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## Hillary Clinton's bloodless memoir

### REVIEWS

**Barry Gittins**

**Hard Choices, by Hilary Rodham Clinton. Simon and Schuster, 10 June 2014.**

**Barry:**

In an era of risk assessment and parsed avowal, memorable political memoirs tend to strut, rather than tiptoe. *Hard Choices* does neither, sashaying past crises with measured grace (or is it calculated resignation?) and pirouetting around presidents past and present.

That's a deliberate choice, I'd say, as the prospect of another Democratic nomination/presidential campaign for one Hillary Rodham Clinton means her dance card's far from full.

This was akin to reading a carefully vetted resume. An intelligent and formidable first lady, senator and Secretary of State, and no shrinking violet (as the Clinton family's dramas have shown), the author presents a largely passionless, desiccated record.

There's the odd poignant reflection. Absurd depictions of Mel Brooksian secure rooms (and the reading of documents with a blanket over her head in non-secure rooms). But, overall, Clinton draws pictures without drawing blood. Readers gain atoms of insight as she and Bill take long nature walks and chat. They watch a movie with Chelsea. Hillary sidles alongside Bono to tickle the ivories at a private function held after Nelson Mandela's funeral. Adoring university students ask the Secretary of State adorable questions.

Policies emanated respectively from, in the author's offhand phraseology, 'Obamaworld and Hillaryland'. These fiefdoms were run respectively by the president and by his 'chief diplomat ... principal advisor on foreign policy, and the CEO of a sprawling Department'. You could be forgiven for wondering who made the big calls.

It's an occasionally illuminating but disappointing canvass; a sometimes mawkish result for a person of intellect and vision who's inspired and divided millions, if not billions. Perhaps I was naive to expect anything more forthright.

A formula ensues in the selective retelling: hubris, 'ethics vs national interest' discourse, and manifest destiny. Atrocities, dictators, American power and prestige. Allies, creeps and gaffes; wins, evasions and losses. Sticky diplomatic situations are resolved or dismissed, as the author works her 'Smart Power' magic (military might plus financial/diplomatic/legal/cultural muscle).

Sometimes, she notes, acting ethically is prompted by the desire to not lose face. Enter famed Chinese 'barefoot lawyer' Chen Guangcheng, a blind human rights advocate who 'was injured, on the run, and asking for our help'. It's one of several engaging retellings

of dramatic events.

Paradoxically, Clinton contends that 'even more than our military and economic power, America's values are the greatest source of strength and security' while noting that 'our credibility was on the line'. The eventually happy ending for Chen and his family comes with Clinton's realpolitik observation that 'if we didn't help Chen, it would undermine our position everywhere'.

Coming in at more than 635 pages, *Hard Choices* is more Easter bonnet than hardhat. It's clear she's not yet thrown it into the electoral ring (she wraps up with the observation that 'the time for another hard choice will come soon enough'). Strategic as ever, she's placed her bonnet in clear sight, to keep her spot warm.

**Jen:**

It's telling that *Hard Choices* begins with defeat (that is to the current 44th US President Barack Obama), isn't it Barry? Here, our heroine seems to be playing her vulnerable card. It's something we can all relate to, right? Putting in the hard yards only to be pipped at the post.

Except that no-one puts up a fight quite like Hillary Rodham Clinton. And it's in these passages where there's a blessed chink in the measured and, as you rightly write Barry 'desiccated' tone - if you read between the lines, that is. Because while Clinton (or, perhaps, her ghost writer) barely puts a syllable wrong on the page, I'm reminded of an upmarket car advertising campaign I saw recently: 'You don't need words to make a statement.'

From her diplomatic skills to her famous designer pantsuits, Clinton certainly hasn't shied from doing just that. But if, dear reader, you were looking for something far-less inscrutable (the internal monologue between her ambitious and pragmatic side after being offered the appointment of Secretary of State from President Elect Obama, for instance), then you'll be sorely disappointed.

Yes, much of *Hard Choices* is a thinly veiled PR spin that, as Barry reminds us, serves a unique purpose of reminding us that Clinton's ambassadorial skills have long been in the making.

Forged in the media glare of her husband's public peccadillos, Clinton's ducking and weaving has also come in handy during scandals of her own making (disingenuously both she and Bill recently begged poor, saying that they left the White House skint).

Yet remaining immutable, level-headed and - most importantly - charming in her role as Secretary of State means Clinton has garnered considerable kudos. So much so that she can now add the string of elder stateswoman to her bow.

Clinton's star power was clearly evident during her arrival in Australia last week to spruik her book. But so, too, was her fighting spirit. Criticising Australia for 'becoming overly dependent on China as a trading partner while expecting Washington to defend [it] from a Beijing that is becoming more aggressive in the region', as Fairfax reported, Clinton showed that despite resigning from her position last year, politics remained firmly on her mind, as well as squarely in her sights.

Of course, she's being disingenuous expecting us to swallow the line that she hasn't, as she writes, decided whether or not she'll be running for president in 2016. But, as the

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fall-out from former Australian prime minister Julia Gillard's famous 'misogyny speech' (and which Clinton is a big fan of) showed, women in politics still can't afford to let down their guard. Not for a second.

And if Clinton is determined to go another round for US presidency, then she'll once again have to decide whether or not to put a lid on that fallible, all-too human side of hers. Not a matter of choice, perhaps, as much as of necessity.

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## Tamils facing new atrocities in Sri Lanka

### AUSTRALIA

*Paul White*



On Monday morning Australians learnt that two boats of Tamil asylum seekers had been intercepted off Christmas Island. Now there are unconfirmed reports that Australia is handing them over to the Sri Lankan navy without assessing their claims for protection. At least one of the vessels intercepted in high seas contained 153 Tamil asylum seekers, originally from Sri Lanka. These included 37 children, one of whom was only aged three months and was sick. The Tamils had been almost two weeks at sea in their 22-metre boat. A Tamil asylum seeker on-board told the ABC: 'We are refugees. We come from Sri Lanka - we stayed in India and we are unable to live there. That's why we are coming to Australia'.

These Tamils previously sought refuge in India from Sri Lanka's 1983-2009 extremely brutal civil war. In 2011 a UN expert panel identified war crimes such as abductions, torture and disappearances, in which high government officials were implicated. Over 100,000 people were killed and one million displaced. Tamils were exposed daily to air strikes and atrocities, forcing many to flee to India.

India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Refugees have no right to freedom of movement. India's Foreigners Act 1946 and Citizenship Act 1955 define all non-citizens who enter without visas to be illegal migrants, with no exception for refugees or asylum seekers. Possession of a UNHCR refugee certificate does not protect refugees from detention.

More than 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils live in between 115 and 130 refugee camps in Tamil Nadu State in India. Aid workers say that some refugees live in thatched huts, others in small cement blockhouses. There are no proper toilet facilities, bathing facilities or adequate drinking water. There is no rubbish collection, and only some camps have medical facilities. Electricity is provided in some locations, but usually only between 6 am and 6 pm. In some camps there is no electricity for many inmates. Six houses at Thiruvadhavur collapsed in monsoonal rains recently, killing a girl.

The camps are of two types: general camps and so-called special camps - which Indian NGOs say are really concentration camps. People can go out of the general camps, but require three levels of police clearance. They are subject to constant surveillance by security forces and face travel restrictions. NGOs are generally barred from working in the refugee camps. Even UNHCR officials are not permitted access.

An Amnesty International investigation found that general camp inmates potentially face great oppression from security authorities. 'The Q branch (the anti-terror wing of the state police) has forced labourers at the Goomidpoondi camp to pilfer steel from the factories where they work', one refugee told Amnesty. Amnesty reports that refugees were made to rob banks in 2008 and 2011, 'and the Q branch were involved'. If refugees caught up in such abuses complain they may find their young relatives packed off to 'special camps'.

Many Tamils have returned home after the war to discover that their land had been stolen. Indeed, Tamil NGOs report a 'Sinhala colonisation', of predominantly Tamil areas. A Tamil refugee told Amnesty: 'My brother went back to check on his property and found that nearly 100 percent of our areas are still under Sinhalese military occupation'. Years after the supposed end of the civil war, allegations of torture in police custody persist. UN human rights commissioner Navi Pillay warned in 2013 that Sri Lanka was becoming increasingly authoritarian. Tamils face the risk of sexual violence, torture, murder, imprisonment, and enforced disappearance. Juan M&eacute;ndez, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, concurs.

Since March 2014 Sri Lankan authorities have intensified security operations in Tamil areas. There have been scores of arrests and several deaths in these regions and freedom of movement has been restricted in these areas. According to an estimate by The Sentinel Project, 'the overall risk of genocide in Sri Lanka is medium to high', as 'conditions point to a likely renewal of conflict in Sri Lanka that could escalate to mass atrocities including genocide'.

Sri Lankan human rights lawyer Lakshan Dias says that in the past 12 months Australia had deported numerous formerly India-based Sri Lankan Tamil asylum-seekers to Sri Lanka. He adds that these forced returnees are sometimes 'held and interrogated, some are questioned or beaten, and they are unable to return to India'. In 2011, ABC1's *Lateline* reported the severe beatings of two forcibly returned Sri Lankan asylum seekers, who claimed that Sri Lankan police beat them in the presence of an Australian Federal Police officer.

Oppressed in India and facing new genocide in their homeland, our latest arrivals have nowhere to go, and seek Australia's mercy. The full High Court has ruled that refusal to give refugees permanent protection visas is invalid.

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*Image: Tamils Against Genocide*



## Human relationships and efficiency don't mix

### AUSTRALIA

*Andrew Hamilton*



The test of a good society is the attentiveness it shows to its most vulnerable members. But when it comes to budgets and budgeting, the most vulnerable usually miss out. This is certainly the case of disadvantaged young people with mental illnesses in Victoria. State funding and the Federal Budget will further disadvantage them.

A recent report from Mission Australia and the Black Dog Institute has shown the challenge in treating mental illness in young people. The stigma and the loss of self-confidence associated with mental illness make them hesitant to seek help or to admit their need for it. They are also intimidated by large clinics and confused by a multitude of carers, each of them focusing on one aspect of their need. So they easily isolate themselves or decline to commit themselves to therapeutic programs.

Many have been helped, however, by the opportunity to have a place they can drop into offering educational and cultural activities and access to services. The key to such programs lies in the relationships that they build with dedicated members of staff. Such programs have been successful in enabling young people to make connections to society that flow into education and work opportunities.

Tragically, young people with mental illnesses have now been caught in a pincer movement between the Federal Budget and changes to the way the Victorian State Government funds its welfare services. The [Shergold Report](#) commissioned by the State Government emphasised efficiency in service delivery by developing partnerships and simplifying a system in which people were referred to many different agencies working independently of one another. Underlying the Report was the determination to ensure economic sustainability.

The Victorian Government has started to recommission its community sector programs. The first to be affected were the community mental health services. The outcome saw a simplification of administration into a smaller number of areas, with tenders being awarded to a few large tenderers in each region. These included some large community



organisations.

But funding was withdrawn from small innovative programs directed to people who are mentally ill. St Mary's House of Welcome, Jesuit Social Services' Connexions Program and the Artful Dodgers Studio and other specialised programs lost funding for interventions that were effective because of the quality of the relationships they had built up.

The young people affected by these changes will be put at even greater risk by the Federal Budget. The restrictions on benefits and the harsh and unrealistic conditions imposed on people in order to receive benefits will affect particularly those with mental illness. They will increase anxiety, the stigma and the feelings of worthlessness already afflicting these young people, and make it less likely that they will trust or seek help from large services. Financial efficiency and managerial simplicity may be gained, but it will be at the expense of hard-won wisdom and personal resources. Those who lose most by the changes will be the most vulnerable members of society.

Mental health, particularly of young people, ranks low in the priorities of voters, and these changes will be little noticed. Yet if the measuring stick for any government is indeed the way in which it attends to the most vulnerable members of society, this inattention is deeply regrettable.

How are these harmful changes to be explained? The common thread running through the measures adopted both at State and at Federal level is the commodification of services and benefits. The business of government is the prudent management of its economic resources. Services are seen as commodities to be produced at the lowest possible cost and distributed in the most economically efficient way, and to be paid for by tokens of involvement in the economy. Vulnerable people who are mentally ill, lack social skills and live in poverty cannot respond in an economically acceptable way. So they will lose access to benefits.

When services and benefits are commodified, too, their delivery will be evaluated primarily in terms of economic efficiency. Inevitably large agencies which promise to deliver economy of scale will win contracts. The public service can shrink, and eventually will lose the stored wisdom necessary for regulating services for the common good.

If human beings were widgets to be traded this would not matter much. But for vulnerable mentally ill young people the goal of their healing is to build connections with themselves, others and their world. It is about relationships. And the way in which this best takes place is through good relationships. Relationships are incorrigibly inefficient things. That is why they are disregarded in budgets and tendering. And the consequence of that is that people are disregarded.

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*Relationships image from Shutterstock*

## The contours of an extended child abuse royal commission

### AUSTRALIA

*Frank Brennan*



On Monday, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses of Child Sexual Abuse produced its first [interim report](#) to government. The commission has asked the Abbott Government for a two-year extension until December 2017 and an additional \$104 million to complete its task.

When Julia Gillard announced the federal royal commission in November 2012, I [expressed](#) some reservations about such a wide ranging inquiry, claiming that it would take at least five years, and I did not know that victims or the rest of us could wait that long to learn critical lessons about how institutions might improve their procedures for the protection of children.

Justice McClellan is adamant that the job will take five years if it is to be done properly. The good news is that the victims' groups seem to think they can wait that long, as anything sooner would be rushed. The bad news is that we will all be waiting another three and a half years for answers about how to restructure institutions ensuring the better protection of children and about how best to provide compensation and ongoing care for victims.

Before Prime Minister Gillard announced the commission, I said that the Catholic Church needed help, in part because there seemed to be a vast discrepancy in the statistics when it came to the number of abuse claims in the Catholic Church when compared with other Churches and institutions which care for vulnerable children. The Commission has not yet come up with any answers or theories about the discrepancy. But its own statistics are frightening and shaming. The commission has provided a safe space for victims to come forward and tell their stories. The commission refers to victims as survivors. 60% of the institutions where survivors reported being abused were faith-based institutions (1,033 of 1,719 institutions). Where abuse occurred in a faith-based

institution, 68% of survivors reported that the abuse occurred in a Catholic institution, while only 12% reported that the abuse occurred in an Anglican institution. Other churches reported lesser figures. No doubt there were many more Catholic institutions set up for vulnerable children. But that goes nowhere close to providing a complete explanation for the shameful discrepancy. It seems that about 40% of all victims who have come forward to tell their story were abused in institutions auspiced by the Catholic Church. When the royal commission was announced, Cardinal Pell said, 'We object to being described as the only cab on the rank.' We are not the only cab, but we are the main one when it comes to reports of child sexual abuse within Australian institutions. There are still many risks with a long running federal royal commission. Many of us lived through the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. I remember being in the office of a federal minister the week that commission was announced. We agreed that the death rate of Aborigines in custody being 10 times the national average was directly related to the imprisonment rate of Aborigines being 10 times the national average. The underlying causes for high indigenous imprisonment rates were not the sort of agenda items which would be solved by a royal commission. Lots of research was undertaken. Lots of public hearings were held. Lots of state police were put through the wringer. Lots of previous deaths and half baked coronial inquiries were scrutinised. Lots of recommendations were made. Indigenous imprisonment rates are higher today than they were before that royal commission was convened. In 1991, Aborigines were 14% of the prison population. By 2013, they were 26% of the prison population. Royal commissioners may have extensive legal powers of inquiry but they have very limited capacity to influence outcomes.

When dealing with child abuse, state police forces and state child welfare departments are central. There has to be real buy-in by them and their political masters if this royal commission is to deliver long term results. State agencies still carry memories of the Aboriginal deaths royal commission and know that there is no magic panacea on offer. On 16 June 2014, Commissioner McClellan convened a roundtable of state agencies and stakeholders to discuss Working with Children Checks. Understandably the Commission would like a uniform national approach to this routine mechanism. Progress on a national approach was so slight that the Commission, having issued a media release about the forthcoming roundtable, did not issue one after it to report outcomes. We have seen lots of bishops and leaders of religious groups appearing before the royal commission. We are yet to see any state premier, minister, or departmental head appear.

The Commission needs to clarify what it actually has power to change or recommend, and to focus its activity more on looking for lessons rather than apportioning blame for the past so that procedures might be improved in future. Lawyers need to contribute to a clearer resolution of the legal issues at hand being separated out from the political and media maelstrom which accompanies a commission of this sort. We Catholics need to help and encourage the Church hierarchy to be on the front foot in the public square explaining our mission, past mistakes, and future commitments.

Following upon Cardinal Pell's disastrous appearance before the royal commission, it is now accepted that the Church must provide dissatisfied survivors of abuse with a legal entity to sue. Otherwise, the head of the Church organisation being sued (a diocese or a religious congregation) should provide survivors with a legally enforceable assurance that the church leader will discharge any judgment debt. The Church organisation, conceding that a priest or religious is in a position akin to employment, should not challenge the assertion that a priest or religious is an employee for the purposes of any damages claim. The Church organisation should comply with a model litigant protocol along the lines of those adopted by governments. Having taken these steps, any church organisation is entitled to plead and fight its case consistent with the law.

The royal commission has been too focused on financial compensation for victims. Doing so, it has set up unreal expectations for victims and their supporters and set impossible questions for some of the witnesses. Under Australian law, the relevant causes of action

are: negligence, vicarious liability and non-delegable strict liability. The royal commission states in its interim report: 'Important issues - including limitation periods, the proper defendant, vicarious liability and the level of damages - will be considered.' Under Australian law as most recently set down by the High Court in 2003, there are limits to the extent to which an organisation will be vicariously liable for the criminal wrong of one of its employees sexually abusing a child. There are very few, if any, instances in which the law would find a non-delegable strict liability going beyond the limits of vicarious liability. The commission is clearly anxious to expand the realm of vicarious liability, much in the way that the courts in the UK and Canada have done. There is little point in asking witnesses about this, let alone asking church leaders. It is not a matter for the commission. It is a matter for the High Court.

Theoretically, one might postulate the commission recommending a very detailed statutory template for adoption by all state parliaments legislating when an employer would be vicariously liable for his employee's criminal wrongs. But this is no matter for legislation. The prospect of getting buy-in from all state parliaments on a matter so complex is very remote. The statute would need to cover Lindsay Fox's truck driver stopping at an intersection and deciding to biff the slow driver in the Ford Focus, as well as the errant teacher who sexually assaulted a child in a classroom or in a dormitory. In its line of questioning on vicarious liability, the Commission sometimes gives the impression that it is seeking to make liability co-extensive with the admitted wrongdoing or failing of an employer. But the thing about vicarious liability is that it concerns liability where the employer is not in the least at fault, there being no proven negligence. The courts determining the limits of vicarious liability are concerned to determine the justice of redistributing damage in light of what seems fair given the scope of the enterprise of the employer. Ultimately, this will be a matter for the High Court, and not for Justice McClellan.

There has been one other line of persistent questioning in the Commission which is unpersuasive, at least in part because there has been a failure to concede the unlikelihood that the commission will be able to achieve its desired result. Church personnel are regularly grilled about their failure to report a paedophile to the police even though the victim now an adult could do so and has decided not to and has asked church personnel to desist from doing so. This was a matter which came to prominence in last year's Victorian parliamentary inquiry. The Victorian Parliament responded by amending their *Crimes Act*. The Victorian law provides that an adult must provide the police with any information about a criminal assault on a child unless the information came from the victim who was over 16 years of age when the information was conveyed and 'the victim requested that the information not be disclosed'. The commission has found that on average a victim discloses abuse 22 years after it occurred. The federal commission will have a very uphill battle trying to convince the Victorian parliament to change this new law. If it were a law passed in 1954 without the benefit of recent inquiries, that would be a different matter. But this is a 2014 law passed after consideration of the vexed issue by a parliamentary committee.

In the next three and a half years with this royal commission, the Catholic Church needs to be more proactive, more on the front foot, more unashamedly committed to truth, justice, transparency and compassion, regardless of what the royal commission might recommend and regardless of the continuing barbs of those sections of the media which are anti-Catholic. The Church must have the confidence that in the end the truth will out. Moving forward in hope with a commitment to assist and protect vulnerable children, the church needs fearless legal advisers to keep reminding church leaders about the fine ideals of scripture and the Church tradition which should animate, inform and shape every public utterance before the commission, no matter how adverse to the church witness's personal self-interest.

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## Good priest walks the ruins of the sex abuse crisis

### REVIEWS

*Tim Kroenert*

**Calvary (MA). Director: John Michael McDonagh. Starring: Brendan Gleeson, Chris O'Dowd, Kelly Reilly, Aiden Gillen, Dylan Moran, Isaach De Bankolé, M. Emmet Walsh, Orla O'Rourke. 100 minutes**

*Calvary* begins with a threat. Enconced in the anonymity of the confessional, a man who has suffered injustice at the hands of the Church informs the priest, Fr James Lavelle (Gleeson), that he plans to kill him. Not because Lavelle has committed any wrong - quite the opposite. He has been singled out because he is 'a good priest', to pay the price for the sins of his brethren.

During the week leading up to the deadline set by his would-be killer, Lavelle goes about his pastoral duties within his windswept seaside parish. The ominously titled *Calvary* traces these earnest ramblings, which are as much a part of a personal pilgrimage - a 'setting in order of his house', as suggested by the killer - as a continuation of clerical duty.

He counsels a young man who is angered that he is denied the affections of women. He mediates a domestic violence situation involving affable butcher Jack (O'Dowd), his unfaithful wife Veronica (O'Rourke), and her lover, Simon (De Bankolé), an ill-tempered mechanic from the Ivory Coast. He resists the request of an elderly writer (Walsh) to acquire a gun, for the purposes of self-euthanasia.

He also endures the condescension of wealthy blue-blood Michael (Moran), and the more hostile slights heaped upon him in the local tavern by, among others, snidely atheistic doctor Frank (Gillen). Amidst these other trials he attempts to reconnect with his estranged daughter Fiona (Reilly), who feels that his decision to join the priesthood after the death of her mother was a kind of abandonment.

Lavelle is a good priest, and generally a decent, if flawed, man. He goes about this work patiently, for the most part. At one point he is accused of being judgmental; he retorts that yes, he is, but he tries not to be. Against the weight of such general disdain, and in the knowledge that any of these men that he encounters could be the one who plans to kill him, to strive to be good nonetheless is noble in itself.

It is hard to miss the biblical connotations both of the film's title, *Calvary* - named for the site of Christ's crucifixion - and of the threat levelled against Lavelle. This 'good priest' is a Christ figure, innocent, but marked for death as a scapegoat for the guilty. Unsurprisingly he has forgiveness on his mind. But often forgiveness is not something to be given or received lightly.

The sexual abuse crisis that brought disgrace upon the Irish Church hangs over all of these proceedings. The killer's reason for wanting to inflict violence is that he was, as a child, a victim of abuse that went unpunished. Lavelle is liked but not respected by his

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parishioners, despite the centrality of the Church to the life of their community. Amid the ruins left by the crisis he carries little moral authority.

*Calvary* is a cerebral film about this emotional but also deeply moral issue. It suffers for it. The characters are virtual 'types' or, at best, sketches, who exist to provide a perspective on a raft of issues (mortality, sexuality, wealth) that are canvassed within the context of the post-abuse crisis. It is a tragic reflection on the diminished authority of the Church in conversations about these issues.

But structurally it is a mess, and its ability to engage the head but not the heart is alienating. It is not helped in this regard by an overbearing score that seems to have been tasked with doing all of the emotional heavy lifting that the script neglects. If it seeks to give voice to victims, affirm their feelings of injustice or offer them catharsis, its cold detachment from a sense of basic humanity undermines this goal.

It is rescued in large part by a tour-de-force performance by Gleeson as Lavelle, who is warm and complex and refreshingly lacking in moral certitude. What's more he is a man who has wept for the death of a pet but not, by his own admission, for the victims of abuse. While he is a good man, a good priest, and not himself an abuser, in his silence and disinterest he is still a part of the problem. A truth he may learn too late.

*Tim Kroenert is assistant editor of Eureka Street.*



## The beautiful game needs better stewards

### INTERNATIONAL

*James O'Brien*



FIFA World Cup

Brazil 2014 is in the knockout stages. Brazil's team is through to the quarter finals, much to the joy and delight of home fans. Yet to what extent can Brazilians actually celebrate? The tournament has come at much social and economic cost.

Before the tournament a string of protests called the Brazilian government to account for misplaced spending due to the World Cup. The government of President Dilma Rousseff's Workers Party has put health, education, anti-poverty and transport spending on the back burner. In one case a stadium was built in an area where there is no locally based team. FIFA was rightly criticised for taking all ticketing and broadcasting revenue, meaning Brazil would find it hard to recoup its costs (some \$11.3 Billion US - including what FiveThirtyEight calculates as 'over \$1000 of stadium construction costs per fan in attendance in four years.') Brazil was simply told to benefit from a short term tourism uptake, only some of which makes its way into government revenue.

Watching on from Australia, we see brilliant players at work. We see stunning goals from Messi, Neymar and Cahill. We see teams striving to bring strategies and formations together. We marvel at the skill of the Dutch, the fall of Spain and the surprise of Costa-Rica. We see coaches trying to pull off a result with well timed substitutions. We see 'the Beautiful Game'in action.

Between matches, we also see a little cartoon of sorts, where an idealised version of Brazil's football loving society is presented as it hosts the Cup. There is wonder, hope and harmony. A boy scores a goal, the Amazon is fitted out with stadia, fans are full of a joy which leaps into the heavens. Social injustice and upheaval is out of sight, out of mind.

The disjunct between what we see and what we don't see echoes a story by Ursula Le Guinn that Moira Rayner referred to in *Eureka Street* last year. In *The Ones Who Walk Away From The Omelas*, there is a society where everyone treats each other well, living harmoniously and happily. Yet the glorious city has a secret. Locked in the middle of the city lives a scapegoat child treated oppressively. When citizens come of age, they are given this knowledge. It is a terrible knowledge, calling each person to a fundamental choice about how to respond. The masses agree to keep the society going by choosing acquiescence. A few walk away in conscience.

FIFA is an unaccountable body which commands nations to spend massive amounts of money in order to have the 'privilege' of hosting the cup. Poor host nations end up redirecting money away from social programs that benefit those in need. For FIFA, the benefits of hosting are channeled back to head office; whispers of corruption accompany its deliberations; it has one billion dollars in reserve yet is listed as a charitable organisation; its current president Sepp Blatter is seeking his fifth consecutive term. Money rather than justice seems to guide this organisation, making a mockery of the match day slogan '&'FIFA Fair Play.&'

During his World Youth Day trip, Pope Francis last year visited the Varginha favela, one of the many slums of Rio de Janeiro. Francis, by his presence, gave his blessing to the needs of its residents, many of whom had joined the protest movement. It was here that the effects of the last few years' massive investment in football stadia and associated public works were felt strongly. Anger and discontent were bristling under the surface.

He sought to console those desiring justice, it being so easy to despair. 'Dear young friends, you have a particular sensitivity toward injustice, but you are often disappointed by facts that speak of corruption on the part of people who put their own interests before the common good. To you and to all, I repeat: Never yield to discouragement, do not lose trust, do not allow your hope to be extinguished.'

The pre-tournament protests were born in righteous anger and a hope that the common good may soon overcome. For as St Augustine said, 'Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage: anger at the way things are and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.'

Let's enjoy the rest of the World Cup. But let's also remember it is a show which financially benefits the few at FIFA to the expense of the many in Brazil. The Beautiful Game needs better stewards. Will its current leadership have the courage to listen to their consciences and walk away? With justice, transparency, and leadership, FIFA's quadrennial World Cups could well be a time of celebration for all.

*James O'Brien holds a BA in Politics from Macquarie University. He is currently enrolled in a Diploma in English Literature at Sydney University. Formerly a Jesuit novice, he enjoys writing, football and the cello. He welcomes tweets @jpeob.*

## As close as we ever came to the Navy

### CREATIVE

*Brian Doyle*



We would drift by the Navy recruiting offices on our bicycles when we were small, and in our ragged old cars when we were older, but we would never approach on foot, in case a grizzled tar emerged and sentenced us to submarine duty in the Black Sea.

Occasionally we would see the tall young recruiter staring out through the door of the office, and sometimes we would spot him in the bakery, but never did we see him anywhere else in town, nor did we ever see him arrive in the morning or leave at night; some of us thought that he lived in the recruiting office, with a hammock slung in the back to remind him fondly of his days at sea.

When we were ten and 12, the thought of joining the Navy was savoury, as it smacked of salt and adventure and ships and exotic girls in faraway ports. When we were 14 and 16 the thought of joining the Navy was still alluring, as a way to startle and dismay our fathers, who had been in the Army or the Marines, some of them surviving wars against Germany and Japan and China.

But when we were 17 and 18, the thought of joining the Navy was both fascinating and chilling, for the war in Vietnam was still seething, and all of us had registered for the draft, as required by law. We crowded around a television one night in March to watch the draft lottery, and some had crowed when their numbers were drawn near the end, and others like me were stunned and frightened when our numbers were drawn early.

All the rest of my life I will remember hearing my number called first among all my friends, and the way they turned to me with complicated messages written on their faces, and the way one boy laughed and started to rag me and then stopped as abruptly

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as if someone had punched him, which maybe someone had.

The war was winding down then, and automatic inductions had been suspended, and some of us were headed to college and so would almost surely be granted deferments, but still we had to register for the draft, and be assigned induction order, and obtain a draft card from the local draft board.

None of us or our parents or any of the ostensible informed authorities in our city or state or nation knew what would happen with the war; what if China and Russia suddenly decided to roar out from behind their pretended neutrality, and pour millions of men into the war, would we not then be thrown into the fray as soldiers for the Army, unless we took the initiative and chose among the other services?

So it was that we drifted by the Navy recruiting office day after day, that spring and summer, for none of us wanted to be Marines, who died first in wars, or Air Force men, who roasted when their gleaming metal coffins fell from the sky, nor could any of us actually countenance moving to Canada, where people spoke French and adored hockey. We played basketball, we drank beer, we went to the beach, we listened to the radio, we read the papers, we waited for the war to decide what to do with us.

By August, with no word from the draft board, we drifted on into the rest of our lives, some to college and the rest to the first awkward jobs boys do before their work comes to fit and define them as men, if they are lucky. That next April, as my freshman year at Notre Dame was ending, the war ended suddenly, half the world away.

One of the first things I did when I got home in May was to drive past the Navy recruiting office with my friends, for no reason that any of us could articulate.

It was sunset and the office was dark. For some reason we parked and got out and walked to the office and looked in the window. All the furniture was gone and you could see bright patches on the darker paint where a desk and file cabinet and paintings or photographs had been. The only thing left in the room was a telephone on the floor with its cord wrapped meticulously around it and secured with a cleanly cut piece of duct tape.

None of us said a word and for once no one made a joke or snide remark and we got back in the car and got some beer and went to the beach. Later that night around a bonfire someone started to speculate what it would have been like if we had all joined the Navy together and been assigned to the same ship, but no one else took up the thread, and the talk turned back to basketball and girls. That was as close as we ever came to the Navy.

Since then many wars have broken out like boils on the body of the country I love, and I have done my best as a citizen to understand and witness them, and explore beneath the usual excuses and lies; and no man more admires the courage and grace of the tall children sent to war by old men in halls of gleaming wood.

When I was in my 20s and 30s, I raged against the virus of war, and accurately enough railed that wars were all about money, as every one of them is. But when I was in my 40s and 50s I came to understand that war will always be with us because it is us; it is a language, a custom, a habit, a tradition, the sport we cannot quit.

When I was young, I thought that men and women in the military were violent and foolish, thirsty for blood and power; now that I am older I understand that they are

braver than I ever was, brave enough to admit and acknowledge our ancient addiction, and in many cases do astounding things to bring it to an end; the most eloquent and articulate agents for peace I ever met are those who have been in wars, and the most strident and shrill agents for wanton butchery are those who never knew it.

In my old age, if I am granted that complex gift, my dream is to visit offices recruiting a new sort of service, one that acknowledges the sneer of evil in the world, the snarl of the bully, the preen of the arrogant dolt who thinks he knows the mind of God, but wields new weapons against it.

The greatest weapon of all is the one on your shoulders, the one that has hardly even begun to be tapped for its imaginative firepower and extraordinary ideas; what victories could we win, most of all against the ancient enemy in ourselves, if our imaginations grew as wildly as our heaps of death-machines? This latter question was asked of me once by a friend who had been in a war. It will not surprise you to hear that he was a Navy man.

*Brian Doyle is the editor of Portland Magazine at the University of Portland, and the author most recently of the essay collection Grace Notes.*

*Periscope image from Shutterstock*



## **An opportunity to invest in Australia's needy**

### **AUSTRALIA**

***Lin Hatfield Dodds***



The medley of benefits, supplements, allowances and schemes that we call welfare in Australia has developed over the years in response to real and pressing needs. It is a system that has helped us take care of one another. Nonetheless, as it has evolved like patchwork, it has grown increasingly complex for everyone involved. Payment levels have not kept pace with the cost of living, and cumulative changes have led to unintended consequences.

This complex system, riddled with inefficiencies and inequity, has its roots firmly in a world long gone. Australia's welfare system was designed for an era where men were the breadwinners and women worked outside the home only until marriage. Unemployment was generally short term and sporadic, with payments geared to helping individuals or families over a short hump of joblessness.

Australia is a different place now. Sixty five percent of women work, fifteen percent of families are single parent households, largely headed by women, and unemployment for too many Australians is long term and endemic. We've seen the rise of intergenerational unemployment, locational disadvantage and an increasingly complex mix of needs in our communities. Where thirty years ago, people came to community services seeking assistance with paying the bills, finding affordable housing, living with mental ill health, escaping family violence, gambling, alcohol or other drug addictions; it is the norm now for people to present with a cluster of these issues impacting their or their family's lives. Our population is ageing. More of us are living longer than ever before, including Australians living with disability. People with a range of conditions can now expect to live decades longer than in previous centuries. Families have become a whole lot diverse than in decades past. Australians increasingly partner multiple times over a lifecycle, so in addition to the rise of the sole parent family, we are experiencing an explosion in family types and complexity. It's not unusual for children to live in and regularly move between two or more households.

And of course our labour market has transformed. Teens no longer are pushed to decided &'what they want to be&' at school, in preparation for selecting one job for life. Workers are required to skill up for work and to continue to develop skills over their working life as jobs change and as they shift industries in response to demand.

These changes all bring challenges for an outdated welfare system. The radical reconfiguring of Australian families, women working en masse, our ageing population, labour market changes and the emergence of long term unemployment all require new approaches to welfare policy and practice.

The particular challenges around financing supports and care for the vulnerable while ensuring an adequate revenue stream to govern the country well has focussed the minds of Australian government after Australian government on the twin approaches of increasing participation in the workforce and tax reform.

The Government's announcement earlier this year that Australia's welfare system would be reviewed provided a welcome opportunity to simplify the system while ensuring that the welfare we provide is effective for its task-providing vital support to some of our most vulnerable people. This is an opportunity that should not be missed.

It is also an opportunity that should not be confused or conflated with the revenue challenge Australia faces. Australia raises less tax than almost any other OECD country. As long as we continue to spend more than we raise, Australia will have an ongoing fiscal problem. The priority of the welfare review must remain focussed on getting the welfare system right.

The Review's Interim Report has just been released and contains some positive signs. It offers principles or directions for where reform should head and outlines a number of questions that need to be addressed, inviting submissions.

Alongside its focus on sustainability and efficiency, the report rightly recognises that our welfare system should be about building capacity as well as providing support. The report also recognises the need to ensure that income support works in tandem with social supports and proposes that welfare should be as much about developing and nurturing the capability of individuals, families and communities as it must be about the provision of adequate income.

This means engaging with people holistically. Adequate income support enables people to survive. Working with people to build their skills and capability enables them to thrive. Social services, like those provided by organisations in our network and other charities, are crucial to providing meaningful support.

As the Review progresses in the weeks and months ahead, some key priorities must remain front and centre. The welfare system must provide support that is adequate, it must be simplified and it must be effective. If we can support people to build their capacity and capabilities, if we can nurture our communities, our families and our people, the long-term social (and economic) benefits follow.

In the months ahead, the Review must take care not to confuse short-term cost-cutting with efficiency. The task that faces us is one of creating the best system of supports that we can. There are few priorities higher than supporting our most vulnerable people and ensuring that they can contribute, belong and be valued.

Nobel prize winner Joseph Stiglitz shared his wisdom with Australia last night on ABC1's *Lateline*, urging the Australian Government to invest more in our people, not less. We could do worse than take his advice.

*Lin Hatfield Dodds is National Director of UnitingCare Australia.*

*Disability image by Shutterstock.*



## Leaners and lifters

### CARTOON

*Fiona Katauskas*



Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.

## Why the excluded are still waiting

### AUSTRALIA

*John Falzon*



It's always the big lie that must be tackled first. Otherwise the other lies look like the truth.

Terra Nullius is the big lie, for example, that allows all the other lies that justify the invasion and colonisation of Australia.

Similarly, I recently read an apologist for the continued oppression of Palestinians reciting the big lie that 'there's never been a Palestine'.

The big lie that the Government's review of welfare in the [Mclure interim report](#) is predicated on is that 'welfare' (read 'government' or 'social spending') is the problem and the market is the solution.

It reminds me of Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek's observation that 'Society itself is responsible for the calamity against which it then offers itself as a remedy.'

Pope Francis also has something to say about this:

Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralised workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting.

When you've got a rich country like ours 'unable' to afford to ensure that the more than 100,000 people experiencing homelessness or the more than 200,000 people on the waiting list for social housing have a place to call home, it is not a misfortune or a

mistake. It is the sound of the excluded still waiting.

When you've got more than 700,000 people unemployed and around 900,000 underemployed, on top of those who are set to lose their jobs due to company closures, the dismembering of the public service and government cuts to social spending - that is also the sound of the excluded still waiting.

Let us not forget the woeful inadequacy of the Newstart payment, at only 40 per cent of the minimum wage. Neither let us forget the single mums who were forced onto the Newstart payment at the beginning of last year, nor the working poor, for there are some who would like to squeeze them even more by reducing the minimum wage and taking away what little rights they have.

When the Government does a triple backflip and declares it is not committed to the redistribution of resources recommended by the Gonski review as a way to address the outrageous inequality that besmirches education funding in Australia - once again, you loudly hear the sound of the excluded still waiting.

The long, fruitless wait of the excluded for some of the wealth, some of the resources, some of the hope to trickle down, is one of the most audacious and sadly successful con jobs in modern history. It is not misfortune. It is not a mistake. It is certainly not, as perversely asserted by those who put the boot in, the fault of the excluded themselves. Rather, it is an attack, sometimes by omission as well as by commission, against ordinary people who are made to bear the burden of inequality.

As Francis points out:

As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills.

That is why there is absolutely nothing unusual about understanding this as an issue of class. And why Warren Buffett was quite correct when he said: 'There's class warfare alright, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning.'

If the Budget and subsequent Government comments are anything to go by the Government not only refuses to reduce inequality, it actually wants to take from the poor to give to the rich.

We will not help young people into jobs by making them live on fresh air and sunshine for six months of the year. We will not help them into jobs by making them go to charities. We will not help people living with a disability into jobs by reducing their income. We have moved to a position where we condemn someone for not being able to get up the stairs.

If we really want to increase employment participation, whether for young people, older unemployed people, people with a disability, single mums or any other group that is locked out of the labour market, then we will start looking honestly at problems in the labour market and set about addressing its incapacities rather than pretending that the incapacity, or unwillingness, lies with the individual.

We will build ramps rather than condemning people for not being able to get up the stairs. And we won't sanctimoniously go on about the ladder of opportunity while kicking

the ladder away.

The simple truth is that behavioural approaches will not solve structural problems.

We do not have a 'welfare spending crisis'. We spend the second lowest amount amongst the industrialised nations. We are not in the throes of a fiscal crisis, but if we venture down the path of US-style austerity we will be staring down the barrel of a social crisis.

As the 1975 Henderson Report on Poverty found: 'If poverty is seen as a result of structural inequality within society, any serious attempt to eliminate poverty must seek to change those conditions which produce it.'

And as the groundbreaking 1996 Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement argued: 'In the main, people are poor not because they are lazy or lacking in ability or because they are unlucky. They are poor because of the way society, including its economic system, is organised.'

If we, as a society, really want to address the causes of poverty and inequality, instead of, for example, extending Compulsory Income Management, which is inherently disempowering and humiliating, we would be guaranteeing income adequacy, housing security, education, health and, now here's an idea ... jobs!

*Dr John Falzon is Chief Executive of the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council and is author of The Language of the Unheard.*

*Locked gate image from Shutterstock*

## 'Speak English or die'

**CREATIVE**

*Jake Dennis*

### **Evening***For Nana*

Like a bather by Degas but smaller, grandma sits on the hotel bed, her brown irises shadowed blue, wet grey hair dyed brown, crow's feet wrinkles like running ink, clear water drops on her bare shoulders, her hands' skin loose as fabric, language drifting away, leaves down a river, her silvered soles travelled through Myanmar, through Thailand, through Singapore, into Australia, over stone, grass, brown mud, black dirt, red dust, her *longhi* gold and covered with flowers, a soldier's photograph in her purse, her pensioner's checks spent, cooking until the end, she stares at us.

*1Burmese house dress.*

**Politics** *Inspired by Constantin Brancusi's Young Bird (1928).*

Songbird, our tongues are a terrain through which lions and rhinos  
in their stubbornness protest. Their ancient artillery heard  
by waterbirds at the edge of opposing territories. And when we open  
the dark caverns of our mouths in anger the lateral borders of our tongues  
are cataracts: beautifully dangerous, tempting as handguns.

Rage, that salivary cacophony, is a flood in which buffalos slip like children through loose  
sediment

necks strained for breath, blood vessels kneecaps tearing. And in this water, storks  
like white doves, flee where crocodiles snap.

### **Witness**

*'Everyone on the bus wants to kill ya and you're gonna have to get off eventually, bitch.'*  
- Quote from a verbally abusive racist bus attack in Australia; one of many that went  
viral online and made international headlines.

*1Mandarin: the sea. 2Tamil: starve. 3Sinhala: fruit. 4Arabic: nightmares. 5Urdu: life.  
6Persian: blood.*

*Jake Dennis is a jazz singer and poet published in Cordite, foam:e, GORE, Lost Coast  
Review USA, Poetry NZ, Structo UK, Tamba, and Voiceworks. He won the 2014 Right  
Now: Human Rights Poetry Competition and headlines shows with Mint Jazz Band at  
Perth's best venues.*

*Angry man image from Shutterstock*

## Emergency relief fall guys for a heartless government

### AUSTRALIA

*Mike Bowden*



After a lifetime of full-time paid employment, upon retirement I approached the St Vincent de Paul Society in Darwin and offered my services. My wife was ill so I could not offer much away from home time, but could do other things like administration or publicity etc. from my home PC. The president offered me the job of council secretary. Not much to it, he said, just sign a few letters and come to a monthly meeting. No worries - I'm in.

The monthly council meetings were more than I had bargained for, but I managed to make plans to see my wife was looked after while I attended them, including one meeting in Batchelor which I fitted in on my way to see our daughter in Alice Springs when she had her first child. Things travelled smoothly for over a year.

But a week ago I get a phone call from the CEO of Northern Territory Vinnies. Could I come in and sign a letter about emergency relief before the next council meeting? 'Of course.' The letter is produced and, being conscientious, I actually read it. The Federal Government is offering Darwin Vinnies additional ER funds for the rest of the year. And I stop. I am not comfortable.

This same Government has just brought down its 2014/15 Budget and cut programs for the marginalised, especially the unemployed. Those under the age of 30, who could have reckoned on receiving Newstart allowance if unemployed, will spend six months qualifying for it with no financial assistance from Centrelink. No wonder Vinnies and the Salvos and everyone else managing ER will need additional funding - we will be overrun by applicants bringing through the door with them the saddest and most pitiable stories.

I know this because as the year had progressed I had taken on the presidency of a local Vinnies Conference and also started to work in the ER office in the local Vinnies shop. I



had seen and heard the stories of people who could not cope in Darwin, where rents are high and costs of living are above the national average, and where, if you are a little outside the mainstream or lacking in trade skills, employment opportunities are limited.

The employment bubble that Darwin has experienced for the last three years is about to contract as INPEX completes its construction phase, and work will be even harder to get. Just as the Government's new Budget measures are being introduced, the Northern Territory economy will start to decline.

The 'safety net' is meant to be about ensuring that powerless victims are not left destitute. But now the unemployed under 30 are to be made ineligible for Newstart for the first six months.

Why was I concerned? Firstly, the way ER is managed is inefficient and not timely - an applicant might have to wait days to get an appointment with an ER agency. Secondly, the ER program entails a cost-shifting exercise by the Federal Government. Instead of Commonwealth employees administering a Commonwealth program, it sub-contracts this essential government safety-net service to voluntary organisations such as Vinnies.

More importantly, it is degrading and demeaning. It further marginalises unemployed people who, by definition, have little control over the health of the Australian economy. Even worse, it alienates them from meaningful participation in society. It undermines dignity while it forces younger unemployed people to look for charity. How in heaven's name is a person without personal financial resources supposed to go out and look for a job?

Sure, charity is one thing that Vinnies does, but our motto is a 'hand up not a hand out'. Most Vinnies programs are developed to provide dignified assistance to people to help them get back on their feet. ER is for when all else has failed. In this case it is the Government which has failed and dumped on the unemployed.

I nearly didn't sign. Then I pondered that it was not my right to withhold without consultation with the council.

What would you do? The council meets next week. I can't attend as my wife has just had a serious operation and needs my company, but my thoughts are with the full council members as they ponder our relationship with a heartless government. When do we stop being their fall guys?

*Mike Bowden has a Master of Aboriginal Education from Northern Territory University. He was founding coordinator of the Ntyarlke Unit at the Catholic high school in Alice Springs in 1988. From 1993 to 2001 he was manager of community development at Tangentyere Council. In 2005 and 2006 he was acting principal at Ngukurr School and Minyerri School in the Roper River district of the Top End.*

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## Abuse and corruption the Australian way

### AUSTRALIA

*John Warhurst*



We should open our eyes and take in what multiple government inquiries are telling us about Australian society at the moment. It is not enough to focus on just one; we should consider the revelations cumulatively. It is little exaggeration to say that almost no major institution in our society, public or private, has been left untouched. We should join the dots and cry.

There are many inquiries underway. The four most significant are being conducted by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption, the New South Wales Independent Commission against Corruption, and the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce. Each of them is broad and the preliminary findings and the content of public hearings, on top of what we already know from previous investigations and trials, point towards damning conclusions.

A significant focus of the Child Sexual Abuse commission has been dioceses and orders of the Catholic Church. But hearings have also focused on the terrible shortcomings of government-run institutions, other churches and secular non-government organisations, including the Salvation Army, the Scouts and the YMCA. The police and the legal profession have also been implicated.

ICAC has examined many cases of criminal and/or unethical behaviour in public life. Both sides of major party politics are implicated. Numerous former and current ministers look guilty of corruption and/or association with dubious if not criminal behaviour. MPs, lobbyists, businessmen, fund-raisers and party officials have been caught in the net,

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revealing a dark underside to public life.

The Trade Union commission is investigating alleged corruption and widespread malpractice and bullying in many parts of the labour movement, including big unions like the Heath Services Union and the Australian Workers Union. At least one major company is also involved.

An ABC *Four Corners* report recently cast further light into the long-running inquiries into sexual harassment and abuse within the Defence Force. Investigations are ongoing under Justice Len Roberts-Smith, chairman of the Defence Abuse Response Task Force. There have been several damning reports over the last decade; hundreds of cases, many involving serving officers, remain unresolved. There are calls for a Royal Commission, and Roberts-Smith reckons sexual abuse in the Defence Force is much greater than has ever been publicly admitted.

Publicity about these inquiries tends to be too narrow. Reporters have their specialities and readers have their pet guilty parties: governments, unions, churches, political parties or the military. Too few join the dots.

There are, however, common themes. In each of these institutions there are not just a few bad apples. Whole institutions are dysfunctional and their cultural problems include lack of transparency and giving primacy to their own self-interest. Senior office-holders have abused not just their members but also public trust. It is not enough to say that these institutions also do good things.

Furthermore, this institutional malfunction indirectly touches nearly all of us through our association, support, or identification with one or more of these institutions.

We should look beyond individual inquiries and institutions and take a much broader view. Once the facts have been established, the criminals punished and the victims compensated, the bigger picture of social dysfunction becomes more important, if history is not to be repeated.

Government must take its share of the blame and bear its share of compensation to victims. But stronger or better government is not the solution to bad individual behaviour, no matter how much the law is enforced or new regulations introduced.

Because these institutions are largely run by men the bulk of the perpetrators in all sectors appear to be men. So more women in positions of authority has to be part of any solution.

Finally, individual human responsibility is central. The problems are so widespread that no one political, religious or economic philosophy has the answer. Very few of us can be absolved from contributing in some way to the maintenance of these institutions and to the cultural understandings that support these abuses.

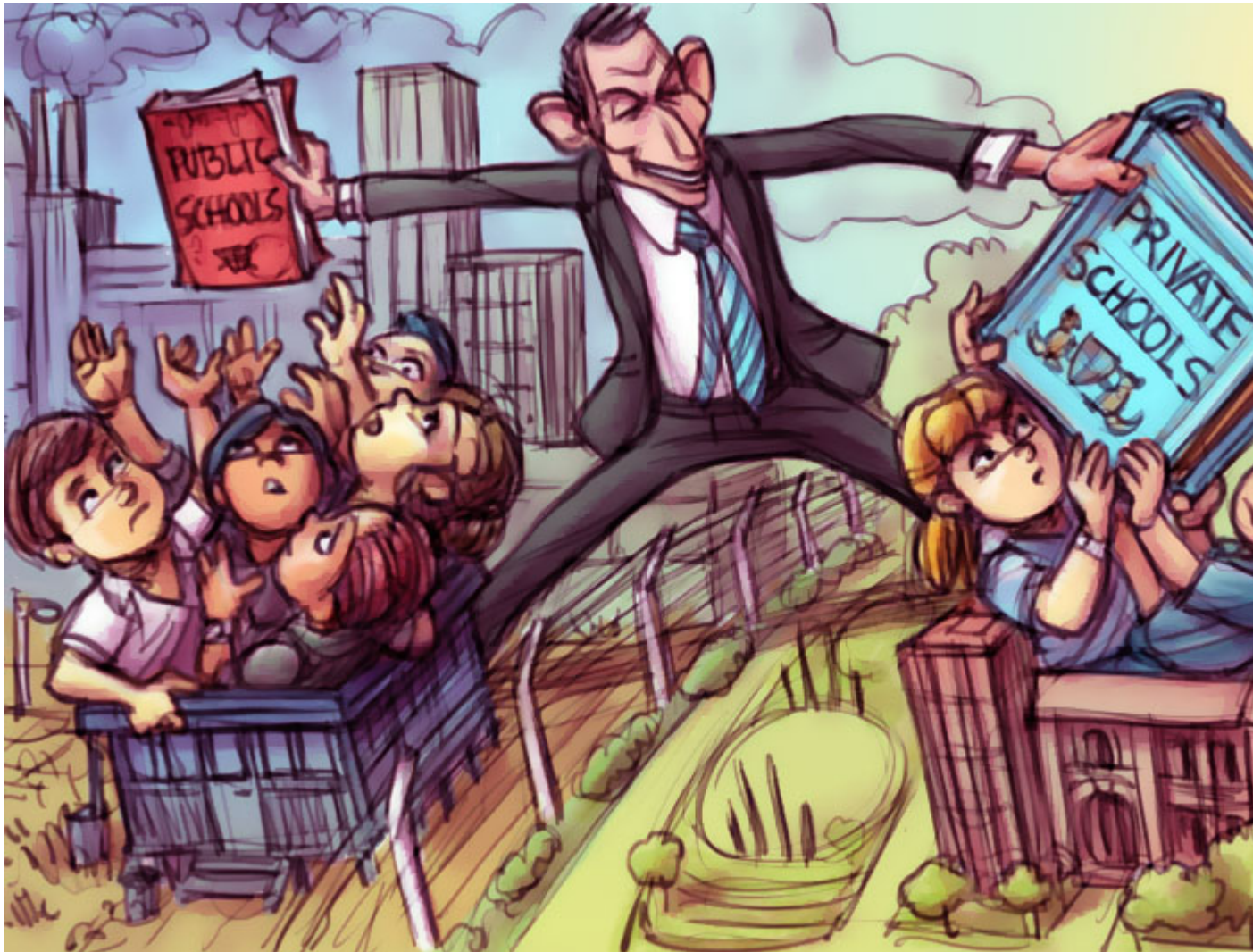
*John Warhurst is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University and a Canberra Times columnist.*

*Rotten apples image from Shutterstock*

## Harvard professor defies Australian class warfare

### EDUCATION

*Catherine Marshall*



David Sinclair's final piece of advice to students at his alma mater could well have been directed at Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey, whose maiden Budget had threatened in one fell swoop all the foundations of a vibrant democracy: welfare, healthcare, public education - and the implicit promise by publically-elected leaders that they would undertake their duty in good faith.

'The last thing I want you to know is that there's nothing more important in life than to be honest,' Sinclair told students gathered before him in a nondescript school hall in Sydney's suburbia. 'Never lie, always tell the truth and people will grow to trust you and



follow your lead.'

It was a striking comment that percolated up amidst an atmosphere of public fury.

Dazed and betrayed, the electorate was slowly digesting the list of election promises that Abbott had already broken just eight months into his term: the cutting of funding to education, health, the disability pension, foreign aid, the ABC and SBS; the changing of the retirement age and the GST; the towing back of asylum seeker boats to Indonesia; the failure to reduce debt and return the budget to surplus; and - most paradoxically of all - the botched assurance that governmental accountability and transparency would be restored.

For keen observers of Sinclair's address, there was also the poignant irony that such words of integrity were emerging from the mouth of a man educated in the very public system the Abbott Government and its new budget measures seemed intent on undermining.

Standing at the lectern in a school hall built in 1964 and barely altered or updated since, he told his audience that to be there speaking to them had been one of the highlights of his life so far.

The magnitude of this tribute was not lost on the students: after all, Sinclair is a professor of genetics at Harvard University and one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people in the world for 2014. He has spent his adult life researching ways in which humans might live longer, healthier lives, and had returned to Sydney to receive the 2014 Australian Society for Medical Research medal.

Amidst a whirl of media interviews and meetings, Sinclair was asked if there was anything else he would like to do while in his hometown. He didn't hesitate: I'd like to visit my old high school, he said.

Perhaps Sinclair understood implicitly that the students - schooled in a deeply under-resourced, under-respected system, and shepherded by an education minister who acknowledges his government has a 'particular responsibility for non-government schooling that we don't have for [state] government schooling' - needed all the inspiration and encouragement they could get.

After all, he had grown up just down the road, attended the state primary school next door, walked into the high school science lab each day and leached such invaluable knowledge and wisdom and guidance from his teachers that one day his scientific findings would reverberate around the world.

Perhaps, in asking to visit his old school, Sinclair had wanted to reassure its students that the class warfare manufactured by the current government was just a smokescreen aimed at winning conservative votes; that, in truth, public (state) schools are not the repositories of children too impoverished or unintelligent for the alternative, that they are, in fact, the living manifestation of democracy, egalitarianism, multiculturalism and ecumenism, because they educate a rich diversity of all-comers; that the gross output of public schools benefits society at a far greater and more equitable rate than does that of its private counterpart.

Perhaps Sinclair realised, as he stood up on that stage with hundreds of pairs of attentive eyes fixed on him, and later, when he answered students' questions which were, he said, 'better than [those] I get from some of my scientists', that it might be far harder for

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these children to prosper, that their potential might not be as successfully cultivated as his had been almost 30 years earlier.

Since then - indeed, since 1970, when non-government school funding was introduced as a concession to the struggling Catholic sector - successive governments have redirected increasing sums of precious education funding so that the once financially-autonomous independent system has now become wholly dependent.

Australia's once robust, inclusive public system has been infused with a culture of deprivation, neglect and fear, so that too often parents are condemned to make the same choice as their peers: to flee the apparently sinking ship, and in so doing to make the ship's fate a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The final, sad chapter of this country's educational story will be written when the newest raft of budgetary changes - the deregulation of university fees - completes the transfer of high quality education from the demos into the hands of the rich.

But if Sinclair's intention was political, his message was oblique. It contained the sort of advice that, if followed, could turn any student - no matter their postcode or the colour of their school blazer - into just the sort of independent thinker that electioneering, panic-mongering, sheep-herding politicians fear the most.

'There are certain personality traits that can really help you in life, and one of them that I found very useful was not paying attention to the dogma,' he said. 'Don't listen to what everyone tells you you have to do. Follow your own path. Be rebellious. Take risks in life.'

*Catherine Marshall is a journalist and travel writer. She is the president of the P&C at Professor David Sinclair's alma mater, St Ives High School.*

## Abbott's Australia beds American Calvinism

### AUSTRALIA

*Lawrence Cross*



The Abbott

Government's Budget has been widely criticised for its un-Australian character, an underlying unfairness and lack of equity. Less noticed is its Americanism and adoption of American religious values. One might say that the 'black hole of the deficit' is as much a religious shortcoming as a financial gap.

Many commentators are noting that a number of Cabinet ministers, including Prime Minister Tony Abbott, are Christian, yet the policies lack any Christian emphasis on caring for the poor and disadvantaged. They have a point, but there is more to it.

America has a history of an idiosyncratic interpretation of Christianity, heavily influenced by the doctrine of the Franco-Swiss theologian John Calvin, whose ideas were followed by the Founding Fathers. It leads to the extraordinary conclusion that the poor are not blessed, as described by Christ. Rather, they deserve their plight and may well be abandoned by God.

Meanwhile, the rich who work hard for their wealth are demonstrating that, by making money, they are preparing themselves for heaven.

How did they come to this conclusion? At one level it is a form of self-delusion, a way of justifying a materialist way of life. But it is also informed by a fundamental illogic.

Calvin subscribed to a doctrine of double predestination. In Catholicism and most mainstream Christianity, it is believed that there is a single predestination: that is, God wants everyone to find their way to Him.



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Calvin, however, believed that God, being all-powerful and all-knowing, predestined men and women to two destinations: heaven or hell. His will is inscrutable, the story is already written. All that remains is to uncover God's preferment by making money. Greed is not just good, it is spiritual.

To Australian ears, this is barely believable. Hence, perhaps, the incredulity at the Government's priorities. But by actively moving to create an underclass, Abbott is doing something totally at odds with the social doctrine of the Catholic Church to which he belongs. Instead, he is taking the country in a Calvinist, American direction.

By attacking welfare and public education, just to name two things, he is ensuring much greater social stratification. But the wealthy, especially investors, are completely untouched. Which from a Calvinist point of view is protecting the righteous who have been chosen for salvation.

German nihilist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche despised Christianity because of its compassion, which he held in contempt because of his belief in a superman. At one level he was right. Christianity was a social revolution, which gave it its long traditions of care for the poor and an ethic of compassion, as embedded in its institutions.

Nietzsche's distinction between *Übermensch* (supermen) and *Untermensch* (subhuman) bears a striking resemblance to Calvin's distinction between the elect and the damned. Such distinctions lend themselves to the kind of savagery exhibited by the Nazis, who were deeply influenced by Nietzsche. In the American context, the distinction tends to be between captains of industry and the financial system, and everyone else.

It is hard to imagine a more complete rejection of the revolutionary claims of the Sermon on the Mount.

In modern America it would seem that the economic views of ultra-conservative Ayn Rand are making a comeback. In a grotesque vision that virtually combines the views of Calvin and Nietzsche, she argues that compassion and altruism are for the weak. Rather, each person is responsible only for themselves.

Consequently, selfishness becomes a virtue. She proposed that taxes are not paid by citizens to maintain a compassionate and civilised society, but are the weak stealing from the strong.

In ultimate terms, the truth cannot be bypassed. During the horror years under Stalinist rule, Russian Catholic spirituality remained alive in spite of often terrible martyrdom. For Russian Catholics, the poor, the oppressed, the persecuted will always be Christ's beloved. Those who suffer have solidarity with the crucified God.

But as Pope Francis has commented repeatedly, solidarity with the poor is the essential mark of any real disciple of Christ. Happily creating an underclass, as the Abbott Government seems intent on doing, has no justification in Christian social teaching.

It is to that history of Catholic social teaching that the Labor Party can turn to refurbish itself. Catholics, especially Irish Catholics, played a large part in the party's origin. Labor has recently developed something of a phobia about the religious strand of society and politics, to its detriment. If faith and religion are bleached out of our culture - not that we want them to dominate - our society will be less human.

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And religion cannot simply be wished away, it just tends to go underground - and distorted religious values can be toxic, as can be seen in America's Calvinism.

Christianity is not a political creed, and seeking to apply it in politics will always be problematic. As the author G. K. Chesterton said, 'The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.' But few have given up on the effort more enthusiastically than Abbott and his government.

*Right Rev. Archpriest Dr Lawrence Cross is the chaplain to the Russian Catholic Community in Australia and Honorary Fellow in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy of ACU.*

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## Ramadan's challenge for all Australians

### RELIGION

*Andrew Hamilton*



Muslims in Australia will begin the Ramadan fast on this coming Sunday. Most Australians will categorise it as a private religious practice. But it is significant precisely because it raises questions for all Australians about the place of religion in public life.

For Muslims, the observance of Ramadan touches the whole of life. It commemorates the month in which Mohammad began to receive revelations. They were gathered in the Quran, the definitive charter for the personal and public life of Muslims.

The practices associated with Ramadan do not simply touch the mind but also the body, committing people to fast from sunrise to sunset. Nor does it have implications simply for personal life. To adjust to fasting and giving time to prayer and reading the Quran throughout the working day has consequences for one's work, as many footballers at the World Cup can testify.

Nor is Ramadan simply about individual practice. It is highly social. Preparations for eating before and after sunset becomes a family industry. And the commitment to give alms is political in the broad sense - it invites people to look at the world around them, to notice people who need aid, and to ask why they are suffering.

So at Ramadan fasting is the symbol of a deeper commitment to focus on what matters and to ask what God wants. For Muslims it is a time for correcting bad habits, mending relationships, reading the Quran and praying, giving alms to the poor, and meeting people. It is about serious business, but it is not a private business.

The seriousness of this quest to recognise what matters and to live by it is a gift and a challenge to all Australians because it invites us to ask how we deal with these questions

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ourselves. It challenges Christians in particular because they share with Muslims a tradition of symbolising the search for God's will in public ways.

In earlier Catholic societies and some Eastern churches today Lent had the same public character as Ramadan, involving serious fasting, communal prayer and spiritual reflection. It was a time for conversion that also made a statement of public identity. Many Catholics went to the early morning Mass on Ash Wednesday and wore the ash mark on their foreheads for the rest of the day. Now it makes less demands, hardly drawing public notice.

The change in Lenten practice in the West reflects a recurrent tidal change in religious practice. The practices of both Lent and Ramadan reflect and nurture the desire to live with great integrity in personal and public life. But the risk inherent in public devotional practices is that the practices can be seen as a goal in themselves rather than as a symbol of deep personal commitment. This leads to a discrepancy between religious practice and life, and invites a charge of hypocrisy.

The discrepancy leads reformers to criticise the narrow focus on external things and to call for a return to the large things that matter. In the Christian Gospels, for example, Jesus criticised the emphasis placed on dietary laws because it stifled the life it was meant to nurture. Later movements of reform have taken up the same charge and emphasised inner devotion over outward observance.

The risk inherent in focusing on purity of heart, of course, is that faith can become privatised, with the result that the quest to find and live by what matters is seen as purely internal and so a matter for private choice. In reaction, new symbols of commitment and adherence are found. There is a periodic alternation between symbol-making and symbol-breaking.

The challenge that Ramadan makes to a secular society lies precisely in its bodily, public and communal symbols of the importance of commitment to what matters in personal and public life. Our society has over a long period been engaged in symbol-breaking. Long established rituals and practices are deconstructed and statements of universal values are routinely criticised for their pretensions. Religion and its symbols are understood to belong in the private sphere.

This process might lead us to ask whether it will be possible in the public sphere to ask seriously what matters to human beings and to society, or whether these large questions will be regarded as a matter for private conversations and irrelevant to public policy.

If the latter is the case, the symbols of public life will embody power without respect for universal values like truth or justice. Parliament will be represented not by the prayer that initiates it but by the verbal abuse that follows; counsel will be represented by the appointment not of wise people, but of loyal creatures; opportunity will be represented by wealth, not by reason.

Ramadan offers a different view; it might give all Australians pause.

*Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.*

*Ramadan image from Shutterstock*

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## Youths burned by the flames of self interest

### REVIEWS

*Tim Kroenert*

**Galore (MA). Director: Rhys Graham. Starring: Ashleigh Cummings, Lily Sullivan, Toby Wallace, Maya Stange, Aiki Matangi. 103 minutes**

When it comes to symbols of destruction and renewal, few are more potent than bushfires. That is particularly true in the Australian context. *Galore's* poignant coming-of-age story unfolds in the weeks prior to the 2003 Canberra bushfires. This, we are warned in voiceover by protagonist and narrator Billie (Cummings), is merely the exclamation point for the events that are about to unfold.

The heart of Billie's story is her friendship with aspiring writer Laura (Lily Sullivan). The friendship is marked by an intense, almost sensual intimacy, but also by envy and deceit: Billie is secretly engaged in a sexual relationship with Laura's boyfriend Danny (Wallace), even as Laura contemplates losing her virginity to him. Billie loves him; the charismatic Laura does not.

Their lives are further complicated by the presence of troubled Islander boy Isaac (Matangi). Billie's mother Carrie (Stange) works at a homeless shelter, and has invited Isaac to live in a caravan in their backyard while he tries to achieve some stability. This creates tension between Billie and Carrie, but also between Billie and Laura, both of whom feel drawn to the handsome and enigmatic Isaac.

*Galore* is, in part, a rumination on adolescent self-centredness: its inevitability and inadequacy as a shield protecting the vulnerable, budding self from the flames of experience. Billie's possessiveness of, and insouciant disloyalty to, Laura; her fierce protectiveness of her and her mother's 'space'; and her muted competitiveness for Isaac's attention, all seem equally natural and ill-fated.

We sympathise with her, even as we recognise that each of these is a signpost to heartbreak; a step towards the flames. They elicit a personal turmoil that spills past the margins of her self to embroil those whom she cares about. In her recklessness she involves all four youths in a spectacular accident, the aftermath of which presents her with difficult moral choices and hard lessons about choice and consequences.

Writer-director Graham's debut feature film is emotionally compelling and beautifully shot on location in the houses, parks and yards of suburban Canberra. The cinematography is expansive enough to capture the landscapes and streetscapes of these young people's world, but also moves in close to find the finer landscapes of skin, the touches, gestures and glances of human intimacy.

Despite a robust portrayal of Billie's inner life, the film's great weakness is its limited development of the supporting characters. Laura, who looms large to Billie as an object of intense adoration and envy, nonetheless remains to the viewer a vaguely ethereal sketch. Given the centrality of this complicated relationship, the thinness of the portrayal



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goes some way to deflating the film's emotional core.

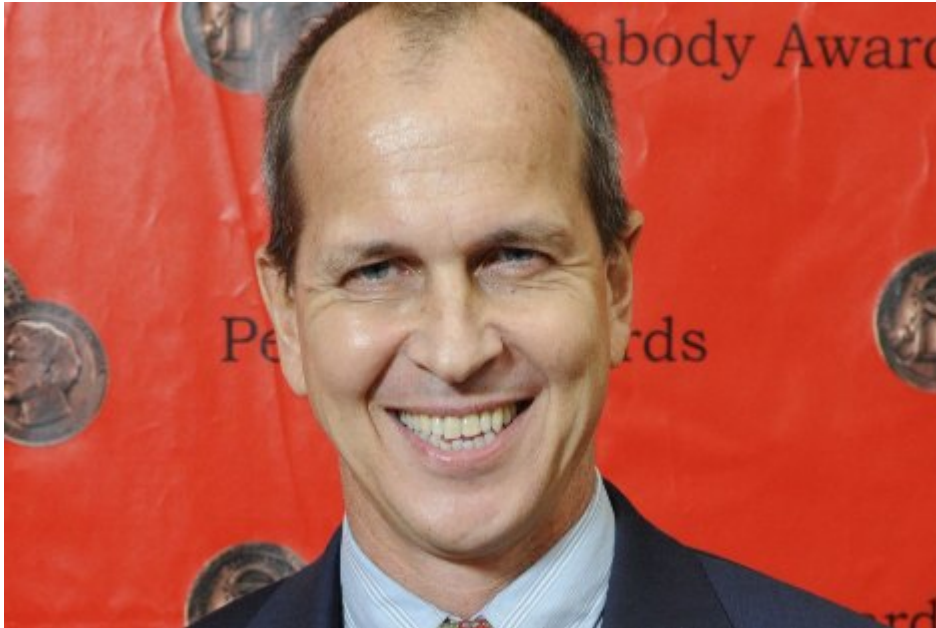
Though not entirely. In its final moments *Galore* builds to an immense emotional crescendo, as the bushfires encroach upon the only world that Billie knows. By that stage her young life has already been badly scorched. This is growing up. It hurts.

*Tim Kroenert is assistant editor of Eureka Street.*

## Australia's hypocrisy in Greste verdict protest

### INTERNATIONAL

*Justin Glyn*



Australians are understandably shocked at the trial and sentencing of Peter Greste. Here is an internationally renowned journalist who, by all accounts, appears to have been arrested and sentenced to a lengthy prison term for doing no more than his job (and as part of what looks on the surface to be a dispute between Egypt and Qatar and the latter's flagship network, Al Jazeera).

They may, not unreasonably, ask themselves what the Government can do for those caught up in the vagaries of a foreign legal system. What can Australia do to back the impressive-sounding declaration in its passports that 'The Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia ... requests all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer, an Australian Citizen, to pass freely without let or hindrance and to afford him or her every assistance and protection of which he or she may stand in need'?

Consulates and embassies can certainly help source counsel and other advice, and a country can make representations on behalf of its nationals. In the final analysis, however, there is not very much more that states can do to protect their citizens at all, beyond exercising what political and diplomatic leverage they have as a matter of realpolitik.

Despite the globalisation of international law, the international order is still largely based on national sovereignty (as it has been since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648). The price of this is that states are (with a few notable exceptions such as universal jurisdiction for torture or war crimes) unaccountable to the outside world for the workings of their own internal legal systems - however dysfunctional they may seem to foreigners.

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We do not need to look to Fatah al Sisi's Egypt to see how this can allow a multitude of injustices to go unpunished - we need only ask our neighbours, the Indonesians.

While much (justified) attention has been given in the media to spying scandals and refugee politics, rather less noticed has been Australia's treatment of its neighbour's fishermen, most of whom ply their trade in small boats and are far from well off.

At least two Indonesians have died while being held without trial on their boats in Darwin harbour. Others have been forcibly taken to the mainland to be in immigration detention (about 1232 in the 2008 financial year) - despite the fact that their 'immigration' was not of their making.

In many cases, the Australian Government burns their boats - thus depriving the fishers and their families of a living, in addition to the other punishments inflicted on them.

The hardship is made worse by the fact that Indonesian fishing boats are often not owned by their masters outright but are often loaned or collectively owned via a variety of complex structures. In at least one case (only resolved after two years), a Mr Muslimin was found by the High Court to have been detained and had his boat burned by the Australians while he had been fishing in *Indonesian* waters.

As Emily Mitchell points out in the *Guardian*, all of this makes an uneasy contrast with the kid-glove treatment meted out to the Australian Navy when its ships breached Indonesian waters. There the Senate found - in a defence unavailable to the Indonesian fishermen - that breaches of Indonesian sovereignty were likely to have been 'inadvertent'; though it is reasonable to assume that the Navy has access to rather better navigational equipment and training in the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea 1982 than the fishermen.

The Indonesian Government has made representations on behalf of its nationals protesting to the Australians at these injustices, and the Australian Government has done the same to the Egyptian Government in the case of Peter Greste. In either case, there is tragically very little more that they can practically do.

*Justin Glyn SJ is a student of philosophy and theology who holds a PhD in international and administrative law.*

## The boy who can move mountains

### CREATIVE

*Gillian Bouras*



It's hard to believe that my youngest grandson is now 15 months old. So much has happened and not happened since he endured a two-and-a half-hour operation on the day of his birth.

Ignoring the Greek tradition of family names, my son and his Cretan wife called their son Orestes. The name means 'he who can move mountains', and it is almost as if some instinct informed the young parents of 'naming power', and of the possibility that such power might be needed. The first mountain resembled Everest: the operation, which was necessary to correct a malformed oesophagus.

Orestes' mountain-moving involved four weeks in intensive care, and he is still not out of the Himalayas, so to speak, while his parents have had to contend with their own peaks and valleys: the constant to-and-froing between home and hospital, the coping with the demands of work, the struggle to ensure that the ill baby could have his mother's milk, the sleepless nights at the hospital, for in Greek hospitals there is always one parent with the child. Round the clock: this is the way it has always been.

Then there was what I call Doctor Roulette. Orestes was very quiet when he was first home from hospital, and one paediatrician postulated that he was suffering from a syndrome none of us had ever heard of, and that he would in all likelihood be 'slow'. My firm opinion was that he was simply behind because of his very wobbly start, and another paediatrician confirmed this, much to our collective relief.

These days, after determined and continuing input of talk, songs, games and toys from many quarters, there is nothing 'slow' about O. It's rather a case of 'O on the Go', as he steams around and prattles endlessly. He was quick to learn that old foreign chook Granny makes different noises from everybody else when she talks to him, and he can

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now make it clear when he wants her to sing 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star'.

He is constantly alert, and starts saying his word for Dad whenever he hears the clunk of the lift after a certain time in the afternoon.

But the ups and downs have continued: the numerous hospital stays, each one involving anaesthesia, so that the site of the operation could be dilated and strengthened; the reflux that is part of the problem, and which led to a failure to thrive for a worrying length of time; the threat of another operation, now thankfully averted; and the recurrent infections that are almost inevitably connected, at least in my view, with a compromised immune system and an overload of antibiotics.

Through all these trials Orestes has grown and developed in normal fashion. He is blessed with an extraordinarily sunny temperament, but in true Greek style sees no reason to hide his feelings, so that primal scenes of jealousy erupt if he sees his mother with another baby, or if anybody hugs either of his parents.

He had yet another hospital stay just recently, and I happened to be present when he was admitted. I have never had to cope with a baby being admitted to hospital before, and I was struck by Orestes' anger. It seemed to me that it was righteous indignation, really. I fancied I could almost hear him saying, through his yells and screams: 'What do you think you're doing? Again? I'm a busy person with my routine and my life to lead, and you've dragged me away from both. And now you're adding injury to insult by sticking needles into me!'

But once the immediate trials were over, Orestes showed his resilience once again, and set about playing happily in his cot. A scientist friend says that babies' smiles are strategic. Of course I don't want to think this, but if it is true then Orestes has the business down to a fine art. With the doctors and nurses he is a general favourite: many of them remembered him from his previous visits, and his most recent paediatrician, a man with 40 years' experience, held his hand and blew him a kiss on leaving.

Orestes is home now, and this is what we want to happen: an end to mountaineering.

*Gillian Bouras is an Australian writer who has been based in Greece for 30 years. She has had nine books published. Her most recent is No Time For Dances. Her latest, Seeing and Believing, is appearing in instalments on her website.*

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## Another Coalition own goal

### CARTOON

**Fiona Katauskas**



Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.



## Nailing Indonesia's next president

### INTERNATIONAL

*Pat Walsh*



On 9 July, Indonesians will vote on their next president by punching a hole in a ballot paper with a large nail. Timor-Leste used the same system for its historic independence ballot in 1999. The issues differ of course but the choices to be made are equally stark. Democratic development and human rights in Indonesia will either advance or regress depending on who is nailed next month.

The two aspirants are Joko Widodo aka Jokowi (pictured), the current Governor of Jakarta, and Prabowo Subianto, a retired general. As dictated by Indonesia's social and religious demographic, both are Muslim and Javanese. On most other counts, including human rights, they are chalk and cheese.

Jokowi's professional achievements are in business and then in local government, first as the popular mayor of Solo then as governor of sprawling Jakarta, one of the world's mega-cities. One could easily conclude that this background and his reputation as a no-nonsense, can-do leader, do not make for best practice in human rights.

What distinguishes Jokowi, however, is his demonstrated sensitivity to people. Faced with the massive challenges of transforming over-crowded, highly stressed urban environments into liveable, modern and functional cities, he has consistently shown great respect for the poor, seeing them as stakeholders with legitimate rights and interests, not as obstacles blocking progress.

Jokowi's approach, marked by patient dialogue, practical alternatives, pioneering welfare measures, and intolerance of incompetence and corruption, has endeared him to masses of people. He has also proved that it works. His modus operandi is the antithesis of the culture of violence, top-down development, opportunism and force that characterised the

Soeharto years. The community sees him as one of them, not as overbearing big business and big government. Not surprisingly, his campaign slogan translates 'Jokowi is us'.

His vision statement includes a number of references to human rights, but one senses that his understanding of human rights is not from books but is instinctive and owes much to his humble origins and personal journey. This translates into policies that emphasise human resources, welfare, education and the prioritisation of neglected regions like Papua, the first place he visited during his campaign.

Jokowi impresses as genuine and authentic. His candidacy represents an historic opportunity for ordinary Indonesians to be represented at the highest level and for social and economic rights in particular to be mainstreamed and lift millions out of poverty.

Prabowo's baggage is of a different kind altogether. He comes from a distinguished family which has made a significant contribution to Indonesian public life over a long period, but is inextricably linked to the Soeharto era and its military and human rights excesses. He served in Timor-Leste on four occasions and is most closely associated there with the Kopassus special forces who perpetrated many of the worst abuses and were instrumental in establishing the notorious militia. Not that this sorry record is getting much profile in Indonesia.

He was dismissed from the military in 1998 and banned by the US over allegations relating to the abduction, torture and disappearance of Indonesian human rights activists. A former head of military intelligence recently claimed he was a psychopath. He was visibly stung when the issue was raised during the first presidential debate but, incredibly, he went on to claim he was the staunchest defender of human rights in Indonesia.

His manifesto, however, makes only passing reference to human rights and, if elected, he is sure to ignore the legitimate claims to justice and reparations of the multitude of victims of past human rights abuses, whether Indonesian or Timorese.

Prabowo is pitching to a number of publics and mixing his messages in the process.

He has set out to woo the right-wing, nationalist, Islamic vote, and plays up his macho image. He arrived at his first public rally by helicopter and rode into the stadium on horseback. He is calling for Soeharto, his former father-in-law, to be declared a national hero, and is backed by Golkar, the party created by Soeharto.

It works. His supporters describe him as *tegas* or forceful, the sort of strong man needed to instil discipline, to arrest the perceived excesses of liberal democracy and to give diverse Indonesia the competent management that civilian presidents have so far failed to deliver.

On the other hand Prabowo is plainly bugged by the negative image many Indonesians have of him. In a strong speech at the beginning of the campaign, he sought to disarm critics by praising Jokowi and declaring his commitment to democracy, pluralism and peace.

The appeal to both sides of the fence appears to be paying off. With two weeks to go, the polls show that Prabowo is closing on his rival. Voters seem to be forgetting that, unlike Jokowi, Prabowo has never been in government and that his ability to deliver on his many big promises can only be assessed against his chequered military career. Let's

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hope Indonesian voters are as smart as politicians always claim they are and drill deeper.

In the meantime, Indonesian colleagues joke about needing to seek political asylum in Australia, just in case.

*Pat Walsh is currently visiting Jakarta. He co-founded Inside Indonesia magazine more than 30 years ago this year.*

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## Cambodia's patchy refugee record

### INTERNATIONAL

#### *Denise Coghlan*

Cambodia is used to receiving large numbers of people. In 1992, 250,000 people returned from refugee camps in Thailand. It took over a year. In the last week trucks have ferried up to 200,000 Cambodian migrant workers back to their home provinces. They feared that the military regime in Thailand would use force against them.

Those returning will now join the many Cambodians living in poverty and trying to survive. And if Australia has its way, they will be joined by asylum seekers sent there by the Australian Government which has refused to consider their claims. Like other refugees they will face formidable obstacles to building a life in Thailand.

Cambodia signed up to the United Nations Convention of the Status of Refugees in 1992 when it was under United Nations administration. Since then about 5000 people have applied for asylum in Cambodia.

They have come from the same broad range of countries from which people have sought protection in Australia on the grounds of persecution. Initially UNHCR adjudged the claims for refugee status. Jesuit Refugee Service helped people prepare their claims and offered social assistance.

In 2009 Cambodia enacted its own laws concerning refugees. Asylum seekers have to register with the Refugee Office, which then makes decisions about protection and hears any appeals. Before their case is decided they are given temporary permission to stay in Cambodia. They may live freely in the community but are not allowed to work. If they are found to be refugees they are given a *prakas* that allows them to stay legally in Cambodia. Those found not to be refugees must return to their own countries.

The situation of people who are found to be refugees continues to be very precarious. The *prakas* is not accepted as a proof of identity by most employers, businesses and banks. In practice a resident card is required. But so far no refugee has been given one. Without their resident card they cannot apply for citizenship. So they have little chance of building a new life for themselves and for their children. What support they may need for their daily living will come from such agencies as UNHCR and Jesuit Refugee Service.

It is little wonder that more than half the people who have been found to be refugees since 1995 have sought and found resettlement in other nations. Few have remained in Cambodia.

The sense of insecurity of those seeking to remain in Cambodia is understandable. They remember that in 1995 the Cambodian Government deported to China at gun point 29 Uighurs who sought protection. This action, which took place days after Cambodia passed laws protecting refugees, was a flagrant breach of the fundamental UNHCR commitment not to return people to places where they face persecution.

Given the poverty of Cambodia, the difficulty refugees face in making a life there, and the precariousness of their position, why would a wealthy nation like Australia want to

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palm off to Cambodia people who have come to Australia to make their claims for protection? How can it seriously declare this to be part of a regional solution designed to share the burden of receiving asylum seekers when Cambodia is now coping with close to 200,000 of its own 'refugees' returning from Thailand?

If Australia sends these refugees to Cambodia, it is morally responsible for their protection and wellbeing. In a country battling issues of poverty, displacement, unemployment and corruption, and which is still rebuilding after decades of war, this is no simple task. Australia is more than capable and infinitely better resourced to welcome the people who arrive seeking Australian protection.

To those outside Australia it seems unjust, unneighbourly and devoid of compassion to push persecuted and vulnerable people out the front door or off the front shore. Those living inside Cambodia will ask how these vulnerable people despatched so disrespectfully by Australia will live.

*Sr Denise Coghlan rsm is Director of Jesuit Refugee Service in Cambodia, and had worked with Cambodians in refugee camps and in Cambodia for thirty years.*

## **This little app**

### **CREATIVE**

#### ***Various***

### **My favourite apps**

This little app drives the car for you while you're texting  
Changes gears, changes lanes, changes everything

This little app pushes the child on the swing while you're tweeting  
Back and forward, back and forward

This little app thanks the bus-driver, the taxi-driver, the butcher  
This little app watches the movie and eats the popcorn while you're messaging  
This little app talks to the neighbour, the carpenter, the courier  
This little app listens to the band while you're filming  
This little app chats to the checkout girl, the baker, the green-grocer

This little app eats the meal you're Instagramming  
This little app crosses the road, the



driveway, the train tracks for you

This little app makes eye contact with passers-by  
This little app apologises for you

This little app catches the child who's falling from the swing

This little app calls the ambulance after the car-crash  
This little app prays for you in  
Intensive Care  
And this little app blesses the soul  
Of the other driver

*Vin Maskell*

### **Proto-thinking**

There is a 'Witching-Hour' that hits before the set time for the demon-walking probably the darkest period of my diurnal rhythm coming in the wake of a lived-day with so many facets- so many loosed-ends -for the one not yet ready to move to the bed-room mode of cocoon-thinking percolated by pre-midnight radio

For this period of the night TV has an addictive dominance with an uncertainty as to how to negotiate my way through the labyrinth of the many proto-thoughts that crowd the corridors of a tired-brain

Proto-thinking is the demon-in-the-machine of this life the frustrations of so many possibilities still-born or severely stunted limping their way through a half-life of 'what-could-have-beens'

Buried in the shallow-graves of unhallowed ground- what might they be in the resurrection?

*John Cranmer*

### **Night in the Glenferrie Hotel**

late night tv : the final scenes of a '90s rom com : its pop-song soundtrack more precise

in its method than carbon dating : neat turns of plot with all the customary fidelities : i reach

for the remote : to flick the silence back on : only to find the reception blocked : by the traffic

on burwood road : the wash of it : in this city that will not sleep :

*Thom Sullivan*

### **Elements of Night**

night with its dark carriages of hours : in a hotel room in dilly a telephone is ringing :  
there's no

apprehension : just the fragments of a picture-tube shining, coming into focus : &  
memories

of a first-floor room: its view out over the suburb : in the minutes after midnight : as the  
tides

of light & dark reversed their pull : i am kept awake now by the sound of someone singing  
: by the dark gift

of her song : one room of that house will remain unfurnished : every word is an  
expectation extinguished :

i am speaking of things that are gone :

*Thom Sullivan*

### **Just sitting and waiting**

Meandering through the Bridge Mall in Ballarat I was amazed at the number of middling  
aged men just sitting not even reading the *Herald* not even toying with a phone legs  
stretched out and looking bored just sitting - and waiting eyes fixed on a far horizon

Who are they waiting for? wives or daughters who are for just 'a few minutes' intensely  
doing over the shops looking for just the right post-Christie bargain? could be a boy friend  
- hmmm probably not though

And now i am just sitting and waiting For a wife AND a granddaughter doing over the  
shops down Sydney Road in Coburg

BUT the difference is I've got an I-pad to play with

hehe - Supercilious old sod!

*John Cranmer*

*Melbourne writer Vin Maskell writes about family, life, music, swimming and sport, often  
for The Big Issue. He is the author of Jacaranda Avenue (2003) and the editor of  
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*A resident alien from South Australia in semi-hiding in Melbourne's outer east, John Crammer makes a profession of being grandparent and recycled Uniting Church Minister.*

*Apps image from Shutterstock*

## The capitalist and the Pope share a common enemy

### AUSTRALIA

*Michael Mullins*



Earlier this month, Pope Francis visited Rome's Sant'Egidio Community, which is well known for its commitment to the poor. Before an audience that included many homeless people and immigrants, he once again blasted capitalism.

He regretted that financial capital is often given priority over human capital: 'At the centre of today's global economy aren't men and women, but leaders and money. What isn't productive is thrown away.'

His answer is the concept of solidarity, which is fundamental to Catholic social teaching. It includes investing in - rather than discarding - humans who cannot be regarded as viable units of economic production.

'Some people have tried to take the word 'solidarity' out of our vocabulary,' he said. But it is not true that all business leaders dismiss the idea of solidarity with those who appear chronically unproductive. Vinnies' CEO Sleepout (pictured), which took place overnight on Thursday, included investment bankers and other capitalist 'true believers' often in Pope Francis' firing line who are willing to express solidarity with those who are homeless.

The business leaders demonstrated that they were prepared to take a physically gruelling first step towards working with these people. Especially if they were able to look them in the eye, there is the possibility the CEOs will include their needs and aspirations in their own corporate thinking processes in the future.

Hopefully the CEOs have seen for themselves that the profile of the homeless these days is no longer the stereotype of the dishevelled alcoholic man on the park bench. A Vinnies spokesperson cites victims of domestic violence and parents with kids who have just run out of options and can't afford the rent. Prospective employers with the imagination to believe in the future productive capacity of today's down and outs is one who is building a nation and not just his or her own business.

Vinnies' CEO Sleepout seemed quite a crazy idea when it began five years ago.

Coincidentally this week, investment banker and venture capitalist [Mark Carnegie](#) went further and proposed a form of compulsory 'national service' that might include older and younger Australians volunteering for organisations such as those assisting the poor and unemployed.

Carnegie's [vision](#) is for a more inclusive and engaged Australia. It is to defeat the 'enemy' of an inequality that is the antithesis of solidarity.

The enemy that we face at the moment is growing inequality, growing divisiveness, growing disengagement, getting people through some universal program to get re-engaged is going to defend us against what's happening in America where you see the society just absolutely sheering because the rich and the poor are just getting further and further and further apart.

As long as a capitalist like Carnegie, and Pope Francis, can be fired up against the common enemy of social exclusion, there is hope for a better life for all of us.



*Michael Mullins is editor of Eureka Street.*

*<!--Follow him on Twitter.-->*

## Iraq needs a local solution, not another intervention

### INTERNATIONAL

*Donna Mulhearn*



Standing on an overhead bridge in Ramadi on Iraq's main highway to Baghdad just over a year ago, I witnessed the extraordinary sight of about half a million people gathered - as they did every Friday - to peacefully protest the sectarian policies of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki.

There were chants and speeches by local Sunni politicians and religious leaders, and from leaders of other provinces and sects across Iraq, including Shia clerics, but little response from Baghdad and virtually no western media coverage.

The protesters, led by tribal elders from the western Anbar province, resisted the call to violence made by bands of Islamist fighters (ISIS) who were circling in the desert around the protest camp and planting car bombs in Baghdad. Instead, the tribal leaders insisted on putting their objections in writing and continuing nonviolent protest to draw attention to their plight, with the aim of engaging the Iraqi Government in dialogue.

After more than 12 months of peaceful protest in Anbar and other cities, the Government still refused to negotiate on key demands and rather harassed, arrested, attacked or even killed protesters. In December Iraqi security forces were sent to sack and dismantle the camp. Protest moved to armed resistance; the bombing of Fallujah followed, causing hundreds of civilian deaths, a new wave of refugees and widespread destruction.

The response to Maliki's aggressive sectarian rule was, inevitably, an aggressive sectarian response.

ISIS has been quick to exploit the divisions and piggyback on the Sunni uprising, extending its violence to northern Iraq. It is Iraq's Sunni tribes and militias - who hold



little in common with ISIS and reject its extreme ideology - who could withhold the Islamists' march to Baghdad, should they have the motivation to do so.



Understanding the context of today's turmoil is the key to any de-escalation of violence and a guide to the type of assistance foreign nations can bring.

Those who have been watching Iraq the last 11 years have not been surprised by the past week's events. They point to disastrous 'divide and conquer' policy blunders by occupation forces in Iraq; the nature of the invasion and occupation itself; and support of the Maliki regime, despite its discriminatory policies, human rights violations, and violence against its own citizens, as the foundation for today's mess.

The fall of Mosul without resistance has drawn some belated attention to the mistakes and crimes of the Maliki regime. Media commentators and Western governments have begun to criticise Maliki, including Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, who on Thursday admitted: 'It's not a good government ... and the problems between the Sunnis and the Shias are exacerbated by his manner of excluding them from the government.'

Removing Maliki, who did not receive the majority of seats in recent elections, could be the first step in a unification process that could ease tensions and quash the goals of ISIS insurgents. Foreign military intervention, by either Tehran or Washington, would draw in other regional players and escalate violence.

The attention on the deteriorating situation in Iraq and talk of possible Western intervention has provided a catalyst for renewed reflection about Australia's role in the 2003 invasion. It has also raised questions about Australia's decision-making process should the Abbott Government choose to intervene again.

It has prompted speeches in the Parliament this week by independent MP Andrew Wilkie calling for a royal commission into the Iraq War, and Greens MP Adam Bandt reintroducing a Greens 'war powers' bill requiring parliamentary approval to deploy

Australian troops overseas.



Such calls have also been made by the Campaign for an Iraq War Inquiry (CIWI), of which I am a member, to ensure lessons are learnt from Australia's role in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The group, made up of prominent Australians, including former prime minister Malcolm Fraser, this week called for parliamentary debate before any Australian involvement in further military attacks on Iraq.

CIWI President and former Defence Department head Paul Barratt said the fact that the Government is considering going back into Iraq makes it all the more obvious that we need to learn the lessons from the previous invasion. 'There should be a royal commission into the process by which we went to war in 2003, with commissioners appointed by a bi-partisan process,' he said.

'Also, the war powers of the Government must change so that Australians can never again be sent to war without the support of our elected representatives, the parliament.'

Labor and Coalition governments have refused to hold an inquiry into Australia's participation in the earlier invasion of Iraq. US President Obama has said that he would consult Congress about the possibility of strikes against Iraq, but while our Prime Minister Abbott has indicated that Australia would be ready to help the US, he has not mentioned any role for Australia's elected representatives, the parliament.

Iraq needs a local political solution, not another foreign military intervention, and there can be no moving forward until the mistakes of the past are acknowledged and addressed. This requires political work not just by Iraqi leaders, but by the nations of the 'Coalition of the Willing', who were too quick to jump into the invasion and occupation, and too slow to respond constructively to its disastrous legacy.

*Donna Mulhearn is a freelance journalist and peace activist. Follow Donna on Twitter or visit her website.*

*Photos by Donna Mulhearn. Original artwork by Chris Johnston*