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Miracle of the Andalusia schoolhouse wasp

CREATIVE

Dan Graham

For two years I worked in a school located high in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Andalusia.

Adjacent to the schoolhouse stood an old and diminutive stone building, with a classical Moorish courtyard and a small chapel, home to seven elderly nuns who had founded the school 50 years previously.

The grounds were encircled by an impenetrable ivy-covered wall, 25 feet tall.

I suppose the wall was designed to provide sanctuary, but I found it claustrophobic. I was always pleased at the end of the day when I left the grounds. The fresh mountain air was invigorating.

Of all unwelcome visitors in my class, including the nuns, insects were the worst. One day a wasp appeared through the window and refused to leave. Chaos ensued as my class screamed hysterically.

I attempted to continue with the class but it was impossible for the children to ignore the wasp. I elected to evacuate the classroom. The wasp won.

The kids loved it - we had our lesson on the playground. One of the kids went home and told their mother about the wasp and that instead of class, we'd had an extra long lunch. The mother failed to appreciate the dilemma I'd faced, called my boss and asked her how
I could be trusted with 20 children when I couldn't even handle a single wasp.

Next week, same class, the wasp returned. Of course, it's impossible to say it was the same wasp but he had the same propensity for attention seeking. I'd had a bad morning, and this was a day when I was looking for something to hit. I rolled up my textbook and started swinging. The kids were screaming, baying for blood.

"I was the first Englishman to have lived in the village so I'd already acquired celebrity status, but this incident took the attention I received to stratospheric heights."

The wasp finally settled. I approached carefully, eyes locked on him. With a mighty sweep I attacked ... It's a blur in my mind, whether I made contact I don't know, but my follow-through smashed a window and shattered the pane of glass. The class went berserk.

I couldn't believe what I'd done. How had I failed to notice the window?

I poked my head out of the window and, you wouldn't believe it, two nuns were sat on a bench directly below in shock, picking glass out of their hair.

It was a farce but at that moment it seemed serious. I sent the kids home, went to the head-teacher's office to apologise and offered to pay for the window. I felt genuinely remorseful. The wasp remained unconquered.

The whole town knew what I'd done by the end of the day. I was the first Englishman to have lived in the village so I'd already acquired minor celebrity status, but the incident with the wasp took the attention I received to stratospheric heights.

The story had a life of its own; the wasp had rampaged around the classroom hospitalising dozens of us; a swarm of at least a thousand wasps engulfed us; I had even thrown a chair through the window in one of the wilder retellings.

My own recollection was blurred and contorted by these fabrications and I began to forget precisely what had happened. I have tried so far to tell this story with honesty so believe me when I tell you that what followed is not a fabrication.

The wasp returned two weeks later. I asked if the class was always infested by wasps, but apparently he only appeared when I was there.

Wanting nothing more to do with my old enemy, having learnt my lesson, we abandoned our classroom. Rain was hammering down so I took the students to shelter in the chapel.

We had been there no more than five minutes when the ground started to shake. Earthquake. The force grew. There was a tremendous noise. The children were screaming, lying flat on the floor. When it finally stopped, I checked the children were okay and stepped outside to inspect the damage.

The wall surrounding the school had collapsed against the schoolhouse and caused some of the roof to cave in, specifically in my classroom. I rushed inside the building to help
evacuate the other classes. Everyone was fine.

The local paper reported it was 'miraculous that there had been no injuries'. We were certainly very lucky. I was stunned at how fortunate we'd been, I think the nuns were quite affected too.

We had, for all intents and purposes, been saved by the wasp.

The school closed while the building was repaired, but we all returned.

When strange things happen to young people, they seem unaware of the abnormality of the situation. One of the children simply asked me, 'Do you think the wasp is okay?'

Dan Graham is a graduate of the University of Liverpool. He is an English writer and journalist.
Engaging with Dutton's rhetoric is a slippery slope

AUSTRALIA

Somayra Ismailjee

Immigration and Border Protection Minister Peter Dutton made headlines this week for comments rehashing blatantly racist and xenophobic stereotypes; among them, that refugees are 'illiterate and innumerate', unskilled and lazy, both unwilling to work and threatening to steal Australian jobs.

Dutton's comments, asylum seeker advocates promptly filled social media with refugee and migrant 'success stories' - positive images of refugees who have become doctors, lawyers, engineers or aid workers.

In response to

The I Came By Boat campaign is one such example, featuring the stories of refugees who have built successful, highly regarded careers in surgery, dentistry, teaching, law and medical science after settling in Australia.

Similarly, popular culture website Buzzfeed posted an article listing '11 Refugees Who Are Definitely Not Illiterate and Innumerate', seeking to dispel stereotypes that have long surrounded asylum seekers.

The irony of trying to negate these stereotypes is that in doing so, we are still cheapening asylum seekers to political tools, stripping them of their humanity and multiplicity. Aiming to counter such rhetoric as Dutton's with stories of high-achieving refugees plays into a toxic game that legitimises the same negative stereotypes by engaging with them, as if these are ideas that truly need to be disproved.

Negative stereotypes often gain traction through the underrepresentation of people seeking asylum, their lives and stories made invisible. However, just as invisibility
dehumanises them, so does the hypervisibility we attribute to a select few stories.

There is no singular asylum seeker narrative, and the ones we preference to represent asylum seekers provide an insight into our national values. While the achievements of refugees are often truly exceptional and worth celebrating, the fact that we only celebrate, or even acknowledge, refugees in high-earning fields speaks volumes.

For the majority of society, one's worth is not dictated by the legitimacy of their future profession. For refugees, however, we demand excellence in return for the most basic human rights.

"We exercise a tendency towards welcoming refugees through the advantages they can provide us, rather than any advantage we can provide them."

By making the only acceptable image of an asylum seeker one that becomes a doctor or a lawyer or any other role with a substantive service to the very society that oppresses them, we have created a cruel and superficial metric for freedom.

This doesn't hold up alongside the reality of many refugee backgrounds. A lack of education, ability or health should not be a source of shame for any population, let alone people we knowingly and continuously subject to physical, sexual and emotional trauma, alongside medical neglect.

Asylum seekers are subjected to both physical and abstract forms of regulation. While we detain, brutalise and police their bodies, we also create barriers that are cultural, spiritual and psychological. Our xenophobia ensures that their cultures are framed as alien and their religions a threat, while physical borders are reinforced by a deeper divide rooted in notions of inferiority. The worth of an asylum seeker is never shown as intrinsically valuable, but expendable, through the policies we enact to keep them away at any cost.

This doesn't end when refugees reach the mainland. Instead of connecting to them through a shared humanity, we rationalise our acceptance through commodification. Justifying the lives of asylum seekers solely with their potential for productivity is a degrading, yet all too common, practice. Much of the national discourse focuses on self-sustaining, entrepreneurial and agricultural refugees, such as the Karen Burmese communities of regional Western Australia. These stories are offered as a counter to negative perceptions of refugees 'burdening' the general population, demonstrating how they can benefit this nation economically instead.

We exercise a tendency towards welcoming refugees through the advantages they can provide us, rather than any advantage we can provide them. Similarly, we argue against internationally condemned detention centres not for a commitment to human rights, but for the money we might save by closing them.

In Australia, the refugee body has been instrumentalised into a tool for economic contribution, from proposals suggesting asylum seekers be allowed passage into the country only for work in regional areas, to the detention industrial complex that turns in billions for private contractors making a profit from arbitrary suffering.

Current debate around asylum seekers is largely reductive and often reflexive, leaving little room for nuance or critical examination of the systems at play. If we refuse to
acknowledge the reduction of refugees to political tools in all levels of Australian society, we risk ignoring the roots of their dehumanisation. With two incidents of self-immolation by asylum seekers detained on Nauru just this month, it's time to move beyond considering the same old racist tropes, and look to the reality of our actions.

Somayra Ismailjee is a Perth-based writer. She was the recipient of Eureka Street's inaugural Margaret Dooley Young Writers Fellowship. Follow her on Twitter @somayra_
Catholic bishops deliver election year ethical wedge

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton

When Archbishop Mannix ruled in Melbourne, politicians trembled at his pre-election comments. Now the Catholic bishops issue statements at each election, but they receive little publicity.
The statements are not designed to outlaw one party or another, but to point out issues that are ethically significant.

This year most comment on the statement focused on the call for support for marriage and family. Its most distinctive feature, however, is that it frames its reflections around the economy.

In this the bishops echo Pope Francis' radical vision, locating the root of Australian ills in the deification of the economy and of economic growth. The remedy they offer is to focus on the people whom the economy ought to serve, and particularly on those who are excluded from its benefits.

The list includes asylum seekers, Indigenous Australians, victims of sexual abuse, domestic violence and abortion, those addicted to drugs and the poor of other nations. It also includes the human and natural ecology on which all human beings depend if they are to flourish. Much human exclusion can be traced to the lack of appreciation of and support for families in societies where the economy is made a god. In a throw-away culture of over-consumption, they too are thrown away.

In the bishops' analysis, the challenge facing us in the election is how to ensure that the economy serves the common good, and particularly those excluded from it. For this to happen the human ecology in which marriage and family are so central need to be protected, as does the physical environment. But it will happen only if the voices of the excluded are heard and their faces seen.

The statement does not break new ground - its themes are consistent with long-standing Catholic Social Teaching. But in Australia it is distinctive because it sets sexuality, marriage and life within a broader framework of social ethics. It links respect for life and family with respect for the environment and with respect for people who are excluded.

The lack of respect for these things has its source in a culture that subordinates the
welfare of people to economic growth and the making of wealth.

"Implicit in the bishops' statement is the conviction that the ills of Australian society derive from and are intensified by a culture that privileges the pursuit of individual wealth."

This framework means that the central issue of the election is not seen as how to encourage economic growth but as how to see the economy itself. The bishops speak less trenchantly than Pope Francis, who criticises sharply the assumptions and practices of neoliberal economics. They speak more generally of a culture of over-consumption.

In the context of this election, however, they add their voice to that of those who are concerned about economic assumptions that enrich the few and exempt corporations and business from social responsibility. Their statement will encourage those who see the now notorious antisocial behaviour of banks, finance business and corporations as symptomatic of a vicious economic ideology.

Implicit in the bishops' statement, too, is the conviction that the ills of Australian society derive from and are intensified by a culture that privileges the pursuit of individual wealth at the expense of social responsibility. This attitude ensures that there are inadequate public funds to help people who are disadvantaged to connect with society and to flourish within it. Such people are regularly deprived in the interests of unequal economic growth.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the statement is the link it forges between a right attitude to the economy and respect for natural and human ecology. The connection is fairly clear in the case of the natural environment where the unregulated pursuit of profit through activities that contribute to global warming harms the world we hand on to our children.

The link made between respect for human ecology - the network of relationships between human beings on which human flourishing depends - and a right attitude to the economy is more controversial. The Catholic definition of human flourishing on matters to do with life, marital relationships and gender is not widely accepted. But the privilege that economic theory gives to the competitive individual motivated by economic gain certainly does not respect stable marital and family relationships in the demands it makes on employees.

But the subordination of the relationships involved in the economy to those involved in the human and natural ecology does provide a consistent ethical framework for considering the major challenges facing humanity today. It also points to the incoherence involved in resisting limitation on individual freedom in personal relationships, while at the same time wanting to impose limitation on individual freedom in economic relations and in treatment of the natural environment.

The implicit argument of the bishops' statement is that a progressive view of the economy and the environment, which for the common good imposes limits on the freedom of individuals to amass wealth, also demands similar boundaries to individual choice in other aspects of human life. The bishop's statement is non-political, but it
develops an old-fashioned ethical wedge.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*.

Main image: Shutterstock
Inside Nauru nightmare

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

Chasing Asylum (MA). Director: Eva Orner. 96 minutes

With Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court of Justice finding last month that the detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island was unconstitutional, the shamefulness of Australia's border protection policies was once again laid bare.

As if we needed further proof, on the heels of those developments comes Chasing Asylum, a new documentary from Australian filmmaker Eva Orner. Orner served as producer on Alex Gibney's Oscar-winning 2007 documentary Taxi to the Dark Side, about American interrogation practices during the war in Afghanistan. Now she turns her eye to the experiences of detainees on Manus and Nauru.

Asylum seeker advocates will be familiar with the facts and arguments that the film articulates. What sets it apart is its wealth of hidden camera footage caught within the grim confines of the centre on Nauru, and Orner's conversations with detainees and social workers who bore witness to the dire daily reality there.
Several of these social workers admit to being naïve and under-qualified upon arrival.

"Ultimately the film's strength lies in human faces and stories."

One recalls her shock at learning she would need to be familiar with a type of knife used to cut down hanging victims. Others detail incidents of attempted suicide and cases of self-harm, which were commonplace, even among children. It's sobering stuff.

Taking a wide view, the film traces the (d)evolution of border protection policies under five successive prime ministers. Human rights lawyer David Manne reminds us that despite government rhetoric it is not illegal to seek asylum. Journalist David Marr offers a potted history of the UN convention on refugees.

But ultimately the film's strength lies in human faces and stories. After presenting footage of the riot on Manus during which 23-year-old Reza Barati was killed, Orner visits with Barati's family. She also spends time with the parents of Hamid Kehazaei, the Manus detainee who died after not receiving proper treatment for a cut to his foot. Chasing Asylum thus rebukes the abstract 'issue' of border protection with flesh-and-blood reality.

This is invoked no more powerfully than by the words of one asylum seeker witness to the death of Barati, who breaks down while describing the scene. He didn't know Reza personally, he says, but that's not the point: he knew he was human. 'It was very important that he was a human being.' If only our political leaders would take such a simple and profound view.
Tim Kroenert is acting editor of *Eureka Street*.

*Chasing Asylum* is screening as part of the Human Rights Arts & Film Festival around Australia during May, ahead of a theatrical release later this month.

Review originally published in *The Melbourne Anglican*.
Recognition or treaty ... Why not both?

AUSTRALIA

Kate Galloway

Newly appointed Senator for Western Australia, Pat Dodson, in his first week on the job, has raised the thorny political question of treaty.

'We know treaty is a big discussion in the community, we know constitutional recognition is a big discussion in the community,' Senator Dodson said. 'They're not mutually exclusive matters.'

Senator Dodson has brought into the mainstream conversation a clear statement of the real debate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This political recognition is, I think, an important step for the movement that is gaining momentum - a movement that challenges both the paramountcy of constitutional recognition, and the binary of recognition vs treaty.

In 2013 I was at the Garma Festival when the Recognise team came to town following a nation-wide road show garnering support for the movement to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution. In the evening bungkl (a
community dance), the Recognise team entered the festival with locals and dignitaries alike.

The festival hosted panel discussions on the Recognise movement and its aims, alongside the Expert Panel into Constitutional Recognition explaining its own recommendations for reform. There was an air of excitement about the ideas presented, and a lot of support.

I myself, a white lawyer (not expert in matters of the constitution), supported the Expert Panel recommendations as an appropriately ambitious constitutional reform agenda.

By the following year however, I was observing resistance to the idea of recognition - not just by mainstream commentators, but more importantly, by Indigenous Australians. It started with a conversation with a young Aboriginal man, a former student of mine, who was instead demanding treaty and who saw recognition as a trap.

"To promote this outcome will require well-meaning non-Indigenous Australians to think twice about signing up to slick campaigns."

From this point I became alert to voices outside mainstream media. As time passed, I became less certain about the form of constitutional recognition being promoted. Rejection of Recognise became more visible to me, an interested outsider in the debate. The calls for treaty that have reached 'mainstream' audiences have become stronger, culminating with Dodson's recent comments.

It is easy for me to rationalise both questions - of 'treaty' and of 'recognition', which I prefer to call constitutional reform - as legal problems. I see treaty as necessary to resolve the gap of legitimacy in the existing sovereign structure. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations have never ceded sovereignty, and the nation we call Australia has been constructed over the top of existing nations. But depending on the terms of any treaty (or rather, treaties), the Commonwealth would still require the powers to enact the laws that would carry it out.

Constitutional reform is therefore desirable to ensure adequate power for the making of laws that will advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and concomitantly to entrench their human rights protections that have consistently been (and remain) at risk through the exercise of government power. That is, the Commonwealth Parliament must pay heed to the human rights of Indigenous Australians while making laws.

The rationale for such reform is the appropriate inclusion of Indigenous Australians within the governance framework of the Commonwealth at least partly because of the exclusion of Indigenous Australians for so long.

In short, I see the need for both treaty and constitutional reform, which support each other in promoting justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. But the limitations of my understanding are both that I am a lawyer, and that I am not an Indigenous Australian. As a question of political strategy and identity, I need to heed the diverse voices of Indigenous Australia in understanding what is truly at stake.

Outside the framework of law however, the questions of recognition and treaty bear so much more weight for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who have borne
the brunt of unjust law for over two centuries, than for non-Indigenous Australians. Acknowledging this injustice demands that significant, meaningful, sustainable reform must occur through a lens of self-determination and ultimately, just settlement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations.

To promote this outcome will require well-meaning non-Indigenous Australians to think twice about signing up to slick campaigns, instead listening to the diverse voices in Indigenous communities nation wide - and calling on our politicians to do the same.

Kate Galloway is a legal academic with an interest in social justice.
Warm autumn blues

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas
Chilling and killing Duncan Storrar's free speech

MEDIA

Justin Glyn

Free speech is one of those virtues which is incontestable as a good in itself. It is necessary for ensuring uncomfortable secrets are laid bare and ensuring that society’s rulers are accountable to those whom they are supposed to represent.

Unfortunately, as I have previously suggested, it can also be a convenient cover for hate speech: a flag of convenience under which arms can be taken up against unpopular racial or religious minorities who are already marginalised.

Over the past week, we saw this taken one step further when ‘free speech’ was used as a justification for shutting down the speech of an opponent - and thereby significantly undermining the virtue of free speech itself.

As is now widely known, Duncan Storrar, an audience member on the popular ABC television program Q&A, pointed out that, as someone with a low income and a disability, he would have benefited much more from the tax benefits offered in the 2016 budget, than those to whom they were actually given (people earning in excess of $80,000 per year). He asked the panel members why he was not deemed as worthy of a tax cut as
higher income earners.

As is also known, a torrent of media abuse followed with successive articles in the Murdoch press making allegations about Storrar's tax affairs and his personal and family history.

At the end of last week, Damon Johnston, the editor of the Herald Sun, was questioned by broadcaster John Faine about the ethics of submitting Storrar's life (including details dating back some 15 years) to the sort of scrutiny traditionally reserved for politicians or celebrities. Johnston responded that, 'If you're going to be on the national stage in the middle of an election campaign, it's equally legitimate to have your own past looked at, and that's what we've done.'

This sort of justification is well-established in libel cases against politicians - people who thrust themselves into the limelight cannot then demand privacy, especially not when the matters up for discussion impact on the conduct of politics.

It is hard to see, however, how the peccadillos of politicians can be equated to the private life of a man whose sole foray into politics was, as a member of the general public, to ask a question on a news show which invites questions from the general public.

"This was not about public debate. At no stage were Storrar's questions addressed. The arguments in the Murdoch papers were all ad hominem, playing the man rather than the ball."

To put it bluntly, this is the point at which the free speech argument, like the Ouroboros serpent of ancient myth, eats its own tail. While the newspapers claimed that they were exercising their rights to free speech in their daily articles against Storrar, the effect of their dragging his name and life through the mud was undoubtedly that any other member of the public who dared ask awkward questions of their rulers would think again.

It is hard to believe that this chilling of Storrar's free speech (and those who would emulate him) was accidental. Let us be clear, this was not about public debate. At no stage were his questions addressed - the arguments in the Murdoch papers were all ad hominem, playing the man rather than the ball. The papers' right to free speech was, in short, invoked in order to prevent others from exercising their rights to free speech.

This is important, not merely for Duncan Storrar (and those appalled at his treatment), but for anyone who values democracy and human rights. A healthy democracy depends for its existence upon people being able to question governments and their decisions. An important part of this is feeding back to those who are supposed to represent us how their decisions affect our lives and our decision making. This requires active participation by everybody, at all levels of society. Only in this way can it be truly effective in securing a society in which politicians represent those who vote for them and policies serve the people who vote for the politicians.

If, on the other hand, people know that attempts to hold their rulers to account will result in ridicule and censure which has nothing to do with the questions which we have asked, this will lead to a disconnect between the rulers and the ruled. People will be increasingly disconnected from (and fearful of) those who are supposed to represent them and society will become less and less democratic (in the sense of government having any
meaningful connection to the people's will or interests).

We will then be perilously close to a return to those pre-human rights days when dissidents, especially those of the 'lower classes' (most, if not all, of us), were placed in the pillory or stocks for public humiliation for daring to insult the ruling classes.

Justin Glyn SJ is studying for the priesthood. Previously he practised law in South Africa and New Zealand and has a PhD in administrative and international law.
Swept into the milky past

CREATIVE

*Pat Walsh*

A perfect lunch break

Book in hand burning
I take chicken soup
The colour of an outback dam
Drained to its dregs
And a bowl of clean white rice
Flecked with insect wings of onion
Browned on a gushing stove
And with my right hand
Feed my body and the left
My hungry mind.

My yard broom

It was made to sweep away
But the sound of my old yard broom
Worn bristles rasping the brick path
Wet with last night's rain
Picks at a faint memory
That grows louder with each stroke
And carries me back across borders
Of seasons lives and landscapes
To a time of rubbing gumboots
Sucking through the quickmud
Hands hugging mugs of steaming tea
The uphill heartbeat of the engine
The baby bleating of hungry calves
Voices cussing and coughing
And the scrape of yard brooms
Pushing back the tide of muck
As the lifeblood of white milk
Creamed in its silver chalice.

Doing my sums

Doing high finance twenty one floors up
I see a figure no bigger than a number eight
Walk to the edge of the roof below
And stand for a long time looking down
On the railway tracks to the underground.
Graph lines on our advisor's chart
Start high then descend wilting in a curve
To drop out of sight off the bottom line
Into that no-man's land of endless zeros
Where numbers and planning are only placebos.

For a moment I am led to look over the rim
To the lines below ruled bold in black
That run express to the edge of the page
Then, afraid, to rejoin the now conversation
As the man on the roof goes inside the station.

New Canadian and US laws revive euthanasia debate

INTERNATIONAL

Frank Brennan

The euthanasia debate is alive and active.

On 9 June 2016, California will complete the west coast coverage of laws in the USA permitting physician assisted suicide for any mentally competent adult who is suffering 'an incurable and irreversible disease that has been medically confirmed' and which will 'within reasonable medical judgment, result in death within six months'.

A new Canadian law will also come into effect on 6 June allowing any mentally competent adult who is suffering 'any grievous and irremediable medical condition' to seek assistance from a doctor with the preparation of a noxious potion. Under the Canadian law, the patient must have 'a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability', and be 'in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability'.

The patient must be 'enduring physical or psychological suffering that is intolerable to them and that cannot be relieved under conditions that they consider acceptable'. Their natural death must be 'reasonably foreseeable, taking into account all of their medical circumstances'.

In both California and Canada, the plan is to permit doctors to help patients who can help themselves. The doctor prepares the potion, but the patient must administer it. Inevitably, in years to come, there will be debate whether these laws 'discriminate' against patients who cannot help themselves.

Euthanasia advocates will argue the doctor should be able to administer a lethal injection if requested by the patient, whether or not the patient is able to commit suicide with
assistance. Pointing to the experience in Belgium and the Netherlands, they will also debate whether these laws 'discriminate' against persons who, though not dying, are still enduring unbearable and untreatable suffering.

They will invoke the language of autonomy, non-discrimination, and human rights, arguing that any mentally competent person has the right to end their life and the right to obtain assistance from a doctor ending their life in as painless and dignified a way as possible.

Countries like Canada, the US, the UK and Australia have been wrestling with this issue ever since the law was rightly changed to decriminalise attempted suicide. Previously it was a criminal offence to attempt suicide and it had always been an offence to assist someone to commit suicide. Needless to say, it was also an offence to kill someone.

"Prosecutors would rarely prosecute the compassionate spouse or the caring doctor; juries would hardly ever convict; and judges would not send the offender to jail."

The argument was that the state had an interest in trying to dissuade people from committing suicide because of its immediate impact on other people and because the preservation of life was a public good. With better understanding through psychology, lawmakers appreciated that criminalising attempted suicide often resulted in those most at risk not seeking help. They also conceded greater autonomy to the individual who should be able to attempt to end their life without any state sanction.

Once attempted suicide was decriminalised, some started to describe the 'right' to end one's life as a 'human right'. Should it still be a criminal offence to assist a mentally competent person to commit suicide especially if that person was terminally ill and suffering unbearable, untreatable pain?

While there are instances of people assisting another's suicide for callous, self-interested and uncompassionate reasons, there are also instances of spouses and other loved ones helping a dying patient to die more quickly, and with no element of selfish self-interest and with an abundance of compassion. There have also been instances of doctors blurring the lines and administering drugs not for the purpose of alleviating pain but for the specific purpose of ending life. Prosecutors would rarely prosecute the compassionate spouse or the caring doctor; juries would hardly ever convict; and judges would not send the offender to jail.

With people living much longer, and with society giving greater weight to personal autonomy, the issue is whether to leave 'assisting suicide' as a criminal offence which would be rarely, if ever prosecuted, or to decriminalise 'assisting suicide' at least in the case where the deceased was a terminally ill, mentally competent person. Euthanasia advocates push the envelope further by arguing that assistance with one's suicide is a also human right, and that there is no real difference between assisting a person to commit suicide and killing them at their request.

Even if there be a case for decriminalising 'assisting suicide', it does not follow that the same case can be made for decriminalising the killing of another even at their request. In the past the US Supreme Court and the UK Supreme Court have conceded that there is a legitimate state interest in maintaining a legal prohibition on killing even if there be a
legislated exception to the criminal offence of assisting another to commit suicide.

"It will be a matter of balancing individual autonomy against the state interest in
minimising the prevalence of suicide throughout society, protecting the weak and
vulnerable, maintaining the integrity of the medical and legal professions, and
maintaining the coherence of the criminal law."

In the 2015 Carter Case, the Canadian Supreme Court threw caution to the wind and
discovered a constitutional right to physician assisted death. In response to the Canadian
court decision, the Canadian Parliament is running against the clock to prepare a new law
by 6 June, the date imposed by the court for any new legislative restriction on the right
to an assisted death. The Canadian Parliament is proposing a law which seeks to
maintain some of the original state rationale for criminalising assisting another to commit
suicide and criminalising the killing of another even at their considered, self-determining
request. In its preamble, the new Canadian law rightly states:
Whereas it is important to affirm the inherent and equal value of every person's life and
to avoid encouraging negative perceptions of the quality of life of persons who are
elderly, ill or disabled; Whereas vulnerable persons must be protected from being
induced, in moments of weakness, to end their lives; Whereas suicide is a significant
public health issue that can have lasting and harmful effects on individuals, families and
communities.

The Canadian law then sets out the safeguards for a medical practitioner to assist a
patient with their own suicide. The Canadian Medical Association, after significant
consultation with its membership, has told Parliament 'that physicians who are
comfortable providing referrals (for medically assisted death) strongly believe it is
necessary to ensure the system protects the conscience rights of physicians who are not'.
Freedom of conscience matters. Voluntary assistance with deliberately accelerating death
should be voluntary for everyone!

Here in Australia, the issue will not be decided by the Commonwealth Parliament nor by
the High Court. It will be a matter for state and territory parliaments. It will not be a
matter of contesting religious and secular viewpoints. It will be a matter of balancing
individual autonomy against the state interest in minimising the prevalence of suicide
throughout society, protecting the weak and vulnerable, maintaining the integrity of the
medical and legal professions, and maintaining the coherence of the criminal law.

Without any legal change, those who compassionately and unselfishly assist with the
suicide of dying, suffering loved ones will endure some uncertainty whether they might
be prosecuted; and those doctors tempted to take the law into their own hands will
practise their medicine without adequate transparent safeguards. But then again, once
the state legislates to permit assistance with the suicide of a dying, suffering, mentally
competent person, the door could well be opened to those who agitate a right to kill and
not just a liberty to assist with suicide, and that door could be pushed open onto a class
of patients which ultimately will include those who are not dying at all.

I'm for keeping that door firmly shut. That door is now wide open in Belgium and the
Netherlands. The Canadian Parliament is trying to place some appropriate limits on the
doors thrown open by their Supreme Court. The US west coast approach of opening just a
window has been more prudent, but even there it could still blow a gale.

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Main image by Margaret Power
21st century binge and purge

CREATIVE

Ellena Savage

I have a turquoise post-it on my wall inscribed with the word 'discipline'. It's a little severe, a bit over-the-top robotic, as if I wish I could become a finely-tuned engine.

But I work from home, and freelance, so without a boss or externally-imposed deadlines, some measure of self-discipline is required to get work done.

For whatever reason, just looking at this word 'discipline' sends my brain a reward signal. Which is creepy, which should be creepy.

In 1936, Gertrude Stein criticised the intense over-regulation of European governments. The period she lived through in France saw war, hyper-inflation, famine, and the rise of fascism - scary upshots of, perhaps, extreme bureaucratisation and over-regulation.

She compares this against an idealised form of 18th-century Enlightenment liberalism in which she suggests that free from 'organisation', individuals possessed liberty. 'Organisation is a failure and everywhere in the world over everybody has to begin again.'

Looking into the 21st century, Stein anticipated a movement against organisation - 'perhaps they will begin looking for liberty again and individually amusing themselves again and old-fashioned or dirt farming' - and, well, she was right about that: union membership is at a record low, social capital is bottoming out, while the demand for
organic food - dirt farming (!) - is booming.

But she didn't predict the flip-side of 'looking for liberty again': that faced with the task of imagining freedom anew, we'd content ourselves with the freedom to hyper-self-regulate.

When my alarm goes off in the morning I reach for my phone: check mail, check ABC, check Twitter. Get up, make filter coffee, pour one. Open my diary and spreadsheet, start working. Pour my second coffee. Eat something, clock calories in. Go for a walk, pick up whatever groceries, clock calories out.

"I am certain that the way we drink and take substances is just that: an outlet, based on a fantasy of freeing ourselves from the efforts of living."

At 10am I make a judgement about how I am feeling, file it in my mood app. Open my sobriety app, bank the money I have 'saved' on booze. Email a friend, text someone. Back to work. Am I cooking tonight? Look up a recipe. Go out to the garden, think about weeding, don't weed, sometimes weed. Back to work.

If whatever I am working on isn't very interesting, this accounting for a day, after day, after day, is fairly sad. But it's also just living a life in 2016.

The anxieties incurred by this intense self-regulation have to come out somewhere, and I am certain that the way we (Australians? We all, everyone?) drink and take substances is just that: an outlet, based on a fantasy of freeing ourselves from the efforts of living.

Binge drinking (or choose your substance) is the reward for a self-regulated existence, of contained autonomy, and one I happily indulge whenever I can. But because the overarching belief system operates along the lines of 'discipline = freedom', being momentarily out of control eventually results in shame. What did I say last night? What did I do? Whatever you did, it'll be up on Facebook, no worries.

And perhaps this shame is legitimate, particularly if and when over-indulging brings harm on ourselves and others (after smoking, drinking is the leading cause of preventable death and hospitalisation in Australia). But this binary of being 'in control' (self-regulation as freedom) and being 'out-of-control' (binge drinking as freedom) leaves a lot to be desired. Being all excess is chaotic, and being all control is terribly boring.

Perhaps this is why teetotallers are objects of fascination to me, why I am repulsed by them while at the same time wishing I could be one. I dislike their innate moralism, and their easy assimilation into an economic order that demands total self-restraint while valorising decadence. But wouldn't it be nice to be so content that slipping into intoxication for a night didn't cross your mind?

There's a moment in Renata Adler's novel Speedboat where the narrator, out for lunch with a man she does not especially like, feels compelled to prove to him she is not an alcoholic:

'He asked what I would like to drink. Nothing, I thought. Then I remembered that nothing would be the order of an alcoholic on the wagon. My normal Scotch and water would not do. I asked for an ouzo. No alcoholic in his right mind, I thought, would have
an ouzo. I had two.'

And only an alcoholic would traverse through such convoluted self-regulation to settle on a drink order. When we drink, we placate ourselves with myths about alcohol's meaning, its naughtiness. And when we don't drink, alcoholism is implied.

Cycling between these two states of 'freedom' - excess and control - is a natural expression of the time we are living in. But considering that neither external 'organisation' nor intense self-regulation seem particularly free, perhaps the concept of 'freedom' has had its day.

Ellena Savage is Editor at The Lifted Brow, and is undertaking a PhD in creative writing at Monash University.

Main image: Shutterstock
Pope Francis' social activism has long roots

RELIGION

Bruce Duncan

It is unlikely Pope Francis would be waving the flag of social justice so boldly on the world stage had Pope Leo XIII not written his famous manifesto, Rerum Novarum, On the Condition of the Working Class, 125 years ago. Pope Francis is expanding on what Leo called for in 1891: fair wages for working people; a more equitable distribution of wealth and ownership; support for trade unions so workers could bargain with employers with a degree of equality and power; recognition of the right to strike to defend essential rights; the State to regulate working conditions and the economy to protect workers and the common good; and establishing a system of arbitration and conciliation to mediate between employers and employees.

Leo attacked the greed of 'unchecked competition' that reduced workers to 'a yoke little better than slavery itself'. He defended the right to property, but urged the State 'to induce as many as possible of the people to become owners' so working people to have a larger share in the distribution of wealth.

Such criteria remain vital even in Australia, but much more so, as Francis insists, in countries struggling to achieve decent living standards for their people.

Popes reject neoliberalism

Francis is absolutely determined to highlight the opposition of Christian social thinking to the tenets of neoliberalism or market fundamentalism, an ideology which assumes that
free markets of themselves will produce the best outcome, and which pushes aside considerations of social or distributive justice.

Francis blames neoliberalism for much of the economic trauma the world has suffered since the 1980s. As adopted by Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in Britain, neoliberalism emphasised supply-side economics, deregulation of restraints on business, liberalisation of capital controls, privatising state-owned enterprises and downsizing the role of government.

Neoliberalism also prescribed tax cuts for upper-income groups, resulting in growing inequality; and it increased pressure to reduce wages for working people, as we see in casualisation of the workforce.

Francis' attack on this virulent philosophy is not new. You can trace this resolute rejection of earlier forms of 'economic liberalism' through the writings of all the recent popes.

In his attacks on the greed, fraud and corruption in key economic sectors Pope Francis is insisting that the message of Pope Leo applies worldwide.

**Social activists guided the popes**

Popes do not take such strong positions on contentious social issues on mere whim. Rather, on the advice of experts, they are articulating the experience of people struggling to improve human wellbeing.

Behind Leo XIII stretched over a century of social activism throughout Europe and Britain, as well as Australia and the USA. We at times overlook how significant were leading reformers like Frederic Ozanam, a founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society, who was a leading political activist and social reformer. Such determined men and women helped the churches to take a clear moral stance and mobilise public opinion to improve economic and social conditions.

It would be a mistake to see *Rerum Novarum* as simply a Catholic document. Other Christian traditions helped shape it, including through the English Cardinal Manning who had been an Anglican priest and social activist, and brought the Anglican tradition of social concern into the English Catholic church.

"*Rerum Novarum* inspired generations of lay men and women as social activists who at times had to challenge other Catholics and clergy to engage with the social issues more robustly."

Manning was also a close friend of the Booths, founders of the Salvation Army, and admired their work so much that he raised funds for them and wanted to set up a Catholic version of the Army. The social activism of these and other churches helped form Manning's views, and influenced how he interpreted *Rerum Novarum* in the English-speaking world.
Rerum Novarum inspired generations of lay men and women as social activists who at times had to challenge other Catholics and clergy to engage with the social issues more robustly. Jacques and Raïssa Maritain were once regarded as dangerous radicals for denouncing the crusade mentality during the Spanish Civil War and declaring that killing in the name of God risked blasphemy. Recent popes have reiterated that message strongly.

Some fabulous women also helped develop the Catholic social tradition. The famous economist Barbara Ward worked with Pope Paul VI to push through the Vatican Council document, *The Church in the Modern World*, and to set up the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace. Recall also Australian member of international women's movement the Grail, Rosemary Goldie, working in key positions in the Vatican to help develop lay social activism.

*Rerum Novarum* can claim to be the fruit of historic struggles in the factories and workshops of many countries by men and women of courage and conscience from many religious traditions.

Bruce Duncan is a lecturer in in history and social ethics in Melbourne’s University of Divinity and director of the Yarra Institute for Religion and Social Policy.
Reconciling with president-elect Duterte

INTERNATIONAL

Fatima Measham

Rodrigo Duterte will be inaugurated as the 16th Philippine president next month. It is the culmination of an extraordinarily intense campaign period, but also the beginning of something else. Precisely what is anybody's guess.

I avoided commenting on the campaign, not least because it left me bewildered. I could not get a grip on Duterte's popularity.

I know and respect many people who support him. These aren't the uneducated, low-income conservatives that Donald Trump has galvanised, though the two men are often compared. I've been known to compare them, too. It's too easy to do.

I was also disturbed. The things Duterte represents - vigilantism, unilateralism and violence - aren't these the same things that Filipino human rights activists had fought against? Is this now the preferred template for imposing order across the country?

What does it even mean for Ferdinand Marcos' son to get this close to being back in Malacañang; an Palace as vice-president? Does this not defy memory and reason - the ultimate insult against many survivors of torture and incarceration under martial law?

I parsed post after post on social media, trying to working out what I was missing. For months I asked myself, what the hell went wrong?

It is only lately that I'm beginning to accept that I got the wrong end of the question.
What went wrong? Everything.

For many, the promise of equity, security and justice that came with a renewed democracy in 1986 remains unfulfilled. The Philippines keeps being touted as a fast-growing Asian economy, but such gains do not trickle down to rural towns and provincial cities.

"Visitors and residents are emphatic about Davao being safe and orderly; that its infrastructure and public and emergency services are world-class."

Transport infrastructure in urban areas has decayed. Rampant development has come at cost to liveability. Quality healthcare is far from universal. The best-paying jobs are still overseas.

Whether or not it is fair, the perception of gross incompetence at the highest levels hardened after Typhoon Haiyan and the fatal Mamasapano police operation. Certain officials were kept in roles based on tenuous things like presidential favour. Corruption in both houses of Congress and municipal councils routinely led to scandal. Meanwhile, farmers go hungry and indigenous peoples continue to be displaced.

One reading of Duterte's victory is that it came via protest vote, the same anti-establishment movement we see elsewhere but with a distinctly Filipino flavour. There is no doubt that people have had enough of the status quo. But that would only be part of the picture. The rest is opaque, unless one understands what it is like to live in places of criminal impunity.

In the estate where my family lives, a neighbour who was a businessman was kidnapped for ransom. One morning, my mum discovered that the patio gate had been partially jimmied. She locks the door like a tic whenever my (unmistakably Anglo) husband gets in the car. Her brother makes sure someone, any one of his five children, is always at home to dissuade burglars; their schedules revolve around it.

The contrast to Davao, the city Duterte has run with an iron fist for years, is more than stark. Visitors and residents are emphatic about Davao being safe and orderly; that its infrastructure and public and emergency services are world-class. Could anyone really begrudge Filipinos in other cities that?

It goes without saying that transposing Davao to the rest of the Philippines is an untested theory. It is much easier to manage a single fiefdom than several. Human rights advocates, various NGOs and the media are sure to scrutinise Duterte's decisions; he may find national attention harder to bear than parochial adulation. The appetite for change is one thing. Actual change is another.

For now, I have to hope that the hope of so many Filipinos cannot be wrong. I have to hope that the passage of credible elections is a good sign; that hard-won Philippine democratic institutions will not only bear a Duterte presidency but refine it.
Fatima Measham is a *Eureka Street* consulting editor. She tweets [@foomeister](http://twitter.com/foomeister) and blogs at [This is Complicated](http://thisiscomplicated.com.au).
Inequality in Australia is dental as anything

AUSTRALIA

Barry Gittins

'I think you've been grinding your teeth in your sleep.'

'Me, gnashing my teeth in distress?' That's what I would have said to the dentist, if her hands and those of her nurse weren't occupying my big mouth.

Our family dentist is professional and kind; she tells you methodically what she is doing, and why it's necessary. 'That pain? That's because of the years of tartar build-up I'm removing,' she informs me.

'Uuuurrrgghmaburble.' I'm retrospectively grateful for the previously-administered needles.

I'd put off dental care for several years, not through fear but because of the necessity to prioritise other expenses within the family. Dentistry hurts more financially than experientially. But at least, as a worker in a dual-income household, I could - and have - budgeted and paid for the work required on my chompers. For many of us, it's not that easy.

Post-budget, one element to sink our teeth into is the question of dental care for marginalised Australians. A smile says a lot about who we are, how we are doing and where we have come from.

British research presented at the 2013 International Association of Dental Research posited 'a link between missing teeth and a patient's quality of life' and cited other
research on observers' 'perception of men and women with straight and crooked teeth'.

Respondents perceived those with straight teeth as 45 per cent more likely to get a job than those with crooked teeth, when competing with someone with a similar skill set and experience. People with straight teeth were seen as 58 per cent more likely to be successful and 58 per cent more likely to be wealthy.

"Sixty-six per cent of the Salvos' welfare clients could not afford dental treatment, and two in five could not afford a yearly dental check-up for their children."

Indicative of employability, wealth (could your family afford braces for you as a child?), socioeconomic status and self-esteem, a dodgy smile is also recognised as a key indicator of homelessness.

In the soon-to-be-released fifth annual national Economic and Social Impact Survey research by the Salvation Army, it's recorded that 66 per cent of the Salvos' welfare clients 'could not afford dental treatment [and] two in five could not afford a yearly dental check-up for their children'. These figures are recorded in several years' worth of surveys: from 2013-2015 the number of clients who couldn't afford dental care varied from 60-68 per cent; the percentage of their children who couldn't afford an annual dental check-up varied from 34-39 per cent.

This is Australia we are talking about. Only the US and Canada have higher average net wealth than us. And yet, one in five of the Salvos' welfare clients interviewed can't 'afford medical treatment and the medicine prescribed by a doctor'.

How we treat the least affluent of our citizens reveals much. The discomfort that led me to the dental surgery was resolvable, and I could have made earlier appointments. Again, this is often not so with welfare recipients and working class patients.

At the end of last year, in New South Wales alone, there were '9203 children and 104,156 adults waiting for general public dental care'. If you needed public treatment for your teeth in Victoria, data from the Productivity Commission shows that in 2014-15 you'd have been waiting for 237 days on average. That was extended to a 260-day wait for succour in South Australia, a 309-day wait in Queensland, and a freakish 933-day wait in Tasmania.

Numbers are still being crunched, but some analysts see the government's budgeted dental policy resulting in a cut of $235 million from provision of services. Gnashing of teeth indeed ... it's hard to laugh off inequity if you are in pain, or embarrassed because your aching canines are an eyesore.

Barry Gittins is a communication and research consultant for The Salvation Army.

The Salvos' 2016 Economic and Social Impact Survey is due to be published in late May.
Neglecting and reconnecting with elderly parents

REVIEWS

Tim Kroenert

A Month Of Sundays (PG). Director: Matthew Saville. Starring: Anthony LaPaglia, Julia Blake, John Clarke. 110 minutes

Writer-director Matthew Saville's accomplishments as a director of both prestige (Cloudstreet, The Slap) and popular (Hamish and Andy, Please Like Me) television are considerable. As a filmmaker he's brought his distinctive voice and vision to bear on the crime genre reconstructions Noise and Felony, without really nailing the execution. Sadly A Month of Sundays, while representing a change of direction for the filmmaker, repeats that pattern of ultimately falling short of the mark.

Which is surprising, as it dwells in a realm of edgy, contemporary suburban angst that Saville has explored very successfully in, especially, the television dramas he's worked on. The central character is Frank Mollard (LaPaglia), a divorced real-estate agent whose world-weariness is embodied in a hangdog slouch and an at-times incomprehensible monotone mumble. It takes little more than a glance to figure out Frank has lost enthusiasm for life, let alone a sense of joy.
The film starts out strongly, pitting the sadsack Frank against a garrulous, dry-witted foil in the form of his boss, Phillip Lang (John Clarke). In one brilliant scene, Frank and Phillip exchange droll barbs, jiving verbally to the beat of Bryony Marks' jazzy score, while vying with the lawn sprinkler in the yard of a house they are selling. There is a finicky energy to these scenes that contrasts with - and hints at the restless depths beneath - Frank's maudlin exterior.

"Essential to this sifting of family and belonging as central to the identity of suburban males, is a rumination on houses as homes versus property."

This terrific first portion of the film culminates in a moment of near-magic realism, wherein Frank arrives home and receives a phone call from someone he takes to be his dead mother. Of course it's a wrong number; however the fact that Frank carries on this conversation for long minutes without seeming to question it is in a way more poignant than if it actually had been a call from a lamented ghost. Sensing the loneliness that all this implies, the woman, Sarah (Blake), invites Frank to lunch.

Sadly, the film's charm wanes. Long scenes of Sarah and Frank making chitchat sap it of energy. Saville clearly wishes to explore the dynamic between men and their ageing parents, but his ideas seem half-formed, and are inelegantly expressed. Frank, trying to make up for neglecting his relationship with his mother, clashes with Sarah's adult son, who never quite feels like a fully formed character. Later, in a jarring narrative non
sequitur, he recruits Sarah to help Phillip mend bridges with his own frail father.

Essential to this sifting of family and belonging as central to the identity of suburban males, is a rumination on houses as homes versus property. Frank takes Sarah to visit her former home, fending off the stoner muso current tenants so that she can revel in nostalgia. As a real estate agent, Frank is repeatedly chastised by a young father who feels increasingly priced out of the market. All this, too, proves to be stultifying rather than illuminating. It’s been said before, and more compellingly.

Tim Kroenert is acting editor of Eureka Street.
What kind of society does this budget enable?

AUSTRALIA

Andrew Hamilton

Theological study is demanding, but it also offers diversions. For example, it makes one alert to the way in which arguments deployed in recurring theological issues are mirrored in political and cultural issues of the day.

To self-assured theologians this shows that all important issues are ultimately theological. I would be content to say that all serious theological, cultural, economic and political issues touch on deep human questions. So we should expect to find recurrent patterns of argument.

These reflections were occasioned by the description of the budget by Scott Morrison and Malcolm Turnbull as a plan. Labor spokespersons, too, give priority to plans over budgets.

This was a refreshing change from the more recent fetish with balancing budgets to the neglect of discussion of national goals. The reference to plans invites questions about what values underlie the budget and about what kind of a society it is designed to encourage.

It offers hope that the election may provoke a discussion of the economy that goes beyond dogma and technical issues to ask how the economy may serve a just and
humane society.

At first sight this talk of budgets, plans and the economy may seem centuries away from theological discussion of the divine economy. The word ‘economy’ referred initially to the regulation of a large household. It had elements of plan and budget. But when speaking of God's economy Christians emphasised God's large plan for the world.

Its stages encompassed God's making the world and human beings for a high destiny, the human collapse into sin and misery, God's accompaniment and education of humankind through the calling of Israel, God's joining the human race in Jesus and freeing it through his death and rising, so offering a transformed way of living and ultimately promising a transformed world.

"This election invites us ask in human terms what the economy is about. It has already produced a budget criticised by those who believe fairness has nothing to do with budgeting."

In short the economy was God's large plan for the world and for human beings. It met the deepest human hopes and was motivated by compassion for those who had lost their way.

In God's governance the plan invited a human response, and so budget-like discipline. This corresponded to the budget, and was often spelled out in terms of justice. Sin and its consequences and penalties, repentance and good works were included in the stuff of discipline.

At many times, however, God's large economy disappeared from view and was effectively shrunk into the human task of balancing the budget. When this happened Christians became preoccupied with divine punishment for sin, on predestination to hell for inherited sin, on matching penances exactly to the severity of sins, on the exclusion on the non-baptised, including babies, from salvation.

God then became a book keeper and a judge, and unfairness lay at the heart of the budget. God's love for all human beings, especially the most disregarded, was channelled through a network with boundaries that separated Christians from non-Christians, Catholics from non-Catholics, sinners and the just, and so on. Lost in all this was the emphasis in the economy that all of God's relationships to human beings were pure gift, not a commercial transaction.

In the Eastern Church the economy was emphasised. It could be appealed to in order to cross budgeting boundaries, such as when reconciling divorced and remarried Christians into full church life. God's nature was to be compassionate. In practice, too, the economy has been emphasised in the retail cash economy (local pastoral practice) of Western Catholic Churches.

This theological excursus is pertinent to reflection on plans and budgets. It suggests the importance in all other human activities of constantly moving from the budget to consider the plan it enables. If the budget is for the whole nation, it should look to the good of all, with each person and business having a responsibility for the good of others, particularly the most vulnerable. When budgets are constructed in such a way that the cost of their balancing is gross inequality and the exclusion of vulnerable people from participation in
society, they should be rejected. They do not serve but betray the economy.

This election is interesting because it invites us ask in human terms what the economy is about. It has already produced a budget criticised by those who believe that fairness has nothing to do with budgeting. We may hope against hope that this larger perspective will survive the negativity of the election campaign.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.
Not stopping the votes

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas
Women deacons the solution to priestly power problem

RELIGION

Phyllis Zagano

The American television series Madam Secretary follows US Secretary of State Elizabeth McCord (Téa Leoni) as she navigates the worlds of politics and world diplomacy. Would the Vatican have a woman Secretary of State? Could it?
Not long ago, Vatican Secretary of State
Cardinal Pietro Parolin suggested there is nothing inherently clerical about his job. Or is there?

The Vatican's Secretary of State, one of the pope's principal advisors, must be a cardinal. And cardinals - at least since promulgation of the 1983 Code of Canon Law - must be at least priests. So that leaves half the church out of the running entirely. Women cannot be ordained priests.

But there are three types of cardinals: cardinal bishops, cardinal priests, and cardinal deacons. And in modern times there have been cardinal deacons who indeed were deacons. And throughout history, women have been deacons.

So, is there a chance? Is there any possibility the church will have a woman Secretary of State who is a cardinal deacon?

The only barriers are what are known as 'merely ecclesiastical laws,' laws that regulate the running of the Catholic Church, but are not related to dogma or doctrine. In short, the laws that keep women from being cardinal deacons are laws until the pope decides to change them.

The first step would be to return to the Church's earlier practice of ordaining women as deacons. Ordaining women as deacons would bring them into the clerical state, required to fulfil completely many church offices. The Church's canon laws state that the laity may 'cooperate with' but not 'share' authority in the church, and that applies to many positions.

Restoring women to the ordained diaconate would allow them to hold wholly (the formal word is 'obtain') certain offices now restricted to clerics, such as chancellor and judge.

"More than one pope has called for a 'more incisive' role for women in the church. None has managed to answer."

The diaconate is a ministry of service, and deacons are ordained to ministry of the Word, the liturgy, and charity. But as the church has grown in bureaucratic complexity, so has grown the need for clerical status. And some deacons - males all - already serve in church offices that could be equally open to women if they, too, were ordained.

But the complexity of the discussion is not only about whether women can be ordained.

Some feminists argue against restoring women to the diaconate because they see it as a second-fiddle sop to quiet the evident and growing unrest among women (and many men) about the dearth of women in official church life.

Some misogynists argue against restoring women to the diaconate because they see it as the camel's nose under the tent of priesthood and episcopacy, even as they pat women's heads and accept the voluntary self-funded ministries of hundreds of thousands of women religious.

Yet attempting to appease everyone appeases no one. The Church knows full well it needs to find a way to incorporate more women into its hierarchical structures. More than one pope has called for a 'more incisive' role for women in the church. None has
managed to answer his own call.

What to do? In 2002, the International Theological Commission, a Vatican body connected to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, presented a long-awaited study document on the diaconate. Work on the paper began at least by 1992.

Many reports state that in 1997 the Commission completed a positive report affirming the possibility of restoring women to the diaconate, but that the Congregation's prefect, Joseph Ratzinger, refused to sign it. In fact, in 1997, Ratzinger named a new committee, headed by one of his former graduate students, which eventually produced an inconclusive study document four times the size of the original.

The newer document, first written in French and soon published in a still widely-circulated unofficial English translation, lately appears on the Vatican website in German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. The study document concludes that male and female deacons had different roles in the early church, that priesthood and the diaconate are separate and distinct ministries, and that the question of admitting women to the diaconate was something for the Church's 'ministry of discernment' to decide.

Most scholars argue with the document's embedded implication that women cannot be restored to the one order of deacon. Among other things, they point to the fact that the Commission ignored or relegated to footnotes serious scholarship about women deacons by major scholars, including Philippe Delhaye, Roger Gryson, Corrado Marucci, Pietro Sorcì and Cipriano Vagaggini, all well-known and well-published at the time. Rome has produced nothing about women deacons since.

Pope Francis may be interested in better situating women within Church governance and ministry, and there is sufficient theological evidence to readmit women to the order of deacon. Even so, significant curial roadblocks keep him from moving in the obvious direction. Women deacons could take up significant posts, at the Vatican and around the world, but in 2008 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith decreed ordination of women a crime worthy of automatic excommunication.

Francis has decried priesthood's connection to power and authority as problematic, saying it 'presents a great challenge ... with regard to the possible role of women in decision-making in different areas of the Church's life'. But if priesthood is the problem, the diaconate is the solution.

Where would the restoration of women to the diaconate lead? In the season finale of Madam Secretary, the president of the United States asked Secretary McCord if she would be his vice-presidential running mate in the coming year. Now, that would really be something to see in the Catholic Church.

Phyllis Zagano is is senior research associate-in-residence at Hofstra University, Hempstead, and the leading authority on women deacons in the Catholic Church. Her most recent book is Women Deacons? Essays with Answers, a collection of essays, many translated from their original French or Italian. On 18 May she will participate in a free teleconference on women deacons sponsored by FutureChurch.
New nationalist myths entrench white denial

AUSTRALIA

William Scates Frances

There is a poster on the wall of the underpass leading to Auburn station in Sydney. If you look closely you can make out the profile of a red turban poking out from under a black smear of paint covering the face of the man beneath it.

Below his chin the word ‘Aussie’ has been similarly obliterated by the slash of a paint tin wielded by one unknown.

The poster is part of a campaign by street artist Peter Drew, and the man wearing the red turban is Monga Khan, an 'Afghan' cameleer.

This campaign seeks to create inclusivity through asking the question ‘What is a Real Aussie’, but as the hasty defacement of Monga Khan's poster in Auburn illustrates, not everyone is on board.

Drew's 'Real Australians say welcome' campaign, and the 'What is a Real Aussie' campaign which followed it, have received extensive coverage and a large amount of private donations. This campaign ties into an increasingly common brand of Australian nationalism. It is a 'civic' nationalism in which belonging is according to contribution to the state, and appeals because it seems free of the normal ethnic and religious requirements of nationalist mythology.

Instead of national identity defined along the lines of a primarily cultural (here: white) heritage, it offers a tale of a shared investment in the 'Australian' state, first as colonies
and then as Commonwealth.

The Afghan cameleers seem the perfect candidates for an anachronistic projection of civic nationalist legitimacy into the Australian past. But at the same time they illustrate the problem with such appeals.

Recruited from within the British Raj and the border regions of Afghanistan (later a British protectorate), the cameleers were an indispensable part of the exploration and exploitation of large swathes of the Australian continent. Working short contracts and frequently returning home, they were often treated with disdain by those they served.

"While at first glance the story may seem to have an inclusive potential, it is an inclusion predicated in efforts expended in the expansion of British territory."

As victims of Australian racism, they were simultaneously an integral part of the displacement of Aboriginal people and the spreading of British Empire into the interior of Australia.

The story of the Afghan cameleers, many of whom we can speculate would have baulked at the title 'Aussie', is an important one. Firstly, it presages some of the issues that arise among many Muslims today; as targets of Australian racism but also as settler colonials. Secondly, the presence of Muslims in Australia at this point in time has a powerful rhetorical quality, and its invocation is a strong counter to the whitewashing of Australian history more generally.

However, it is not these issues that seem the purpose of the story plastered on the wall of Auburn train station and mentioned in a collection of 'Australian stories' on Australia.gov.au. While at first glance the story may seem to have an inclusive potential, it is an inclusion predicated in efforts expended in the expansion of British, later Australian, territory. Real Aussies displace.

Dismantling white myths about history is a positive step for those still in denial, a potential pin in an ethnic nationalism which lingers here. Yet these posters pop up often not in bastions of that denial, but rather on walls across Western Sydney, in suburbs whose demographics hardly tell tales of fortresses of white privilege. It seems that, less than a project to dismantle white myths about history, the popularity of these stories is more an attempt to bring non-white Australians into a new myth in the making.

This myth is one of an Australianness that is redeemable, an Australianness that deftly sidesteps nationalism's ugly past in this country. Rather than countering white denial, it is instead its own kind, where racist legacies are swept under the rug by projections of acceptance back into the past.

Today, 'Real Aussies' overwhelmingly support mandatory detention. In the past, Real Aussies displaced, massacred and set up systems which to this day oppress the Aboriginal peoples of this land. Being a 'Real Aussie' is nothing to aspire to. Rather than a blow to Australian racism and white denial, the 'Real Aussies' campaign and its civic nationalist partners is an affirmation of both.
William Scates Frances is a PhD Candidate in History at the Australian National University. His writing covers intellectual history, colonial history and Islam in Australia.
Anna Burke: 'It's time for a rational debate about refugees'

AUSTRALIA

Di Cousens

Anna Burke has represented the seat of Chisholm in the House of Representatives for the ALP since 1998. She is the former Speaker of the House (2012-2013), and has been a consistent advocate for asylum seekers. She will retire at the next election.

Q. We have just seen the Papua New Guinea government find that the detention of the asylum seekers on Manus Island is illegal. Do you think that shows that there is a more robust sense of human rights in PNG than Australia?

A. No, but I think it demonstrates that the law understands better the UN Charter of Human Rights than either the PNG or the Australian governments.

Nobody has taken this case about offshore processing to the High Court here, nor could they because technically it is in PNG, but as you saw with the Malaysian Solution, when they took it to the High Court here it was overturned.

So I think our legal, constitutional framework - I wouldn't say it was more lacking than the PNG government in any way size, shape or form, I just think it demonstrates that if you bring these into the realm of the legal sphere, then the legal system says you have to abide by the UN Charter of Human Rights, which neither government has been doing.

Does it reflect badly on Australia that we have no articulated set of legal rights in our constitution, such as freedom from arbitrary detention without trial?

I think our constitution is lacking in many areas, but I think this gets down to basically, we have - on all sides of politics - not been abiding by the UN Charters that we have adopted and signed and that we request other countries to follow. Instead of maintaining a humane and dignified approach to this difficult, complex situation we have played
political football with it.

So I think there are issues to be addressed in the longer term, but in the here and now we need to deal with the 800 people on Manus who have been living in this horrendous, limbo situation for almost four years now.

"Instead of maintaining a humane and dignified approach to this difficult, complex situation we have played political football with it." - Anna Burke

Many people have spoken up in support of asylum seekers since the offshore camps on Manus and Nauru were reopened. Petitions have been signed, letters have been sent to members of Parliament, demonstrations have been held ... Yet it seems the government is not listening, and has never been listening. Do you think this ideological commitment to offshore processing has been run at the cost of democracy?

I think what the political process is, they see that, yes, the mood is changing, but they don't think it is changing significantly enough that it will impact them at the ballot box. They think by adopting a more humane approach they will lose votes at the ballot box. They would argue that what they are doing is actually democratic.

The point has been made by several legal minds, including Professor Triggs, that the use of arbitrary detention without trial so as to deter others from seeking asylum and coming by boat is a breach of the separation of powers. Normally the component of deterrence in a sentence of imprisonment can only be made by a court, and not by the Parliament. Do you see that the principle of the separation of powers has been breached?

I am not a lawyer, and I respect completely Gillian Triggs' views. What I think is the difficulty in this situation is that we have not got a system of detention for processing, we've got a system of indefinite detention. I have never said we shouldn't have some form of processing situation - although I have always been opposed to offshore processing. But what we have now got is this prolonged incarceration.

On Wednesday last week the Iranian asylum seeker, Omid, set himself on fire in desperation as he had given up hope after three years in detention. He was not transferred to the mainland for 24 hours and was brain dead, I believe, on arrival in Brisbane hospital. Do you see a systemic failure here, in the care of asylum seekers?

Yes, and I think the medical profession is now also saying that what is being offered in terms of getting approval to take people off the island [is not good enough], and that Nauru absolutely does not have the medical facilities to be looking after the volume of people that we sent there, and on this occasion the system has failed.

It seems that the harsh treatment of asylum seekers is a response to the racist attitudes of Sydney shock jocks and focus groups. It appears to be playing a 'race card' so as to appeal to particular vote banks. Is it possible for either party to get back to policies that have a moral basis and provide ethical leadership to
the community, rather than dog whistling the worst elements?

I think that from the Howard days of Tampa we have seen that the race card has been used to create fear and loathing and mistrust. The creation of asylum seekers as 'other', calling them 'illegals', running that whole argument. I would say - with my political hat on - that the Liberal Party has been far worse at that than the Labor Party. The Labor Party hasn't gone down that path. But having said that, everybody plays politics with this situation.

"Asylum seekers on Nauru are still living in tents. The theory is that this will stop people drowning at sea. But it is appalling that we are putting people's lives in this situation." - Anna Burke

We have now got a world wide refugee problem - we don't have one here but we do have one world wide. It is now time to start having a rational debate about what we do with these people as opposed to playing the race card. But tragically I think we are going to go into an election where again asylum seekers are going to be used as political footballs, as opposed to having a calm debate with the populace about why Australia needs to be doing its bit and can.

**I talk to men on Manus Island every day and I am aware that they do not have adequate food or clothes or medical care. A very large proportion are becoming addicted to pharmaceutical medications and are developing full blown mental illnesses. There is a massive problem of untreated injuries, skin diseases and chronic pain. Do you think the Australian public has any awareness of the sickness and squalor in which these people are living?**

No, because the government has closed down information. The UN has been there and has reported now on many occasions. They are going back - I think they are there as we speak. I hope they will report and indicate what conditions these individuals are living in. Manus is bad but Nauru is worse. The majority of asylum seekers on Nauru are still living in tents. The theory is that this will stop people drowning at sea. But it is appalling, that we are putting these people's lives in this situation.

**A German friend explained to me that after Dachau, all the concentration camps in the Second World War were placed outside Germany, in Poland and Ukraine and other countries, and that information about them was kept secret from the ordinary police and military. Do you think that offshore processing has parallels with the strategies of Nazi Germany, in placing the camps away from the mainland and making their internal operations secret?**

I think it has the same political strategy that anything does where it is 'out of sight, out of mind'. The journalists are not allowed in, we are not having information because of 'on-water matters', I think it is a situation where these individuals have been dehumanised. They take away their being - having numbers, referring to them as illegals. It is a political strategy so that the populace doesn't really understand what is being done in their country's name.

**How can either party put forward a platform that is truly international in focus and which takes into account the large scale movements of people engendered by war and political persecution which are causing refugees to flee their**
homelands?

Well, we did it post World War Two, but it is now an international problem. This is something that needs to be done on an international scale. Australia already has got an approach through the Bali Process in our region, we should be utilising that with our neighbouring countries who all have these issues as well, so as to adopt a rational approach. The Donald Trumps of the world want to put up walls, put up barriers, but it is not going to stop refugees. It is not going to resolve the situation we have. We are wealthy enough and big enough to find a resolution for this.

It is also about ending the conflicts so that people aren't having to flee. It is not just a situation of housing refugees. What are the root causes of refugees? No one talks about that. And until we actually start talking about these much bigger issues then we will constantly see political posturing across the globe - not just in Australia - about how to deter instead of how to prevent.

Di Cousens is an honorary fellow with the Australian Catholic University, a university administrator at RMIT and former vice-chair of the Buddhist Council of Victoria. After meeting refugees in detention in Australia she became friends with detainees on Manus Island through social media. For over a year she have been engaged in supporting them in various ways, mostly through daily conversations.
Umpire, a local buffoon

CREATIVE

Ian C. Smith

Umpire, a local buffoon

An honest tackle trucks two junior footballers
tangled across the boundary line of the arena
before the barrier between hoi polloi and gladiators,
the tackler fouled again, the ball out of play,
an elbow stab to the ribs, a knee seeking a crotch
in this small town that yearns to be a contender,
the fair team fitter, faster, braver, ahead.

Clouds the colour of bruises, thuggery imminent,
the hyper whizz-bang electronic scoreboard sports
a score infuriating the home coach, Little Caesar.
A visitor queries if the umpire knows how to whistle,
prompting a memory of a Humphrey Bogart movie.
I hope our fair-haired lad knows how to survive
without net, trident, sword, my young Spartacus.

A guttural murmur growing, the home mob sniffs blood.
I sniff food, fatty, fast, selling furiously,
air still, floodlit smoke ghosting, storm gathering
as the fair boys brawl back, rules, skill, abandoned.
The melee an enraged kraken, our umpire freezes,
trump cards to send off unruly players unplayed.
Backlit by neon-blink, bodies rag-dolled, he cries, Stop it.

On the shelf now

Shelving books beneath the comfort of photographs
I come across a so-called Dirty Realist I loved,
Andre Dubus, who lost a leg, stopped on the road
to help a stranger in trouble, only to be taken out.
His stark title, We Don't Live Here Anymore
saddens me thinking on my old home I've left.
Protagonists did time in that tumbledown space.
Now their stories echo in this cottage room.
Glimpsed faces disappear, framed as in a train window,
characters who would be old now, living edgily,
doing their best, foundering hearts sore, battered,
spiralling bizarre events forcing them to their knees.
Rain throughout yesterday matched my mood, this slippage, memory downsized, Voices from the Moon. I retrieve a saturated letter from the mailbox though my mail address is a PO Box. The letter I shall dry out, a mystery, in my name, had been sent earlier to an incorrect street number. Dubus eventually died from losing that leg. One thing leads to another, living your best to dying. Bad knee howling, I'll never finish my shelving wondering what this letter could turn out to be.

Attachment

A video of Smooth comes with a surprise email. Leaning forward my whiskers twitch seeing him still chasing tail, me barely breathing, knowing visits from sadness will linger, sweet but hard. Once adventurers, nine lives now almost spent, one a bird lover, the other a bird eater, the final act in this survival game is separation. My instinct is to daft-voice my old mate the hunter now landed on his paws in a land of milk and fish, reach out, scratch his vulnerable part near the heart, then a shadow falls, the jumpy images end, halt my fingertips from blurring the screen.

Becalmed

At breakfast his kin trump each other with dreams, versions of life remixed, a whirligig batch, lurid, zany, trite, jumbled, absurd; minds amok, dreams of old and young a crazy match. Daydreams are different, private, unshared. They heard his nightmare, like a frightened child's, from cards dealt before his life became moored. Driven from the beach by squally weather he wins at cards, loses at chess, razing the board, headlong advancement, then nothing left to lose. The camp joker, he says little about his wild youth. The wishes in his heart. What they made him do. His offspring and friends' lavish expectancy irks, blissful privilege, birthright he never knew, radiant Camelot skipping in merriment to the sea. Back from salt-sprayed horseplay, he seeks respite behind a droll mask for the private room of his mind.
Challenged at chess, he accepts with grace,
making the most of this chance to be kind,
old heart a pennant fluttering over a distant field.

Questions for sub happy Australia

AUSTRALIA

Justin Glyn

Last week Frank O'Shea pointed out that part of the reason that the $50 billion submarine deal passes underneath our intellectual sonar without being challenged is the brain-boggling amount of money which it represents.

For me, as an international lawyer, another klaxon which it sets off is the fact that defence spending goes relatively unchallenged despite the fact that it says much about a country's diplomatic priorities.

As the great military strategist Carl von Clausewitz put it in Vom Kriege (On War) 'war is merely the continuation of policy by other means'.

In this age of the terror of terrorism, however, we have unfortunately reached the position where, like a stage hypnotist, all a government (any government) needs to do is to say 'national security' and our collective eyes glaze over and our brain switches off.

The new budget has allocated $32.3 billion to defence to pay for everything from submarines to maritime patrol aircraft, air tankers and training aircraft, and promised to grow the whole defence budget to 2 per cent of GDP (from its present 1.92 per cent) by 2020. Some of these increases may be vital and it is impractical for an average citizen to do a line by line check of the accounts.

However, while we may not be able to challenge the books in detail, we should be asking basic questions like: who are we defending against, how will our big ticket spending
items advance this and will they work?

Only then can we sensibly ask whether the money could be better spent elsewhere - especially at a time when the Abbott-Turnbull government has been preaching austerity and a reduction, or at best flat-lining, of government spending in most non-military areas.

Let us take the sub spend, for example. We are told by the Navy in its 2005 book, *The Navy Contribution to Australian Maritime Operations*, that the roles of the submarine fleet include: intelligence collection and surveillance; maritime strike and interdiction; barrier operations; advanced force operations; layered defence; interdiction of shipping; containment by distraction; and support to operations on land.

"If Australia is buying such offensive weapons, against whom does it anticipate using them?"

It will immediately be seen that these categories are not only very broad but (with the exception of layered defence) generally offensive in nature. Subs are not much use in policing or peace-keeping roles either. The Navy's book observes laconically that '[t]he modern submarine generally has limited utility in undertaking constabulary or benign diplomatic tasks'.

Indeed, as expected, the examples of effective submarine warfare cited in the book all date from active wars (World Wars I and II and the Falklands War). That raises the obvious question: if Australia is buying such offensive weapons, against whom does it anticipate using them?

In the last 50 years or so, Australia has been engaged in offensive operations mostly at the behest of the United States (Viet Nam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria). The US' main rival in Australia's neighbourhood is China. Unsurprisingly therefore, Australia's 2009 Defence *White Paper* appeared to suggest that China would likely be Australia's main challenge in the region (and that the US might be unable to assist Australia in its defence).

That, however, would be awkward to say the least since China also happens not only to be Australia's largest trading partner but also to have a vast submarine fleet (80 in service and ten under construction) against which 12 submarines would seem fairly insignificant.

Even leaving aside such sobering considerations, the government has already announced that the first craft of the new fleet is only likely to be operational in 2030. That makes it quite a hostage to fortune. Not only does this assume that a boat with 14-year-old technology will not be completely outclassed by its enemies by then but also that the enemies against whom it is designed to be employed (whoever they may be) will still be relevant.

The purchase of submarines raises diplomatic questions, too. If Australia knows who its enemies are, presumably these putative enemies have a fairly good idea who they are as well. How are they likely to respond to a purchase of submarines? By initiating military countermeasures? By exacting trade sanctions? By diplomatic reprisals? (In this regard, it is noteworthy that China is currently reported to be upgrading its anti-submarine...
warfare capability.)

These questions are vital, not just for military planners but also for anyone who is likely to be affected by Australian foreign policy (sadly, usually a poor cousin when it comes to electioneering) as well as those who want to know more generally how their tax dollars are to be spent.

Let me be clear: there may be good answers to these questions. However, the questions themselves have not even been raised in most media outlets. Answering them, however, would scarcely reveal state secrets (given that both the *Defence White Paper* and the *Navy Contribution to Australian Maritime Operations* are public documents). It would also make for a much more informed public - especially with an election due.

Justin Glyn SJ is studying for the priesthood. Previously he practised law in South Africa and New Zealand and has a PhD in administrative and international law.
A reply from an advocate to Peter Dutton about self-harm

AUSTRALIA

Di Cousens

My first thought on seeing the video of Omid setting himself on fire was that he didn't have a support person. If he did, they would have talked him through his suicidal thoughts in the night or the morning and he would have settled down.

As an advocate for refugees, I talk to those on Manus at all times of the day and night and make sure they are okay.

Of course, they are not okay, but so far all of my friends are still alive.

We, the advocates, keep their spirits up by sending them clothes, games and keeping their phones paid-for so they can talk to their families. We keep them informed about what is going on in Australia. We do not encourage them to hurt themselves in order to get attention or put pressure on the government. We do everything possible to stop them from hurting themselves or attempting suicide.

After Omid's death, more than one had copycat thoughts. This was an intense time for those of us who listen and care for these people.

The asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru can talk to the paid staff of the detention centres, who may try to stop them from self-harming.

However, many of the paid medical staff also try to get them to go back to the country they came from, even though they have a well-founded fear of persecution there. If they
did not have such a fear, they would have left by now. The conditions on Manus and Nauru are subhuman and they are being treated with deliberate, organised cruelty.

On Manus I regularly hear of inmates being beaten by guards for offences such as having a mobile phone. The guards who beat the inmates are not charged for these crimes. The guards who raped women and children on Nauru have not been charged either.

"One of my friends says that he is finding it increasingly difficult to see his friends' blood every day, after they have cut themselves."

Of the six people identified in the murder of Reza Barati, two were white Anglo-Saxon guards - an Australian and a New Zealander. They have been repatriated to Australia, and not charged.

The refugees are living in a fearful and dangerous place, and the consistent message from the Australian government is that they have no hope. It is the message of hopelessness that causes self-harm and suicide.

Their medical conditions are untreated, many have skin diseases and injuries from falling over while wearing thongs on slippery wet ground, and they live with chronic pain. A large proportion take psychiatric medication every day, which also limits their ability to think.

They are constantly retraumatised. One of my friends says that he is finding it increasingly difficult to see his friends' blood every day, after they have cut themselves.

We, the advocates, believe that hope is not lost. We believe in the rule of law, in human rights, and in the innate dignity of others. We don't believe that it is defensible to mistreat a group of people so as to stop others from seeking asylum. We don't believe it is defensible to treat a group of people as tools in a war of politics. These people need protection, dignity and opportunity, not punishment.

It will soon fall to the Australian government to relocate the refugees from Manus and Nauru, and I and other advocates look forward to welcoming them to Australia. Australia cannot go knocking on doors, seeking to offload human cargo on other countries. This is *infra dig* - beneath the dignity of a developed country with an elected government. We have room, and in arriving by boat the asylum seekers have committed no crime.

*Peter Dutton, 3 May 2016:*

*I have previously expressed my frustration and anger at advocates and others who are in contact with those in regional processing centres and who are encouraging some of these people to behave in a certain way believing that pressure exerted on the Australian government will see a change in our policy in relation to our border protection measures. The behaviours have intensified in recent times and as we see they have now turned to extreme acts with terrible consequences.*

*Advocates who proclaim to represent and support the interests of refugees and asylum seekers must frankly hear a very clear message and I will repeat it again today. Their*
activities and these behaviours must end. They can oppose government policy and espouse a cause for open borders but that is not the policy of this government and no action of advocates or those in regional processing countries take will cause the government to deviate from its course.

Di Cousens is an honorary fellow with the Australian Catholic University, a university administrator at RMIT and former vice-chair of the Buddhist Council of Victoria. After meeting refugees in detention in Australia she became friends with detainees on Manus Island through social media. For over a year she have been engaged in supporting them in various ways, mostly through daily conversations.

Peter Dutton image: Alex Ellinghausen