



Justice News

Newsletter of the Geelong Catholic Social Justice Committee

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The need for better mental health services Not just another health issue - It is a justice issue

When Professor Patrick McGorry was named Australian of the Year in January, many people would have asked, “who is he and why has he got the award?” Professor McGorry, who is a leading international researcher, clinician and advocate for the improvement of mental health services, has tirelessly sought to raise awareness of mental health issues, and to highlight inadequacies and inequities in the mental health system.



Professor Patrick McGorry
Australian of the Year

The incidence and impact of mental illness within the Australian population has become increasingly apparent. A survey of mental health and wellbeing conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that one in five (20%) Australian adults experience mental illness in any year.

Of particular concern is the incidence of mental illness in young people. The majority of mental illnesses begin between the ages of 15–25 years with at least one third of young people having had an episode of mental illness by the age of 25 years. In their 2009 Social Justice Statement, the Catholic Bishops of Australia asserted that mental illness is a justice issue for young people because, at a time in their development when they are especially vulnerable, they need particular attention and support. Too many cannot find that support. They end up marginalised, alienated and even in danger of physical harm or imprisonment. The Statement spoke of the need for increased support services – “As a community we are yet to provide sufficient support to those living with mental illness. We can work much harder to prevent it. Our society must act to minimise the known risk factors contributing to mental illness, and we must expand services to meet the needs of those suffering from it.”

Professor McGorry believes that the acute pressure on the hospital system has made mental health budgets very vulnerable and that the mental health system needs to be scaled up significantly. He wants to see the centre of gravity of mental health services shifted away from hospitals to community-based facilities.

There are a number of examples of community-based facilities which provide highly effective and comprehensive services to people with mental disorders. **Headspace** is a facility which provides mental and health wellbeing support and services to young people and their families across Australia. Locally it has centres at Corio and in central Geelong. In partnership with other community-based support services these centres assist young people aged 12-25 and their families deal with different problems and to get help from experts in a range of areas.

The largest healthcare reform for decades is already part of the political agenda ahead of the Federal and State elections. It is vital that any federal plan which overhauls the funding and management of healthcare, addresses the unique needs of the mental health sector. Professor McGorry has called on the governments of Australia to act urgently and effectively to reform our mental health system and to fix its inadequacies and inequalities. This is an opportunity which must not be missed.

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Restrictions and Oppression at Bethlehem University

In June last year Geelong people were fortunate to hear the Vice Chancellor of Bethlehem University, Brother Peter Bray, talk of the restrictions and oppression imposed on the University and its students by Israel (*Justice News*, Issue 42, August 2009). Recently we have witnessed a specific example of how this was perpetrated on one of its students, Berlanty Azzam. Berlanty went to Bethlehem University from Gaza on a temporary permit. She was in the last few weeks of a four-year course studying business and went to Ramallah in the West Bank for an interview for a sales position. On her way back to Bethlehem she was stopped at an Israeli checkpoint where she handed over her identity papers. She was told that she could not leave. After five hours she was blindfolded, handcuffed and put into a military vehicle and taken to Gaza.

Berlanty's case was taken to the Israeli High Court by the University with attorneys from GISHA, an Israeli human rights organisation, arguing against lawyers for the Israeli State and military, to bring Berlanty back to Bethlehem to complete her studies. As one would expect, knowing how Israel continues its illegal occupation of the West Bank, its application of apartheid policies and how Palestinians from Gaza are treated collectively and not as individuals by Israel, the High Court ruled that she would have to return to Gaza even though she posed no security risk.

Bethlehem University was determined to find ways that would enable Berlanty to complete her course and graduate. Her teachers worked with her by e-mail, by phone, by fax and by sending material with people going to Gaza. She completed the course, sat the exams and graduated.

On a very special occasion on Sunday January 10 of this year, the Papal Nuncio, who is also Chancellor of the University, said Mass in Gaza, and afterwards with Brother Peter and Brother Jack, attended a ceremony to support and offer hope to the students of Gaza who had enrolled at Bethlehem University, and to make a presentation to Berlanty, recognising that Bethlehem University had worked with her to meet the requirements in order to graduate. It demonstrated to the students in Gaza who had enrolled at, but were prevented from attending Bethlehem University, that the University had not forgotten them. It provided them with some hope for the future.

The policies of the Rudd Government and the Opposition provide no hope for the students of Gaza. The students of Gaza and Bethlehem University need our support to overcome the injustices that are being perpetrated in our name. This highlights the need for us to renew our objective to raise money for Bethlehem University.

Bill Snowdon



Berlanty Azzam with Brother Peter Bray of Bethlehem University and the Papal Nuncio

Sacred Heart College

Celebrating its 150th Anniversary



Sacred Heart College, Newtown, this year celebrates 150 years of service to the community in Geelong and beyond. A major strength and focus of the college is its social justice program with its commitment—

- to build a school community that treats people justly, fairly and with compassion; that is welcoming and inclusive of every person
- to encourage every person to make an active and personal contribution towards social justice
- to undertake social justice activities and to work in collaboration with others in seeking social change and social justice
- to pursue knowledge and understanding of the causes of social injustice
- to plant the seeds for a life-long commitment to social justice

The Geelong Catholic Social Justice Committee is grateful for the support it receives from Sacred Heart College and for the college's ongoing contribution of articles for *Justice News*. We particularly thank the college for its assistance and generosity in the printing of this issue of *Justice News*

Giving help to those in need

International development requires community engagement

If we are to make a significant contribution to international development and 'make poverty history' we need to take much more seriously the need to engage the community – both in the country we are contributing to and in our community at home. Fundamental to development is the concept of engagement. People who have things given to them or have things done to them have difficulty in participating and therefore taking responsibility for their own lives.

Aid donors preach the need for capacity building, partnership and participation, yet so often fail to practise this approach. This is largely, I believe, because we think we know what others need and are impatient to have the situation fixed. Genuine development requires time, patience, trust and real partnership.

If we impose our answers to the situations of others we ignore the fundamental values of justice, equity and human rights. While our wealth and our experience can be very important in assisting others to develop, the way we share these will have much more impact and influence than how much we give and how much we control. This requires more than Government alone can offer. It needs more participation and commitment from an Australian community that understands the causes of poverty and respects and trusts our partners.

Development cannot take place unless the people themselves are intimately involved in both seeking the answers to their situation and taking the action to change the circumstance themselves.

While giving is good and necessary, seeing ourselves only as donors can lead to a feeling of superiority. If we are not careful we can begin to believe that we are better than our fellow human beings who do not have the same degree of material wealth we possess.

On the other hand, those we call our partners are so often referred to as beneficiaries or recipients, implying that all they do is receive and that they have little or nothing to contribute to the partnership. Receiving help, which is nothing more than welfare/charity can make one feel inferior and a failure.

We have much to learn from our Asian and Pacific neighbours. For example, the way these people live - sharing, working together in community and supporting one another as members of the one family. Most of these virtues we, of the affluent world, lost long ago.

It is very important that we continue to give. However, we should do so in a spirit that respects and identifies the gifts we all bring to that partnership. We need to learn how to learn from our partners and to work with them in solidarity to change this world in a way which ensures that all human beings are treated as equals and able to participate. We must be open to examining our own lifestyle and behaviour so that eventually we, along with all our sisters and brothers throughout the globe, can live peacefully in a just and equitable world.

Bill Armstrong



Bill Armstrong AO who wrote this article for **Justice News** is Co-Chair of Indigenous Community Volunteers (www.icv.com.au) and Vice President of ActionAid Australia (www.ActionAid.org.au)

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

Luke 4:18-19

Social Outreach and Advocacy St John of God Hospital Geelong

Our Vision for St John of God Health Care is that we proclaim the healing touch of God's love where we invite people to discover the richness and fullness of their lives, give them a reason to hope and a greater sense of their own dignity.

Our mission is to continue the healing mission of Jesus Christ through service that promotes life to the full by enhancing the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual dimensions of being human.

Our mission is underpinned by 5 core gospel values -

- Hospitality
- Compassion
- Respect
- Justice
- Excellence



Our position as a not for profit hospital allows us to invest funds in helping others and we value our part of the Geelong community and seek social justice for those in need.

We are actively involved in providing some of the basic necessities to families through the Empty Cupboard program, long term accommodation to young people through the Horizon House program and assistance to families who may be experiencing difficulties following the birth of their baby through the Raphael Centre.

We also provide benefits to a range of people through collaborative partnerships with specialised organizations. Our long relationship with Barwon Youth has led to the development of an expansion of alcohol and other drug support services for young people in the region and allowed us to make links with Aboriginal support services through The Outdoor Experience. This program encourages young indigenous people to reconnect with their community through a variety of outdoor challenges.

We are ready to answer the call in providing assistance for others and matched dollar for dollar the contributions our caregivers made to the appeal following the Black Saturday fires.

In this Easter season of new life and hope our concern is with all those in need, and we are looking at ways we might be able to expand the support available through our social outreach and advocacy activities.

Patricia Boom

Patricia Boom is Director of Mission and Coordinator of Pastoral Services at St John of God Hospital.
For further information visit www.sjog.org.au/geelong and click on 'Outreach'

An Easter Reflection In the Celtic Tradition

**In light defeating darkness,
In wisdom conquering foolishness,
In trust overcoming fearfulness,
Jesus Lives.**

**In strength coming to weakness,
In health rescuing from sickness,
In hope saving from despair,
Jesus Lives.**

**In love victorious over hatred,
In forgiveness dispelling anger,
In glory dispersing drabness,
Jesus Lives.**

**In Joy growing from sorrow,
In life rising from death.
In God giving the victory,
Jesus Lives.**



Justice News

Justice News is a publication of the Geelong Catholic Social Justice Committee, and is authorised and published by the Committee's coordinator, Kevin Yelverton, c/- St Mary's Parish Office, 150 Yarra Street, Geelong 3220 (kbyelverton@bigpond.com).

The Committee welcomes letters and comments in response to items published in Justice News. All letters and comments are placed before the Committee and will be replied to wherever possible. The Committee can be contacted via its coordinator, Kevin Yelverton.

Earlier issues of *Justice News* and further information about the Social Justice Committee are available on the website of the Justice Unit of the Archdiocese of Melbourne at <http://www.ccjdp.org/geelongdeanery.htm>