervention was announced with a telegenic level of symbolism that would vie with George Bush's 'mission accomplished' announcement: army tanks and armed services personnel, weeping ministers, and emergency writ large. 'Intervention' is the right word: it was a centralised, bureaucratic incursion into peoples' lives the like of which has not been undertaken before. Indeed, the cost of administering \$150 million of Centrelink money under the intervention's key policy of income management was \$105 million, a cost of \$4400 per person, per

year.

This aspect of the intervention, compulsory income management, resurrected apartheid in Australia. All Aboriginal people in receipt of welfare had a portion quarantined to a basics voucher, limiting the number of stores they could shop at and forcing them to specific check-out queues. Express lane, 12 items or less, and a line for Aborigines with basics cards.

Such discrimination has no place in modern Australia, its attitudes or laws. Hence the Government suspended the Racial Discrimination Act. Opposition to the measures were cast aside due to the sense of emergency created by the Government. The public were not presented with a persuasive policy debate but were instead subjected to a primitive, utilitarian ethical construction: Do you support policies, which, if a bit drastic, will stop children being abused? Or in other words, don't you think the end justifies the means?

And it was this question that the Government returned to whenever opponents expressed concern at the intervention and its hostile imposition upon Aboriginal people. The policy removed from Aboriginal people their autonomy in choosing how to spend their money, it forced them to submit their children to mandatory health checks, and lease their land to the Government in return for essential services, in the belief that ultimately the Government was better placed to deal with this emergency than Aboriginal people.

So do you oppose child abuse, or do you support it?

The government was at war with child abuse, their opponents were at war with 'paternalism'. The odds were always stacked against them in terms of public debate.

Paternalism is a bit of a nothing word anyway. It has been invoked to oppose laws that mandate cyclists wear helmets, or attempt to reduce smoking. Its cousin, the term 'nanny state' is often used to defend the right of racists to be racist and shock jocks to shock: the term of choice for those wishing to prevent government regulations encroaching upon their turf.

For those lucky enough to be born white and middle class, such ethical considerations offered by Kant and Mill are several steps removed from real life, especially since the case study in question is whether we should wear bicycle helmets or not.

But for Aboriginal people such questions have a material affect on their lives. The Mandatory Alcohol Treatment bill for instance is a 'tough love' measure that insists that locking up drunks in mandatory treatment centres is justified since it's for their own good. It posits that depriving people of their liberty by placing them behind wire and under the care of guards is an ethical response to the harm they cause themselves through drunkenness.

The ethical question posed in first year arts courses is whether the end can ever

justify the means; whether the deprivation of one's liberty can ever be considered an ethical response to a problem.

For Aboriginal people, the answer to that question can be found in rates of abuse and alcoholism which have not reduced despite the intervention, or its continuation under Stronger Futures.

The answer can be found in an adult incarceration rate 14 times higher than non-Aboriginal adults, and 31 times higher among Aboriginal juveniles; a life expectancy gap of 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females.

The answer? Paternalism never has, and never will work for Aboriginal people.

A life of oranges

CREATIVE

Rory Harris

suns

my father
is still in
the house
he built
with his wife
those hand
held walks
after work
from three suburbs
away, to plant
a garden
as the bricks
became walls
& as the fruit
trees budded
walls became
rooms, became
a life of oranges
as big as suns
heavy & ripe
just touching
an earth
that was forever

gift

for Br James Murray cfc

along the beach

the song
of a tide
a wave
& then another
& another
unwrapping
the day
at yesterday's eulogy
the Cathedral
bristled with tears
line
the shirt tails
of family
the threads
frayed in the wind
semaphore back
& forth
a line
of song
though a suburb
of backyards
red gum
he had
already
picked out
the tree
something
solid
a red gum
on the side

of the road
into town
or out of
depending
on circumstances
& patterns
a domestic vein
or artery
to take blood
to or away
from the heart
which stopped
beating when
he crashed
slip
this heat in autumn
rises off the walls
facing the Gulf
flutters surrender
all the rag ends
a sun cut in half
balances on
the horizon

Advice for the Pope on reforming the Church

RELIGION

Geraldine Doogue

The Church isn't offering many endearing images to its stoic believers of late. But one will stay with me for many years. That wonderful moment in March when Jorge Mario Bergoglio walked out onto the Vatican balcony with his simple but inviting *Fratelli e sorelle, buona sera! — Brothers and sisters, good evening!* — still sends a thrill up my spine.

Along with the rest of the watching crowd in St Peter's Square, I thought he'd seemed rather stunned, almost overwhelmed just prior to this emergence. Then came this incredibly pastoral moment followed by the next, his appeal to all of us to pray for him. You could have heard a pin drop in the packed square as people delightedly complied, an unforgettable moment.

In the intervening six months, I've wondered: where will he take believers? His recent analogy with the Church as a busy public hospital dispensing vital services was one of the most eloquent for some time from an ecclesiastical leader. Is he re-imagining our Church, amidst its terrible predicaments? I wonder how much he seeks to draw the lay world inside the structure, to tap its wisdom, its experience of these revolutionary times of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Forgive some tilting at windmills. But I wish he'd invite me to be his temporary consultant, to offer him advice for his next 500 days.

The laity has a lot to offer.

Some of us have lived inside big secular institutions that have experienced their own existential crises. Many of their established systems were found wanting, their whole mission seeming in peril.

And various organisations have fought back, their social-licence-to-operate restored after major setbacks. Think BP after various environmental challenges, Westpac in the 1990s, political parties who re-invent themselves to be fit-for-purpose (hopefully). Believe it or not, the US Army post-Vietnam bears close analysis for its rebuilding skills.

The institutional Church must re-earn trust in similar ways. Maybe it should even consult some of the specialist disaster-managers employed at these times, who focus on calamity plus public expectations plus internal ethics, that is, more than mere 'spin'.

Indeed the relationship between these secular organisations and their 'consumers' altered profoundly during their dark nights.

So what would I suggest, as Pope's consultant? Fairly smartly, I'd propose a substantial, largely public, Vatican-led inquiry, into why the Church has been so

troubled by sexual abuse across various countries. Was it due to priestly formation, celibacy, parish structure, sexual orientation, lack of ongoing sexual counselling, bad theology or other issues? Answering all of these core questions from within would not only satisfy the public but would genuinely set the Church up better for future service.

Any decent consultant would have to ask herself: does the Church have the capacity to change? Does it have the management, the processes, even the supply chains to deliver new messages to itself, let alone the world? I suspect it has, which gives me hope.

While nothing is directly comparable, the experience of the US military after Vietnam is an epic model of change. Here was an 800,000-strong standing Army representing the mighty USA, humbled and embarrassed after being bundled out of a small developing Asian country. Could this lumbering giant really reform itself, the sceptics of the time wondered, and continue to serve the national interest, militarily and socially?

Under the title 'An Army Transformed' Lieut-Colonel Suzanne Nielsen outlined how it did just that, in a 2010 article for the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College:

During the two decades preceding the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the US Army went through tremendous reform and rejuvenation. First, leaders within military organisations are essential. Second, military reform is about more than changing doctrine ... an organisation must have appropriate training practices, personnel policies, organisations, equipment and leader development programs.

Third, the implementation of comprehensive change requires an organisational entity with broad authority to craft, evaluate and execute an integrated programme of reforms. Fourth, the process of institutionalising complementary reforms can take several decades. The consequences, for good or ill, could be quite significant in terms of resources, lives and the national interest.

Whether or not you approve of US military objectives, the organisation is vastly more relevant than its earlier iteration, widely regarded as the most effective institution in the country and one of the best deliverers of training and dignity to some of the poorest Americans.

Another interesting model is the *New York Times*, which spent ten tough years recovering from what's known as the Jayson Blair disaster, the young reporter who lied, faked and cheated his way through the venerable paper's news room, trashing the brand mightily when discovered ... by the paper itself eventually.

Provoking agonising self-reflection, it is still clearly a touchy subject. In an interview with the *AFR* in May, Margaret Sullivan, the *Times'* public editor, described the climb-back:

After the scandal and a thorough internal analysis, the *NY Times* management

put safeguards in place. One was the role of the public editor — I am the fifth — to give readers a direct place, independent of the *Times'* editing structure, to take complaints about journalistic integrity. Another was the creation of a full-time standards editor, an internal position within the newsroom hierarchy. Still another was a program to thoroughly and regularly evaluate journalists' work.

According to the current editor-in-chief Jill Abramson, one of the greatest lessons of the Blair scandal was 'how concerned, hurt and angry our readers were, because this was contrary to everything we stand for — the trust and authenticity that people attach to the *Times'*. Sound familiar?

There are other less dramatic examples. The NSW Police Force embarked five years ago on a significant program of cultural change. Under the leadership of Commissioner Andrew Scipione and Assistant Commissioner Catherine Burn, the force set itself up to abide by a Customer Service Charter, meticulously researched within the community and broadly interpreted.

In a recent Customer Service Association magazine, the two police executives described how they moved beyond merely answering the usual complaints about force personnel to addressing root causes.

'The front-line officer needs to understand that 99 per cent (of work) is about the community, only 1 per cent is law enforcement and interaction with actual criminals,' said Burn. 'Why do I see customer service as being important? Because serving customers means investing in the safety and security of communities. And so I see this whole notion of improving customer service as being the driver for us to deliver the leadership that the community right across this state is seeking today,' said Scipione.

In essence, this amounted to big, pastoral thinking. It arose out of a problem-solving mode, ventured into process matters, but emerged way beyond that, with refreshed core values.

In all these cases, venerable institutions were humbled, experiencing a type of grief, followed by an impressive step-by-step commitment back to offering service. They drew on stamina, perseverance, fidelity and courage among their followers: the Virtues, which ultimately led back to good service.

Finally, to an area where my thoughts are still forming: should core mission for the Church be re-introducing believers and non-believers to the beauties and depths of the culture? In the past, the Church virtually represented culture, they were joined at the hip. The Enlightenment and Reformation ended that and hooray for that.

However with the decline of confident religion generally, and the rise of confident science, a seismic gulf has opened up in modern communities about ritual and symbolism ... even memory of its own cultural inheritance. A range of commentators like Hugh Mackay for years now, have openly yearned for big, new

cultural stories to emerge to fill gaps in meaning within modern culture.

Whereas former NSW priest and judge Chris Geraghty believes the contemporary Church has overlooked the sheer power of its back-story. 'We've got a bloody good story, terrific heroes, a wonderful storyline, wonderful metaphors and beautiful narratives. It's a story full of myths and legends. There are lots of bad things — crusades, wars of religion — but the story is an epic one. Atheists and agnostics don't have a story to tell.' (*Compass* research, April 2013)

I'm not so sure about that any more. But maybe we do need to re-assemble the stories of our past, including the great characters whose stories dovetail so neatly with highly significant cultural developments in art, music and politics. It is not always a pretty story about the Church, but certainly eventful and laden with heritage.

We could use modern communication tools to refresh our cultural inheritance, to re-position the Church back into the familiar territory of handing on a Grand Narrative, even if this trumps the purely theological. It could even be a form of reparation to the wider community for the scandal of sexual abuse.

Lord Rowan Williams has recently said that 'art is sacramental: it uses the material world to arrive at the spiritual world — even ideas are spiritual' (*Tablet*, 13 June 2013).

As Fr Andrew Hamilton wrote in *Eureka Street* in May, handing on a tradition, whether a Church or a nation, represents an acute challenge these days. 'In Western societies today communal allegiances are weak. They are not automatically handed on but need to be chosen,' he wrote.

Maybe the Church's mission is to prompt that conscious choice, towards more robust identity in modern communities. It could be healing and redemptive in every way. For me, personally, it is the sort of re-imagining that offers genuine hope of renewal.

Judging and fudging Pope Francis

RELIGION

Fatima Measham

The contest over the meaning and implication of papal statements has probably never been this intense. Ever since Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio stepped onto a balcony at St Peter's Basilica as Pope Francis, his words have been abbreviated, deconstructed and turned into memes.

The [interview](#) published last week, conducted by *La Civiltà Cattolica* and *America* on behalf of major Jesuit journals worldwide, has prompted fresh fervour. It presents a candid profile of the first Latin American and first Jesuit Pope. The interview has been met with admiration and delight, as well as astonishment and caution, as has been the pattern for seemingly every remark and gesture the Pope has made over the past six months.

If nothing else, the attention suggests that the Roman pontiff is still held relevant, even by those who regard religious institutions as anachronistic. What he says, matters. What this Pope says and does probably matters more than usual, given the crossroads at which the Catholic Church finds itself, as well as the global challenges to which it must respond. The Church still has something to say in a world that continues to demonise and exploit the vulnerable, and it must be able to say it with force and resonance.

All this would have weighed on the conclave last March. At the time, however, I did not think the election of a new pope mattered. It seemed to me that the conclave had always been about maintaining the status quo. The sitting pope appoints the cardinals who must eventually choose his successor, which tends to secure continuity.

Still, I got into the spirit of poring over *papabili* and wished for a pope from Africa or Asia, saying that it would be like having Yoda in the Vatican. A desire for change lay underneath my irreverence. I wanted to see some sort of institutional acknowledgement that things aren't working; that the hierarchy understood what was required to revive the Church for the ages. I wanted, most of all, to be surprised.

Of course, there was already the surprise of Pope Benedict XVI relinquishing office, nearly six centuries after the last papal resignation. Perhaps it was this unexpected turn of events that enlarged the sense of possibility for the cardinal electors; it constituted opportunity and permission to do something different. On the fifth ballot, they elected a man who had not even appeared on anyone's radar.

I had wanted a surprise outcome, yet met it with great ambivalence. Maybe it was the shock of a Jesuit pope. I reserved judgment for quite some time, against an overwhelming impulse to own him.

I had studied at Ateneo de Manila University, which is Jesuit in history, culture and outlook. I was a member of Ateneo Student Catholic Action, which is animated by Ignatian spirituality and liberation theology. I had undertaken silent retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises and directed by Jesuit priests. Yet I decided that none of these necessarily lends insight into the man. I did not want to be reckless in my regard, conscious of the bias.

Perhaps it is a measure of my sense of alienation from the Church that I was also sceptical of his capacity to address the suffocating aspects of bishopric language and clerical culture, the moral and ritual fastidiousness that has hurt good people yet failed to protect and care for the children in its pews.

So I reserved judgment when Francis took the bus with the cardinals after his election, paid for his hotel bill himself, carried his own bag and moved to simple quarters at Casa Santa Marta. I reserved judgment when he downsized the papal throne to a simple white chair and wore plain black shoes rather than the customary papal scarlet. These seemed nothing more than anecdotes, charming though they were.

Then he washed the feet of prisoners, including women and Muslims, at Easter. He spoke at Lampedusa, holding a crozier made from a shipwrecked boat that had borne asylum seekers. He rang people who sent letters that triggered a paternal response. He spoke with great resonance and consistency on mercy and healing, on meeting people of good work and good will regardless of belief or unbelief and sexuality, on taking the Gospel to the streets where people are.

I finally realised: here is a pope who articulates the sentiments closest to my sense of faith and church, a truly pastoral pope who finds God in everything, even in the brokenness and darkest regrets of the human heart.

It brings some amusement, therefore, to see the mad scramble to dilute and reconfigure the sense of his words, the caveats — offered always by others, not himself — around some of his more provocative statements. It is interesting to hear the chorus in some quarters that he does not change anything, and probably won't.

Yet for someone like me who has been looking for someone like this, the change has already come. If nothing else, Pope Francis has shown me how much I had underestimated the God of surprises. I can't wait for more.

Pope Francis' field hospital

AUSTRALIA

Michael Mullins



Much is being made of the [interview](#) with Pope Francis that was released early Friday morning. In particular the section where he compares the Church to a field hospital after battle and the first question is 'How are we treating the people of God?' The Pope's main point is that rules don't become a consideration until the wounded are healed.

In a similar vein, Vinnies CEO John Falzon [said](#) on Friday: 'There is no place in Australia for the kind of policy approach that equates to condemning people for not being able to walk up stairs while refusing to build a ramp.'

Discussing the Federal Government's Work for the Dole Scheme, he said the Government will do nothing to increase employment participation 'if it chooses to demonise people'.

Pope Francis says: 'We must always consider the person. Here we enter into the mystery of the human being. In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation.'

Falzon also insists that people must be accompanied and empowered *where they are*, and not have to wait until they fulfil various qualification criteria. 'People who are unemployed should never be forced to live in poverty. This is why Newstart still needs to be urgently increased by \$50 a week.'

The odds are always against anybody who lives in poverty, especially in isolation. When those who are desperate feel they are being punished — or continuing to be punished if they have left prison — they simply become more desperate and follow a perilous course. They sit on the margins of society, often demonised for the addictions they inevitably fall prey to.

To use Francis' term, if they are accompanied, rather than punished, they are more likely to rise out of poverty.

A particularly powerful media presentation of accompaniment was Steve Cannane's hour-long ABC radio [interview](#) with Sister Anne Jordan last Monday. She is coordinator of Cana Communities, a Sydney-based organisation dealing with people who have become homeless through mental illness and addiction, or are unable to make a start after leaving prison.

She says an 'arms length' approach to former prisoners does not help them to re-establish a life, and inevitably leads them to reoffend. '[Society] gives them \$200 and say go get a job and a house. How can you do that? You can't even get a place to live in Sydney for that ... We need the community attitude to be one of welcome.'

That may be difficult if their behaviour is antisocial, according to our way of thinking. Jordan even tells of people she has welcomed setting fire to the shelter she has given them, and that this has not stopped her from welcoming them again after time away.

Francis' message is that people on the margins tend not to follow the rules, but that is a long-term goal that is secondary to the accompaniment we offer them as the first and most urgent priority.

Universities are changing, not dying

EDUCATION

Jessica McLean

Currently, Fisher Library at the University of Sydney is subject to a renewal project. The transition is [discussed](#) by Daniel Stacey in a piece for Fairfax expressing concern about the removal of books from the library to storage, and the reworking of that space to 'hot desking chill zones and break out areas'.

On reading the piece, I had an initial pang of recognition, for the University of Sydney is my *alma mater* too, having studied for a science/arts degree there, and a PhD. Fisher's 'renewal' raises a number of questions, from the simple to the catastrophising: What about all those books? And what about a university's responsibility to provide abundant texts for learning? Is this a sign of the end of quality learning and teaching at universities?

Fisher's renewal began in earnest in 2012. Since then I've convened a third year human geography course at Macquarie University, and am halfway through convening a first year gGeographies of global change' course. In so doing, I've learnt a lot about what students expect from a university education, and the ways that educators have to change to support the learning outcomes we want them to achieve.

I've got excellent mentors at Macquarie, including other early career academics, who teach me what they've learnt through their own teaching, and more experienced academics, who share their longer-term views. Which is lucky as I'm enthusiastic about good teaching and also keen to distribute my research for discussion and debate.

I don't see these as mutually incompatible goals and love working with others who approach academic work in similar ways. Contracted, junior staffers like me are doing much of the teaching, and the pressure to 'publish or perish' may lead to poorer outcomes for students, especially if there is a lack of prioritising of teaching roles. These are not new dynamics, yet the greater number of people graduating with PhDs does intensify them.

As an early career academic, I have only convened a small number of undergraduate courses, but in one course there was a participation mark given to students for attending and contributing to tutorials. Happily, the students did attend these classes and gave substantive efforts to generating learning.

One reason for this participation, aside from the enticement of earning marks, was that they involved a range of different learning modes: from role plays for negotiating resource management, to reflection on learning over the semester, to critique of map-making for the same northern Australian river catchment by different stakeholders. At the same time, lecture attendance did reduce over the course of the semester, perhaps because lectures were recorded and available

online, and attendance at lectures wasn't mandatory to achieve the learning outcomes.

But there are greater opportunities to improve teaching in response to the challenges of meeting the needs of diverse student cohorts. For example, the diversity in tutorial experiences, where skills and content are emphasised to the betterment of learners and teachers alike, feeds in to how students tend to prefer learning by doing rather than being told. This requires more than just reading, but making things too, like websites to communicate group learning activities, and posters to communicate a student's reflection on a learning process.

Underlining these practices is a growing trend that sees more people considering university as a desirable step to achieve professional skills and capacities. This means that a broader range of people are participating in tertiary education than in the past. Universities Australia [found](#) in a 2013 survey that 88 per cent of their sampled 1300 people encourage their children to attend universities. This large pool of potential students requires educators to accommodate diverse learning needs, and do more than just set essays to assess students' learning.

For instance, recent research [identifies](#) that today's students are working online, and use technology seamlessly, meaning that even the notion of how students are 'reading' course materials to get a grasp of concepts and content must acknowledge this mode of learning. Many students and teachers are already using online learning effectively, and find online environments useful if they are given the right support to work with new technologies.

So the moves at the Fisher Library to provide more spaces for working online are in fact necessary for university learning. Break out areas, too, are important for people to achieve group work goals effectively.

Overall, I think learners and teachers alike need to open up to new ways of learning, and not lock ourselves in to rigid expectations of what is ideal in the learning-teaching relationship. Rather, let's support innovative learning and teaching, and address the political economies of universities that may be limiting success in both realms.