

INFORM-ACTION

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

Refresh Australia! Add values to build prosperity

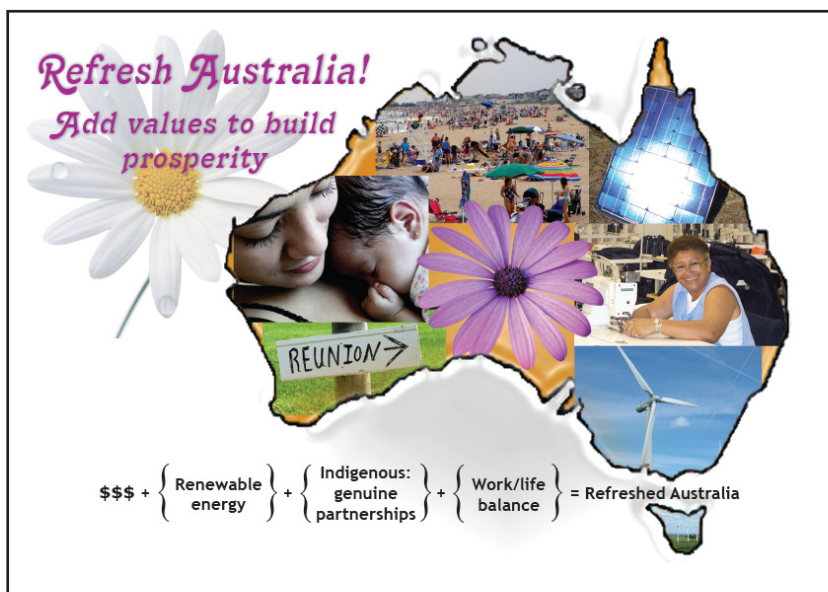
This edition of INFORM-ACTION takes up where the May edition left off and serves to launch our new campaign. In May we wrote: *This year SAO plans to engage in the political process [...] by providing a critique of policies in the areas of climate change, Indigenous affairs and industrial relations, drawing our inspiration and vision from our religious tradition.*

Our organisational values form the basis of our campaign, **REFRESH AUSTRALIA!** The vision of the Social Action Office is – to be fully engaged in God’s transformative dream for all creation... in this dream those in greatest need are given the highest priority.

Our campaign message is encapsulated in the REFRESH AUSTRALIA! card (pictured). You are invited to participate in this ongoing campaign and you can start by reading and reflecting on the campaign information pages. Distributing the card to friends, family members, co-workers, church community groups and engaging as many people as possible in discussion about the issues will energise the campaign in the lead-up to the federal election. More information is available from our website at sao.clriq.org.au/refresh_australia

In an article entitled *Christians and Politics* in the Winter 2007 edition of *Australian Catholics*, Andrew Hamilton SJ wrote:

- “The test of a political process [...] is not who wins, but whether what we plan and do actually benefits people.”
- “Christianity is concerned for the way in which we care for one another and live with one another. [...] The Jewish people’s relationship with God depended on the way they treated the widow, orphan and stranger. The prophets criticised, in God’s name, institutions that do not work justly for the good of all people.”
- “Through elections we take responsibility for who will represent us and for the kinds of policies our representatives will adopt. [...] To use our vote well we



Refresh Australia! Add values to build prosperity



Refresh Australia’s Climate Change Policy:
Maximise renewable energy sources



Refresh Indigenous Australia:
A future strong in culture, health and genuine partnerships



Refresh Industrial Relations:
Ensure balance in Work/Life Choices

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ADD VALUE TO THIS CAMPAIGN –

Go to sao.clriq.org.au/refresh_australia/ or contact SAO for campaign actions/info

PASS THE CARD ON

should take an interest in the policies of the different parties. [...] We can also exercise our responsibility by reflecting on the issues that face the nation.”

It is SAO’s belief that Climate Change, Indigenous Affairs and Industrial Relations are three critical issues that face us

Continued on page 2

Only One Second to Midnight ...

*"We cannot change the outer world without also changing the inner world.
A desolate earth will be reflected in the depth of the human."*

Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme

Averting dangerous climate change by stabilising the climate systems is the greatest, most crucial challenge we face. Nothing else humans have ever encountered is as crucial for so many. A whole of systems, whole of planet response is required; response in our hearts, our thinking and in our actions – in our households, communities, enterprises and missions – and also in many of the ways we approach God's creation.

Buddhist scholar and deep ecologist, Joanna Macy, has long spoken of the *Great Turning*, but now it is urgent, a deep emergent crisis with only a few short years to turn ourselves around and attune ourselves to the health needs of the planetary body we call Earth. Yet the warnings that scientists and the planet itself are offering us are not being fully heeded by government, business and community leaders to the extent that they must. Some until recently have been 'climate sceptics and deniers' just as there are still Holocaust sceptics and deniers. What else is new! In a very real and pressing sense we are all in this together. The good news is that this crisis is also our opportunity to live up to and into our gift, which is our capacity to do what is right, just and good. By changing the ways we live and work and making the sometimes tough decisions required we are more likely to ensure a return to the stable health of the earth that sustains us. 'Business as usual' is just not an option. Renewed 'localisation', each of us working within our own communities and fields of endeavour, is now nested in the greater endeavour of a new kind of 'globalisation'.

Through a sense of at-one-ment with each other, the planet and the Creator, we can learn to mitigate and adapt to the changes already evident in changing weather patterns and avert the potential of much greater crises of 'non linear' climate events. (Non linear events are where the big systems that sustain the climate as we know it, such as the Gulf Stream, might actually shut down – with the effect of more environments unable to sustain populations in parts of our world.)

Ways forward to a sustainable future include hastening the acceptance of new attitudes and understandings and willingness to ACT now on the information and opportunities presented (and let us still be quick about it!). We can refresh, re-energise and reinvent sustainable ways of being in the

world and one of the best opportunities Australia has to contribute to the sustainable future of the planet and that of our own country is in the field of renewable energy. We are blessed with an abundance of natural energy in the form of solar, wind and geothermal energy, yet mainstream political parties are failing to fully embrace the opportunities for a low or zero carbon economy that current and future renewable energy technologies can afford us. Politicians need our encouragement and support to do what is necessary.

As we gear up to the challenge in this election year it behoves us to recall how crucial our participation in the political process is at this juncture in our lives on the small blue planet. So join the SAO in working to refresh all our renewable energy policies for whole of system climate change strategies – from the household to the boardroom and government – and consider also how to make the most of your vote.

*Angela Ballard
SAO Project Officer*

Refresh Work/Life Balance in Orange

The changes to the industrial relations landscape wrought by government in recent times have adversely altered the balance of work and life of many Australian workers. Long hours or insufficient hours, being beholden to employers who maintain a 'flexible' workforce without regard for the needs of family and community time, and greater inequality in the power relationships in the workplace are contributing factors to the breakdown of social norms. Where families who once prayed together stayed together in these days of casualised labour and more shift work, families and communities struggle to find quality, common time to share with each other. Work/Life, the community alliance the SAO is a member of, is instituting "Orange Fridays" every Friday where we visibly wear something orange in solidarity of worker, community and family values (even if it's just socks or a scarf or a wristband). So dive deep into the wardrobe, dig out the orange bits, spread the news and we'll start our own orange movement. Prosperity and values is about so much more than the almighty dollar!

Continued from page 1

at this time in our history.

We are inviting you to reflect on these issues and to ask, before you vote, which party demonstrates the capacity, political will and capability to deliver on their stated policies and which policies are aligned more closely with the values we uphold. A federal election provides us with an opportunity to imagine an Australia where prosperity benefits our country

and all our citizens. As Andrew Hamilton wrote in closing: *"At election time we have the choice of switching off or switching on. If we become involved in the conversation about which party will best govern Australia, we can help shape the Australia of our dreams."*

*Kathleen Tynan pbvm
SAO Coordinator*

Reconciliation - Two Views

On 27 May at the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the group of eminent Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians gathered for the celebration. In many ways the two speeches reflect policy positions of the two major parties, especially in relation to reconciliation. So I have included extracts from both speeches for your consideration.

*Kathleen Tynan pbvm
SAO Coordinator*

Extracts from the Prime Minister's speech (<http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2007/Speech24341.cfm>)

Today Australia remembers one of the finest and fairest days in our history. [...] On the 27th of May 1967, Australians said in a loud and collective voice that indigenous Australians deserved a fair go... We recall today the bipartisan spirit in which it was carried.

This is a moment to reflect on the wider meaning of what Australians were trying to say in 1967, including about indigenous rights. I recognise the importance of rights to indigenous aspiration. I recognise the special status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as our first peoples with 60,000 years of history, the starting point for our nation's history which every Australian child should learn. I recognise too the spiritual importance of connectedness to country and of indigenous languages. And with others I celebrate the way indigenous culture is now so central to Australia's cultural expression to the world.

But in recognising all this, I come back to what I think the Australian people were trying to get at 40 years ago. The right of an Aboriginal Australian to live on remote communal land and to speak an indigenous language is no right at all if it is accompanied by grinding poverty, overcrowding, poor health, community violence and alienation from mainstream Australian society. Reconciliation has little meaning in a narrative of separateness from that society.

This single question; what does indigenous success look like must be our starting point. It's at the heart of what we as a government are trying to achieve in areas like housing, health, employment, business development and education.

But for indigenous success to shine through sometimes, frankly, it demands less from government and more from indigenous civil society; from the little platoons between the individual and the state. Like the family, the school community, the elders, the voluntary sector and indigenous leadership...

Under the umbrella of Reconciliation Australia, this same spirit is inspiring more and more of our people and companies to the cause of Reconciliation; a very Australian, bottom-up, do it yourself Reconciliation. Not in a way that absolves government of its responsibilities. But in a positive way that affirms this as a cause that begins with people.

Extracts from Kevin Rudd's speech (<http://www.alp.org.au/media/0507/speloo270.php>)

If reconciliation is to be achieved, we must deal with both its symbolism and its substance. Symbols are important. They are part of our national life... We cannot simply pretend that certain things did not happen. That is why simply saying you are sorry is such a powerful symbol... Powerful not because it represents any formal legal requirement. But powerful because it makes new beginnings possible simply because it restores respect.

And that is why we will do it – if we are elected to form the next government of Australia.

But symbolism without substance is ultimately without meaning. Apology without action is ultimately without meaning.

So what of the substance? Indigenous leaders I have met have urged upon us the need to set achievable national objectives within equally achievable timeframes. I agree with them.

My challenge is this. Rather than focus on what we disagree on in this critical area ... let us instead focus on what we can agree on.

Let the nation now resolve to transform reconciliation into an Australian reality in an enduring spirit of reciprocal partnership.

And let it never be said when those who come after us in this place gather again forty years from now, our generation failed to seize the day.



DVD Reviews

Blowin' in the Wind is one of the latest films from two-time Academy Award nominee, David Bradbury – one of Australia's most provocative documentary filmmakers.

In this film Bradbury examines the treaty that allows the US military to train its soldiers and test its weaponry on Australian soil. In particular, Bradbury highlights the 'war-games' – *Talisman Sabre* held at Shoalwater Bay, just north of Yeppoon on the Central Queensland coast in June 2007. This joint exercise involved around 10,000 Australian and 20,000 US military personnel.

He looks at the impact of recycled uranium weaponry, especially depleted uranium shells, and the far-reaching physical and moral effects on Australians. The film is also timely as the Government and Opposition move to approve the opening of more uranium mines.

The film graphically shows the birth defects which a disproportionate number of Iraqi babies are now being born with as a result of exposure to depleted uranium. Bradbury questions whether Australians living downwind from the military testing ranges will be similarly affected in the future.

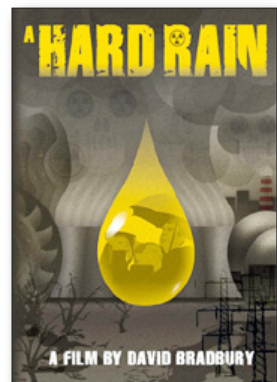
A Hard Rain is David Bradbury's latest film. This film takes the viewer on a journey across five countries – China, France, UK, Japan and Australia – to look at the global nuclear industry from the mining of uranium through to nuclear power plants and the management of nuclear waste. He asserts that there are hidden agendas from the latest push for Australia to go nuclear and much of this is covered by a veil of secrecy.

The film contains interviews with a number of leading scientists and environmentalists who state the facts simply and succinctly. The film urges us to consider that 'going nuclear' opens us up to some dealing with the managing contaminated waste for hundreds of years – a toxic legacy.

Both of these films offer a strong challenge to the current arguments that uranium mining and nuclear energy options are 'safe' and 'green'.

More information about David Bradbury and his films is available from <http://www.frontlinefilms.com.au/>

Both of these DVDs are available for borrowing (for private showing) from the Social Action Office library.



For Your Calendar

AUGUST

- 6 The Transfiguration (Feast)
- 6 Hiroshima Day 1945
- 8 Mary MacKillop (Feast)
- 8 Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki 1945
- 9 International Day of World's Indigenous People
- 12 International Youth Day
- 15 Assumption of Mary
- 15 End of World War II in the Pacific 1945
- 16 Wave Hill Station (NT) returned to the Gurindji People 1975
- 23 International Day for the Remembrance of the Abolition of the Slave Trade
- 26 Migrant and Refugee Sunday
- 26 *MV Tampa* rescued 433 asylum seekers from a sinking vessel
- 26 National Sorry Day
- 27 Anniversary of death of Dom Helder Camara 1999
- 30 Anniversary of East Timor's Independence Ballot 1999

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Wattle Day
- 2 Fathers' Day
- 2 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991
- 3 Declaration of World War II 1939
- 7 National Threatened Species Day
- 11 Anniversary of attack on New York and Washington DC 2001
- 12 Death of Steve Biko (South Africa) 1977
- 13 First Day of Ramadan
- 15 Racial Hatred Act, Australia 1995
- 16 International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
- 21 International Day of Peace
- 30 Social Justice Sunday
- 30 Racial Discrimination Act proclaimed, Australia 1975

OCTOBER

- 1 International Day of Older Persons
- 2 Mahatma Gandhi born 1869
- 3 Day of Jewish and Christian Dialogue
- 4 St Francis of Assisi (Feast)
- 4 World Habitat Day and World Animal Welfare Day
- 5 UN World Teachers Day
- 10 World Mental Health Day
- 10 Treaty on the exploration and use of Outer Space 1967
- 11 Opening Session of Vatican Council II 1962
- 13 International Water Week begins
- 14 Anti Poverty Week begins
- 15 World Rural Women's Day
- 16 World Food Day
- 16 Rigoberta Menchu Tum (Guatemala) is the first Indigenous recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 1992
- 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 19 Amnesty International Candle Day
- 19 Sinking of Siev X 2001
- 21 World Mission Sunday
- 24 United Nations Day
- 24 World Development Information Day
- 26 Uluru handed back to Traditional Owners, the Mutijuli People, 1985