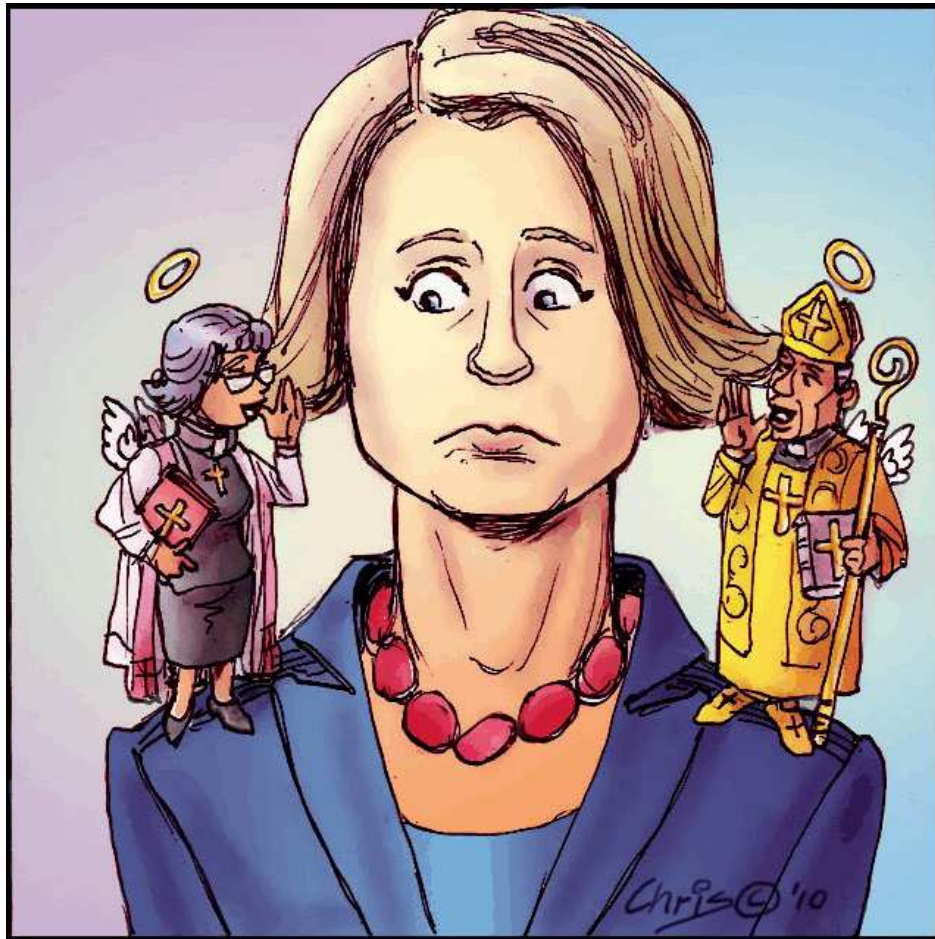


Troublesome nun's faith and feminism <i>Peter Kirkwood</i>	<u>1</u>
Understanding Afghanistan's complexities <i>Jan Forrester</i>	<u>3</u>
Career criminal's uneasy redemption <i>Tim Kroenert</i>	<u>6</u>
Queensland's abortion law shortfall <i>Andrew Hamilton</i>	<u>8</u>
Remembering the unwinnable war <i>Fiona Katauskas</i>	<u>10</u>
Refugees jammed in ASIO bottleneck <i>Kerry Murphy</i>	<u>11</u>
Labor, unleash your rock star <i>Paul Mitchell</i>	<u>13</u>
Tony Windsor's Murray-Darling prescience <i>Tony Kevin</i>	<u>15</u>
Insect empathy <i>Various</i>	<u>18</u>
Mary MacKillop's lesson for Murray-Darling irrigators <i>Michael Mullins</i>	<u>21</u>
The problem with prosperous Australia <i>John Falzon</i>	<u>23</u>
Serious business for children <i>Andrew Hamilton</i>	<u>26</u>
Kristina Keneally's rational Catholic conscience <i>Tony Smith</i>	<u>28</u>
Defending Rudd's aid agenda <i>Jack de Groot</i>	<u>30</u>
What to do when trapped underground <i>Tim Kroenert</i>	<u>32</u>
Subterranean interrogation <i>Vin Maskell</i>	<u>34</u>
Aussie Mary <i>Fiona Katauskas</i>	<u>36</u>
Empathy for the buried as Chilean miners emerge <i>Catherine Marshall</i>	<u>37</u>
Police email scandal can't dampen Indian hospitality <i>Vinay Verma</i>	<u>39</u>
Anti-valentine <i>Aidan Coleman</i>	<u>41</u>
Australia's feminist saint <i>Michael Mullins</i>	<u>45</u>
Geoffrey Robertson's Catholicism for dummies <i>Paul Collins</i>	<u>47</u>



Eureka Street is published fortnightly online, a minimum of 24 times per year by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd

Requests for permission to reprint material from the website and this edition should be addressed to the Editor.

PO Box 553
Richmond
VIC 3121
Australia

Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by the publisher.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned.

Tel +61 3 9427 7311
Fax +61 3 9428 4450
Eureka@eurekastreet.com.au

©2010 EurekaStreet.com.au

©2010 EurekaStreet.com.au

Troublesome nun's faith and feminism

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

Sandra Schneiders is one of the most prominent and accomplished nuns in the American Catholic Church. She is a Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and Emeritus Professor of New Testament Studies and Christian Spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology, Santa Clara University in Berkeley, California.

Schneiders' message and concerns resonate strongly with those of Mary MacKillop, so it's fitting that we hear from her this week when Australians celebrate the canonisation of the new saint. (Continues below)

Mary MacKillop founded the Josephite Sisters to address the pressing needs of the real world around her. In a similar vein, Schneiders warns of the dangers for the Church in seeing itself above and separate from the world. She argues that scripture and the documents of Vatican II position the Church firmly in the world, with something vital to contribute to the struggles and development of the world.

Schneiders spoke to Eureka Street TV at a conference marking the centenary of the [Melbourne College of Divinity](#) where she was one of the keynote speakers. Her talk was entitled 'The Word in the World'. The meeting was held at Trinity College at the University of Melbourne in July 2010, and its overall theme was the future of religion in Australian society.

Like MacKillop, Schneiders is a 'troublesome nun' who is fearless in calling the male Church hierarchy to account. This occurred most recently and publicly in a series of articles she wrote for America's *National Catholic Reporter* in response to the Vatican's three-year study of institutes of religious women announced in January 2009.

Her opening [salvo](#) came in an email she wrote to a few close colleagues that was widely circulated and, with her permission and with some additions, was later published in the *NCR*. Its opening paragraph gives an indication of its overall tenor and her feisty words:

'I am not inclined to get into too much of a panic about this investigation — which is what it is. We just went through a similar investigation of seminaries, equally aggressive and dishonest. I do not put any credence at all in the claim that this is friendly, transparent, aimed to be helpful, etc. It is a hostile move and the conclusions are already in. It is meant to be intimidating.'

During 2009 she penned a series of articles [against](#) the Vatican investigation, espousing her vision for the future of religious life and ministry, culminating in a five-part essay published in the *NCR* in January 2010.

All her writing reflects deep learning, spirituality and love of the Church. She has written a number of acclaimed books, including *With Oil in Their Lamps: Faith, Feminism and the Future*; *Selling All: Commitment, Consecrated Celibacy and Community in Catholic Religious Life*; *Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*; and *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Catholic Church*.

Understanding Afghanistan's complexities

HUMAN RIGHTS

Jan Forrester



Our first parliamentary debate about Australia's involvement in Afghanistan, nine years after that involvement began, focuses on Australia's military role activity in Uruzgan province in the south.

At the same time, Afghan election authorities have cancelled 1.3 million votes in the parliamentary election, nearly a quarter of the 5.6 million ballots cast. The final results are due to be declared on 30 October, although it will likely be later. It's grist to the mill of those who believe widespread electoral fraud and the corruption of the Karzai government nullifies any international assistance to Afghanistan.

We tend to view Afghanistan through the lens of our own experience. Our national parliamentary elections are held on a Saturday morning at the local school complete with sausage sizzle and cake stalls. They deliver our representatives to a well-established parliamentary institution in Canberra.

But in Central Asia, from Genghis Khan onwards, the strong man has been privileged over strong institutions. Institutions are for settled societies. Afghanistan remains a highly unsettled political entity.

The [interactive maps](#) from the Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan show just how insecure the election campaign and election day were for huge swathes of Afghans. [Democracy International's](#) interactive map shows the number of polling booths that didn't open, both in the south and east where the Taliban is strong, and in the north and centre where other anti-government groups operate.

The situation is far more complex than the Australian parliamentary debate seems to credit.

So far the debate has not raised the Karzai government's plan to bring the Taliban inside the political tent, or the fact that countries in Central Asia are already discussing the strategic shape of things following a major US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

There seems to be bipartisan acceptance that Al-Qaeda has been routed in Afghanistan. But US security analyst, Peter Bergen, [believes](#) a hive of jihadists is still operating across the border in Pakistan. This border is not officially recognised by Afghanistan, and Pashtuns in Afghanistan's east cross it regularly.

In August ten members of a medical team from Christian aid organisation International Assistance Mission were murdered in remote north-east Afghanistan. The surviving Afghan

driver confirmed that Urdu was spoken by some of the killers, indicating they were from across the border.

The murders are being investigated by the FBI. However, many in Afghanistan [believe](#) Hezb-e Islami, one of a handful of anti-Afghan government groups led by notorious former *mujahed*, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, were responsible. Hekmatyar's group has bases in Pakistan's Swat Valley and North and South Waziristan.

It also has members in the Karzai government. This exemplifies the conundrum for the international community. Some former jihadi commanders who allegedly committed murder and other human rights violations now sit in the parliament. Under Afghan electoral law, one has to be found guilty in a court of law to be denied candidate status. The international community has failed to address this.

An opportunist like Hekmatyar has no real need of democracy, governance, free and fair elections or human rights because he plays political *buzkashi*, the Central Asian game where a goat's carcass is fought over furiously by opposing teams, with no discernible rules. He has been successful, and US observers maintain he can be brought into the political tent — for a price.

The international community still focuses on elections as the tool of nation-building and as a bulwark against the Taliban insurgency. Yet democracy doesn't end when polls close: many parliamentarians demonstrate little knowledge of basic parliamentary procedures, and their constituents have exaggerated, uninformed expectations.

What is more alarming is that, having instituted successful ballot-rigging during the 2009 presidential election, election players have learned how to do it in more sophisticated ways. [Analyst Noah Coburn argues](#) that clever candidates can use existing insecurity and rumours of violence to their own benefit while hurting other candidates.

More than 30 people were killed during the election campaign, including candidates and election officials. In some cases candidates have encouraged this violence, which has been blamed on the Taliban. The entrenched culture of violence profoundly undermines efforts to establish democratic institutions.

Coburn argues that fraud and corruption, which the international community focuses on, are only symptoms of the real issue. '... Politics in Afghanistan, despite (and in some ways because of) nine years of international intervention, are inherently unstable ... | the country is deeply divided on the question of whether it should be ruled by religious leaders, former commanders or bureaucrats'.

Coburn suggests the international community and the Afghan government should be starting a bigger conversation about how a more transparent and accountable political culture can be encouraged in Afghanistan. It is a profoundly difficult conversation, and one that will

not be dealt with while the international engagement with Afghanistan is seen merely in military terms.

Career criminal's uneasy redemption

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***The Town* (MA). Director: Ben Affleck. Starring: Ben Affleck, Rebecca Hall, Jon Hamm, Jeremy Renner, Pete Postlethwaite, Blake Lively. 125 minutes**



With *Gone Baby Gone* (2007) actor Ben Affleck proved himself to also be a capable filmmaker. He now cements that reputation with *The Town*, a thoughtful, relationship driven crime drama containing a redemptive arc that would make fellow actor-turned-director Clint Eastwood proud.

Affleck plays Doug MacRay, a professional bank robber from the blue collar Boston neighbourhood of Charlestown. The precinct is a hotbed of generational criminality, and is particularly notorious for producing career bank robbers. Doug's own father is doing time for similar crimes. Under the direction of menacing florist-cum-crime boss Fergie (Postlethwaite) Doug is simply following in the family business.

The closest thing Doug has to a friend is James Coughlin (Renner). The two grew up together and are now accomplices. James has already served a stretch in jail, for reasons that have left Doug somewhat indebted to him. Doug has also been romantically involved with James' sister Krista (Lively), and these factors, as much as his decided skill as a criminal strategist and action man, shackle Doug to 'The Town'.

The film opens with a bank heist, during which a masked Doug and James and their colleagues take hostage bank manager Claire Keesey (Hall). After releasing her, Doug later tracks her down *incognito* to find out if she knows anything that might incriminate them. Unexpectedly, he glimpses the emotional after-effects of her ordeal and takes pity on her. Not knowing him as her assailant, she responds openly.

Doug sees in Claire the chance at a new kind of life. Their budding relationship causes him to experience, perhaps for the first time, guilt and empathy for one of his victims, as she confides in him the trauma of her kidnapping. It awakens in him a desire to escape and perhaps be redeemed from his previous life.

But redemption must be earned not just through the repentance of bad choices, but also through the subsequent making of good choices. There are consequences to first be confronted, and ethical dilemmas to be negotiated.

Not the least of these pertains to the secret origin of Doug's interest in Claire, which, if he reveals it to her, will change their relationship irretrievably; but which, surely, he can not keep from her forever.

Also, Doug's professional obligations are not going to readily release him. Neither are his personal obligations to James and to Krista.

Then there's the righteous crusade of FBI Special Agent Adam Frawley (Hamm), who is determined to mete justice upon Doug and his cronies. Frawley's tireless investigation contributes suspense and dramatic momentum to the film, but this, along with the film's exquisitely staged action sequences, simply provide a framework for the warm human stories that are at its heart.

The Town's trailer heralds it as the new film 'from the director of *Gone Baby Gone*'. No doubt it seemed like a savvy marketing move to downplay the Affleck cringe factor (since Affleck also has top-billing); Affleck is an actor whose reputation has been marred by decidedly bad career choices (*Gigli*, anyone?).

That said, perhaps the cringe factor is misplaced. After all, Affleck was, in a past life, an Oscar-winning screenwriter, as co-writer with Matt Damon of *Good Will Hunting* in 1997. It should be no surprise that he might one day end up doing his best work behind, rather than in front of, the camera.

Queensland's abortion law shortfall

APPLICATION

Andrew Hamilton



Last week the Queensland courts acquitted two young people of procuring an abortion.

The case and verdict deserve reflection. Those who, like me, believe that respect for life in its beginnings and its end is important for the health of society, will ask how helpful it will be to focus on legislation in order to commend these values.

Tegan Leach and Sergie Brennan were charged under a Queensland law that forbids abortion except when the health or psychological welfare of the mother is at stake. Believing it was not the right time to bring a child into the world, the couple had imported an abortifacient pill from the Ukraine. They claimed they did not know its use was illegal. The police, visiting the house on other matters, discovered evidence of the drug, established why it had been imported, and pressed charges.

It is not known, of course, on what grounds the jurors found the couple not guilty. Most comment on the case came from those who are in favour of abortion on demand, and so are opposed to the Queensland legislation. They applauded the verdict but, like more dispassionate observers, recognised that the decision left uncertain the legal status of doctors and others who participated in abortions.

The case and its outcome suggest that in Australia the cause of respect for human life, including that of the foetus, may not be advanced by pressing for stronger legislation or stronger enforcement of existing law.

To rely on legislation in areas where community opinion is sharply divided comes up against a dilemma. Relatively strong laws, like those regulating abortion in Queensland, will either not be enforced, or their enforcement will appear arbitrary, and as a result undermine support for the values they try to enshrine.

In the Queensland case few people would have hoped for the conviction and jailing of the couple. Whatever we might think of their project and motivation in large ethical terms, they were young, attractive, naïve, and came accidentally to the notice of the police.

The use of the law in this case only highlighted the fact that many other Queenslanders procure abortions in other ways without anyone being prosecuted. The prosecution of this case with its consequent humiliation of the accused therefore seemed harsh and arbitrary.

If they had been convicted, those pressing for abortion on demand would have had a

martyr, and the law itself would have come to seem harsh even to those opposed to abortion on demand.

The case might lead us to ask under what conditions it is helpful to focus on legislation to deal with behaviour which we believe to be detrimental to society.

Certainly legislation that penalises behaviour detrimental to society can sometimes be helpful. Laws against speeding are a good example. The penalty will deter some people, and the existence of laws will educate others and change their attitudes. So once it is conceded that abortion is detrimental to society, the desire to make strict laws covering it is not unreasonable.

But if legislation is to achieve the goals it aims at, it must enjoy public support. In the case of abortion the public view appears to be that abortion is regrettable, but that for good reasons it is justifiable. What counts as good reasons is only loosely specified.

This fluidity means that when a case is brought under the law, the accused will inevitably win sympathy, the law will appear to be restrictive, and pressure will grow to weaken it further. Without strong public support, strong legislation will carry with it the loose ends of its own unravelling.

Those who believe a good society must be built on respect for human life at its beginning and its end must work to change public attitudes. This will necessarily be a slow task. If it is to be successful, such an approach needs to be based on a respect for freedom, and not simply on an appeal to authority or fear.

In particular, it must be based on respect for the freedom of women whom child bearing and rearing touch most intimately. To respect human freedom involves commending an attractive vision of human life in which it will seem natural to nurture life once conceived.

A community that proposes such a vision must embody it, particularly in its commitment to support mothers in need and to demand economic structures that support humane values.

Remembering the unwinnable war

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas



Refugees jammed in ASIO bottleneck

HUMAN RIGHTS

Kerry Murphy



New changes in immigration practice mean families and the more vulnerable will await decisions on their asylum claims in community accommodation rather than detention. This is welcome, as prolonged detention is bad for everyone. But one significant reason for the delays is not being addressed.

'Karim' is calling me nearly every second day now. His protection visa application was lodged nearly six months ago and he was interviewed nearly four months later.

His case is one of the strongest I have seen in 12 years. He was brutally tortured in his home country and has lived with the debilitating trauma of that ever since. He is severely depressed and showing signs of paranoia. He wrongly thinks his case will be refused because of the long delays in processing.

The delay is not caused by Immigration, but by ASIO security checks.

Despite my assurances and those of his excellent psychologist, Karim's paranoia makes him think we are lying to him and that he will be sent home for more torture.

Sadly, his experience is the rule, not the exception for refugee applicants.

In 2005, the Howard Government changed the Migration Act to speed up the processing of protection visas. A processing time of 90 days was introduced unless delayed by security checks. This was a welcome reform and one of the few positive changes in refugee processing made by that government in 12 years.

For a while, cases were processed quickly. Then the number of asylum seekers arriving increased, especially those arriving by boats. The delays in ASIO checks are now very long. Complaints to the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS) no longer result in satisfactory replies, but more *Yes Minister* style letters telling you the case is being processed and legal requirements are being met.

These delays affect people who have been positively assessed for the refugee criteria. For all purposes, they are refugees but legally they need a security clearance. It is reasonable that people get security checks, but why does it take more than a year for ASIO to advise that someone is not a security risk? As an Australian citizen, I would hope ASIO could assess someone as a security risk in less than 12 months!

The delays are now one of the biggest problems faced by asylum seekers. Those in

detention get priority, but still the processing takes a long time. Those in the community on bridging visas live in limbo. Employers are reluctant to employ them: they need more certainty. But certainty is a long time coming.

Refugees who want to sponsor their spouse and dependent children face long periods of separation from them. Not only must they endure a long wait for their own case to be approved, their spouse and children then have to go through the same long security process.

Waiting up to a year for the visa is becoming more common. Several cases which were so strong they were approved by the Refugee Review Tribunal on the papers, without a hearing, are still waiting for their protection visas more than a year later. Children are being born while this process grinds on.

This processing delay is causing delays at all stages of the system. Refugees who'd otherwise be able to get on with their lives are stuck waiting on a decision by an agency that moves at its own slow pace.

The delays are also affecting agencies and people who work with asylum seekers as they are unable to help refugees move into the community while their cases remain in limbo. The psychological strain of uncertainty is adding to the existing trauma of the refugee experience. Once again we are seeing the process of seeking refugee protection becoming, itself, a significant cause of trauma.

Labor, unleash your rock star

POLITICS

Paul Mitchell

Barbecue conversation at my place inevitably turns to the question of what bands or artists people have seen. Rare gigs or guilty pleasures are named: Prince, Cold Chisel, The Baycity Rollers ... Mick Jagger at The Corner Hotel. And dead artists are popular: Jeff Buckley, Michael Jackson.



But I come into my own when we start talking about who we've seen the most. My band? Midnight Oil. Seven times. I chanted *Oils* with the best of them through many a sorry support band's set.

Peter Garrett was my boyhood hero. He turned me on to caring about the environment, Aboriginal people, workers' rights, nuclear disarmament and even politics itself. He couldn't sing to save himself, but Garrett had something that few rock stars had: straight up and down gutsy passion. And it was catching.

That's why what Labor has done to him makes me madder than a Garrett dance across a slippery beer barn.

They got themselves an '80s rock star for cabinet — nice move. Attracted the notoriously disaffected Gen X voter. But they didn't get the lead singer of Pseudo Echo: they got Peter Garrett, the lead singer of a band that once stood on a truck in Wall Street, wailing about financial inequality and environmental abuse. The same singer that travelled Australia getting to know Aboriginal people before releasing one of the best reconciliation documents this country has seen, the album *Diesel and Dust*.

He's a man who made speeches off the cuff at gigs that Julia Gillard couldn't write in a year.

And what jobs has Labor given him? Ah, Pete, put down the megaphone and Marshall amp, we need you to have a look at this insulation scheme thingy. Guess what Labor? He didn't sing 'How can we keep the recession out of our beds/stick pink batts in all our roofs.' And now he's the man for schools, education and youth, which would have been perfect for him 20 years ago.

Labor has used its rock star politician, who almost made it to Canberra on his own, to push paper around.

A little stage whisper of advice, Labor: Peter Garrett was a rock star and a hero to a lot of us. Use him at the top of his voice! Here's how to make the most of him: first, get him out of that godawful suit and into his long, underarm revealing singlet. Then you let him speak —

sing, if he has to! — his mind on every issue that made him the most outspoken rock singer this country has seen.

The Libs have Wilson Tuckey but, Labor, you will have the real Peter Garrett. You won't agree with everything he says, but, by the rock gods, people will listen. There'll be no need for focus groups and citizen's assemblies — the real Garrett will fire people up so much they'll want to raise their fists at him or take action on his words.

And lastly, Julia, the next time he has to make a speech in Parliament, let Pete come running down the stairs, do his epileptic frog dance, grab the mike and scream until the Opposition's heads droop like your approval rating.

Tony Windsor's Murray-Darling prescience

ENVIRONMENT

Tony Kevin



Tony Windsor's comparison is apt: Australian city dwellers would certainly resent it if a Government-commissioned report was put out for public discussion, recommending that one third of their electricity supply, or one third of their suburban road network, should be closed down.

Irrigated agriculture systems, like electric grids and city road transport networks, are human engineering constructs. They are not gifts of nature. And like electric and road grids, irrigation systems trigger by their existence a government's duty of care to the human communities that they sustain.

Particularly when those systems were built with the blood, sweat and tears that went into the building of our Murray Darling Basin (MDB) irrigation communities over the past 100 years.

We see now, in the latest MDB Report, the results of a perverse alliance of convenience between two extremist ideologies: the market rationalism which only values water as a tradeable good to be sold to the highest bidders, and the deep green environmentalism which opposes any interference to natural ecologies for purposes of building and sustaining human settlements.

To the latter ideology, any irrigation system (or any major water storage and diversion system like the Snowy Mountains Scheme) is actually an unacceptable interference with nature.

Here are some principles which I hope might better inform the current debate:

First, irrigation is intrinsically a good thing for human civilisations. It collects and stores rainwater falling in arid, mountainous, high rainfall areas, and then reticulates this water by controlled means to flat, easily-tilled fertile-soil plains where food can be grown more safely and efficiently.

Irrigation makes sense, as the best means of sustaining human food security under conditions of irregular rainfall in the wrong places. It is as old as Ancient Babylon or Egypt.

Second, if it is proposed to withdraw substantial quantities of water from the existing irrigation-based human settlements in the MDB, in order to restore (temporarily, until the next drought cycle hits) ecological health to the MDB river system, it must not be left to the chance vagaries of market forces to decide who stays and who goes.

It could be the big high-profit mechanised cotton and rice farms that stay, and the small mixed farmers, orchardists and horticulturalists that will go one by one. This is not a good social outcome. It will destroy human communities. We are part of the ecology too.

To claim that the Government will buy back water only from 'willing sellers' misses the key sociological point. Once an irrigation-based community, which is all about cooperation, starts to lose members, it starts to fall apart in an irreversible feedback process. The people (and local bankers) in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area understand this very well. Only economists in ivory towers do not want to see it.

Third, the Australian nation owes the people who live in our irrigation communities a lot — we encouraged them to work hard to develop these areas for our national food security. They are us.

Fourth, it makes sense now, taking a longer view, to help these communities sustain themselves, because city-dwelling Australians will again need their food-growing potential in future, as climate change and peak oil hit our nation harder, inevitably reshaping our national food import and export patterns.

It would be reckless to rely on cheap food imports bought on the proceeds of our present massive coal and minerals sales abroad. This bonanza will not last in a world of accelerating climate change and peak oil.

The present temporarily benign weather patterns in the MDB are no guide to the future policy environment. The reality of severe coming climate change must be factored into policy. Against a background of the inevitable desertification through climate change of most of the unirrigated MDB region, especially in the south, our irrigation communities should correctly be cherished, as places that will become like oases in the Arabian or Sahara Deserts.

Arab desert people cherish their oases and look after them as precious sources of food — they do not walk away from them.

There is a huge social capital and farming expertise invested in our irrigation communities. We need to sustain this national asset, not wilfully disrupt it.

Windsor has urged a wider perspective on the problem: more efficiency in the way water is reticulated to the farm gate and used on the farm; and a preparedness, in a time of climate change, to look outside the MDB catchment for more water.

On the latter point, I salute his courage. We need to challenge the fundamentalist market economics and environmentalist doctrines that say it is wrong to pump water from one river catchment to another.

In the final, future scenario-setting chapter of my climate change policy book *Crunch Time*, I envisaged the future need for a series of solar or wind-powered Snowy-type schemes along

the east-flowing rivers of Eastern Australia, to pump increasingly over-abundant coastal rainfall due to climate change up to highland storages just across the Great Dividing Range.

The advantage of beginning such a public works program now is that it will provide enough water over the next few years to sustain both the natural river ecologies and the irrigation communities of the MDB.

Additionally, such highland water storage and diversion infrastructure will be an insurance-premium against the time — maybe only 20 years off — when all of southern Australia will face severe average temperature increases and coastal region sea-levels start to rise faster, disrupting international trade and coastal communities, and forcing migration inland to higher, cooler areas.

We should think about planning ahead for such climate change disruption now, while our nation can still afford it.

Meanwhile, extra water pumped over the Divide into the MDB could be used to sustain the national asset of our present MDB irrigation communities — as well as the natural river ecologies.

Tony Windsor's questions about going outside the MDB for more water are on the right track. I hope he won't let doctrinaire market rationalist economists and environment fundamentalists mock him into silence.

Insect empathy

POETRY

Various

Beast

Elastic, subtle, canny, rapid
or maybe merely dogged
which as the very word would suggest
 can apply to them all too well,
animals inhabit
another world of cognition
from you and me
(whatever you reckon
about the deep intellect
 of your siamese cat
which mainly behaves like a member
of your home team).
Agouti and antelope
are just not human at all,
though dolphins can sing along
 if not exactly in tune,
while the lion with its pelt of gold
simply exceeds us, a king.
Sheer glory, those muscles rippling
under a sleek pelt — for those
who respond to such beauty;
 we know too little
about the introspection

even of mares and stallions.

We are all tempted to say
that a dog could feel guilty:
our own Fido, at least.

But envy? Or nostalgia?
And does the bounding leopard
rejoice in his great leap?

—*Chris Wallace-Crabbe*

Owed to bees

Industrious servant of excellent fame,
You sting to protect the hive, then you die.
It seems as if you empathise the same,
As man's rare trait of heeding another's cry.
Instinct is such an unworthy name,
Which calls a selfless attitude, a lie.
You cause each flower to bear and contrive
To produce crops we need to survive.
Humans do not actively pursue a bee's favour.
Why does your fervour get you to gather
A glut of nectar. We benefit from your bee-haviour.
If you ever got lazy and languished rather
Than work like some buzz-sawing raver,
We would be left in a considerable lather.
The honey you make excessively, slowly degrades.
It's healthier than sugar, whose effectiveness soon fades.
Honey retards the growth of staphylococcus aureus.
This resistant germ defeats all tries to destroy it.

Even antibiotics have been less than victorious.
Honey, lemon and chilli makes Thai, and we enjoy it.
O, striped insect, are you tired and less salubrious?
One extra great effort, you can deploy it.
To avoid a monumental natural disaster,
Heal yourself with your miracle bandaid plaster.
—*Margaret Cameron*

Mary MacKillop's lesson for Murray-Darling irrigators

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Governments often overlook the needs of rural and regional Australians, as most of us live in the big cities, and that's where the votes are. It's therefore providential that a handful of regional MPs hold the balance of power in the lower house of the current parliament.



No doubt their pivotal position was instrumental in the appointment of the member for New England, Tony Windsor, to chair the parliamentary committee that is looking into the social and economic impacts of the draft Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

Windsor is proving himself a master negotiator and appears to be a politician of great integrity and tact. Lingering enmities with the Nationals notwithstanding, he looks to have what it takes to inspire confidence and goodwill in those who are aggrieved by the circumstances they face.

He has his work cut out for him in the case of the Murray-Darling Basin irrigators, whose initial response to proposed cuts in water allocation can only be described as juvenile and counterproductive. In a highly symbolic action, protestors acting on their behalf burned copies of the 223 page [Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan](#), in a bonfire on a field adjoining the Yoogali Club at Griffith in southern NSW.

The Plan of the Murray Darling Basin Commission appears to be well researched and presented. But it does represent a serious threat to the livelihood of the irrigators. Previous generations of irrigators established unsustainable practices, and today's irrigators are being forced to pay the price. The cuts aim to ensure that those living in towns and cities dependent upon the Murray-Darling have enough drinking water, and that the ecosystem surrounding the river system survives.

Governments have a responsibility to look after the economic and social needs of the irrigators, and also ensure the sustainability of the Murray-Darling. It is to be hoped that Tony Windsor can persuade the irrigators to enter into respectful negotiations about their future so that hostile actions do not elicit a forceful response from authorities.

Mary MacKillop, who was canonised last night, was a champion of rural and regional Australians. It is worth considering her strategy in the context of the irrigators' struggle for survival.

MacKillop is often depicted as a fighter, a person who is able to marshal forces capable of intimidating her opponents. But she was not thuggishly combative. Instead she was steadfast

in her determination to improve the conditions of those marginalised by their remote location or treatment by authorities.

Her style was more characterised by a disarming serenity that was ‘neither pretty, nor small, nor meek, nor malleable’, to use Moira Rayner’s [words](#) in *Eureka Street* last week.

Tony Windsor would do well to invoke the spirit of Mary MacKillop. If she was working among the families of today’s threatened irrigators of the Murray-Darling, no doubt she would urge them to stop burning books and enter into respectful but determined negotiations with authorities.

The problem with prosperous Australia

HUMAN RIGHTS

John Falzon



'And, in the dawn, armed with an ardent patience, we shall enter magnificent cities.' (Arthur Rimbaud)

There's something disquieting about quietness imposed from above in the heart of a democracy. Something eerie.

The voices of the people who continue to be oppressed and abandoned are, in many ways, effectively silenced. Often they are like the gentle breeze or the still small voice that represented the presence of God in the story of Elijah. But in nearly all cases these voices, these stories of dispossession and quiet dignity, are neither heard nor heeded.

Recently, I visited Palm Island with other members of the Australian Social Inclusion Board. Palm, everyone reminds me, was established as the ideal place to exile those who were outspoken in the face of the coloniser. An unruly mob, one informant told me, the descendants of political prisoners.

Unruly is an interesting word, especially in light of the new paternalism, or 'close supervision of the poor', as its chief proponent Larry Mead defined it. When Palm was allowed local self-government it was gutted of its economic activity, as is so often the case when the coloniser walks away from its former possession.

I was lucky on Palm. Apart from the powerful and hope-filled story-telling I listened to from the some of the council leaders, I was also able to privately talk with the softly spoken Lex Wotton.

Lex has been instructed not to speak in public as a parole condition following his conviction for inciting a riot in the wake of the well-known death in custody on Palm Island. Eyewitnesses actually attest to Lex's attempts to restrain the angry crowd. Lex, however, continues to be tagged as a troublemaker. As Martin Luther King, another troublemaker, said: a riot is at bottom the language of the unheard.

The unheard are everywhere: the people who have been placed under the yoke of compulsory income management simply because they receive a social security payment (and the Government has the audacity to call this non-discriminatory!), asylum seekers demonised as 'illegal', people with a disability characterised as being too comfortable on a pension, the First Peoples of Australia living with the historical poison of stolen generations, stolen wages, stolen land and the attempted crushing of the spirit.

The stories of the unheard are a call not to paternalism from above but to empowerment

from below. They bear witness to a hope for redistribution rather than a desire for retribution. As Paulo Freire wrote: 'The oppressor cannot find in their power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only the power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both.'

At a recent gathering of the St Vincent de Paul Society in India, Bishop Agnelo Gracias of Mumbai echoed Freire's insights, explaining that those who have a vested, unchristian interest in defending a cruel and unjust status quo truly fear the conscientisation of the poor. They fear the poor will cease to accept their poverty as a matter of fate, and begin to critically analyse the structural causes of their marginalisation.

Frederic Ozanam, the young activist-academic who founded the St Vincent de Paul Society, warned against employing charity as a substitute for addressing the causes of poverty and inequality. He wrote: 'Charity may heal the wounds but it does not stop the blows.' This reflects a profound solidarity with the unheard.

This is how I would define the kind of theology of liberation that is urgently needed at the dawn of the 21st century; not only a theology but also a sociology of liberation; a precise vision that allows the human community, like Elijah, to know the presence of God in the whispers from the edges of society. We already know the guts of the message: another kind of world is possible.

As a woman from El Salvador told me at the International General Assembly of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Salamanca: 'We begin with what is on the ground and not with what we think is in the sky.' And as a woman from Sri Lanka put it: 'We do not want charity; we want to make our own liberation.'

Professor Ian Webster, a highly regarded physician who has had a long and generous relationship with the Society, put it well at one of our recent Congresses in Australia: 'Poverty ... is an oppression from which we should aim to liberate our people.'

This is a revolutionary message but one that we have for too long shied away from. Revolution literally means turning everything upside down. This is precisely what Christ's Beatitudes challenge us to do. The Beatitudes are a call to love; not a sentimental or patronising love, but a hard and disturbing love:

Blessed are you who are poor. Woe to you who are rich.

Blessed are you who are hungry. Woe to you who are full.

Blessed are you when people hate you, exclude you, revile you.

Woe to you when all speak well of you.

This is a hard teaching. Over the centuries since these words were uttered, we've done triple somersaults to avoid their startling, revolutionary challenge. The poor, hungry,

excluded; these are people whose choices have been taken away by unjust structures and oppression. There is only one way forward, and that is for those who do have choices to take their side; to listen and learn from the poor.

The key to improving the lives of the unheard lies both in making the tools of education available to them, as is their fundamental right, and in simply listening to them. It is not enough, according to the logic of the Beatitudes, for the powerful to try to impose solutions.

It is to the Federal Government's credit that its Social Inclusion agenda gives people experiencing exclusion a voice to influence decisions that affect them. How sad then that this principle is disregarded, as paternalistic policies such as compulsory income management are imposed while the obvious need for income adequacy remains unheard.

How, for example, is a young person experiencing homelessness meant to survive on a \$377 fortnightly youth allowance? And are we not failing our people when, according to a COAG Reform Council report, 43.5 per cent of working age adults have literacy skills below the minimum level required for work, and 15 per cent (2.7million people) are estimated to be surviving with the lowest level of literacy skills?

Prosperous Australia has a problem. Anti-Poverty Week is a good time to reflect on how, as a nation, we allow the voices of the unheard to remain unheard.

Yet it is precisely in this contradiction that hope lies, joined inexorably with the hopes of the oppressed across the globe. Nothing less than this all-embracing vision would be worthy of the kind of hope against all hope that Paul of Tarsus wrote of. And it is embedded in the smallest and humblest of daily struggles of the crushed in our midst; joined at the hip with the struggle for a different kind of world.

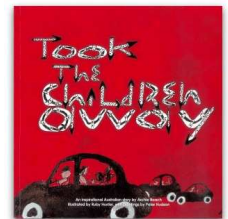
Serious business for children

BOOKS

Andrew Hamilton

Neil Murray: *My Island Home* (ISBN: 9780980564334), Archie Roach: *Took the Children Away* (ISBN: 9780980564341), Shane Howard: *Solid Rock* (ISBN: 9780980564327). All published by One Day Hill, 2010, with paintings by Peter Hudson.

Children's business is serious business. It often makes adults angry. You have only to think about the debates about teaching literacy or history. Or of the defensive responses to the uncovering of the experience of the Stolen Generations and to the detention of asylum seeker children. Not to mention to the sexual abuse of children and more recently to reports of the tasing of children.



The suffering of children opens a door into the hardness of society. We are forced to see practices that we take for granted in a different light. And as we are pressed to change our perspective, we can easily react angrily or defensively by denying the truth of events and minimising the harm that people suffer. Societies try to close doors that open on to vulnerability. They try to control children's business.

These three little books do children's business. The text of each is a popular song through which mainstream Australian audiences became more aware of Indigenous Australians.

Archie Roach's 'Took the Children Away' tells the story of the stolen generations. Shane Howard's 'Solid Rock' is a song about dispossession. Neil Murray's 'My Island Home' tells of the longing for the sea felt by a man from Elcho Island, now living in Central Australia.

The books are splendid fare for young children. The rhythmic words are simple and are spread through the book, a line or two to a page. They are accompanied by carefully chosen and thematic paintings by Peter Hudson, and by drawings by children in the communities associated with the songs. Ruby Hunter, Archie Roach's late partner, provides haunting illustrations for *Took the Children Away*.

Together, songs and pictures create a vivid imaginative world that is both strong and gentle. For adult readers, Martin Flanagan's simple and informed introductions place the works into their rich human context. All that is missing in each book is a CD of the song.

These children's books also do serious business. They make us ask how we should encourage our children to see their world and society.

They are surely right in helping children to see from the inside a world that is not their own. The empathy the books encourage is the base on which all interest in history should be

built. Later on, children will hear other stories, the connections between them and the timelines that situate them.

These songs open a door into the world of Indigenous Australians. The generous fellow-feeling that they inspire includes the recognition of what Indigenous Australians have suffered since white settlement. It provides a better starting point than the coldness, lack of interest and callousness that arise out of fear and lack of familiarity.

The artwork in the books is also serious business. Together with the songs, the illustrations help children to see the importance of place and school them in longing. Longing for what has been lost lies at the heart of the three songs, but they also touch a deeper longing for a world that no political or technological arrangements can ever provide.

Like all good children's books, these works do serious business in commending a subversive attitude towards time. The songs suggest that dreaming, play and song are important and that looking at pictures is as important as reading text. They encourage children to read slowly, to dwell on each page, and not to turn the pages quickly in order to finish the book. They cultivate the eye of the imagination.

These gifts are not valued in society, and so are normally lost. But if encouraged early, this attitude to time as the straw from which contemplation might be made has the potential to undermine the adult view that time is a commodity to be used and traded, to be saved and managed.

The songs tell of the terrible consequences that follow when the fundamental story told by a dominant culture is about technique and the efficient completion of narrow tasks. Children's business is to retain a richer view and to encourage dreaming. It makes less victims.

Kristina Keneally's rational Catholic conscience

POLITICS

Tony Smith



The New South Wales state election next March looks certain to end the 15 year reign of the Labor Government. Many MPs will lose their seats because voters have become disillusioned with Labor's broken promises, policy failures, unprincipled ministerial behaviour and instability.

Paradoxically, while Labor's popularity has declined, the personal standing of Premier Kristina Keneally has grown. But this apparent inconsistency in public approval is not the only complexity about Premier Keneally. While Australia's Labor Prime Minister embraces atheism and the federal opposition boasts a number of Catholics, Keneally's faith makes an interesting study.

Traditionally, Catholic-Labor links have been so strong that wits described the Church as 'the Labor Party at prayer'. Catholics in a distinctly Irish republican culture who felt socially powerless tended to vote Labor while protestants supported anti-Labor parties.

Over the last 50 years however, religion and politics have changed radically. The sectarian divide has weakened and political scientists have noted newer links between religious and political behaviour.

Marion Maddox has noted the opportunistic way that the federal Coalition exploited the rise of the 'megachurch' such as Hillsong, whose conservatism mimics American fundamentalism. Gary Bouma has argued that as the state manages conflicts, attention is moving from inter-Christian sectarianism to relations between majority religions and the fastest growing, such as Islam and Hinduism.

In a secular, postmodern, multi-faith society, some religious stances appeal more because they are committed to mutual respect and tolerance.

Some politicians, and not just those of the Fred Nile Christian Democrats, project images of an arcane, wowsery Christianity. In considering constitutional reform and in demanding greater assimilation of migrants, the Coalition Government (1996–2007) regarded Christianity as central to Australian values, and the current Federal Opposition leader Tony Abbott shows great enthusiasm for Catholic orthodoxy.

By contrast Premier Keneally represents a growingly assertive Catholicism which might be described as progressive, rational and independent.

Keneally has stated plainly her belief that Catholic women should not be excluded from ordination. This potentially brings her into conflict with the Vatican and the Australian

Catholic bishops.

In explaining her decision to support a [bill](#) to remove anomalies from the Adoption Act so that same sex couples would be eligible to adopt, Keneally noted the importance of allowing all MPs a ‘conscience vote’. She described how her conscience was informed by Catholic teaching about the ‘primacy’ of conscience and the importance of actively developing the conscience.

These specific stances — on women’s ordination and same sex adoption — and the more general principle of the importance of conscience are courageous. When the issue of same sex marriage was raised during the recent federal election campaign, both Prime Minister Gillard and Opposition Leader Abbott subjugated their personal positions to a vaguely understood general social expectation.

When Keneally became premier, her opponents and sections of the media accused her of being a puppet. They argued that she had been installed by Labor factional power brokers as a premier they could easily manipulate. Keneally denied she was subject to undue influence and said she would be her ‘own woman’.

Other observers thought that while Keneally believed she could maintain her independence, she would eventually succumb to Labor wheeling and dealing. Despite the continuing ministerial resignations and revelations about Labor MPs lacking dedication to public service, Keneally has maintained a high degree of political integrity. She is no-one’s puppet.

Keneally has not compromised her religious faith. Rather, she has taken positions that will inspire several categories of people. Many Catholics feel proud when the hierarchy opposes war or sides uncompromisingly with the poor, but quite contrasting emotions when it is socially conservative.

Keneally’s intelligent approach to her faith creates hope among the many Catholics searching for new ways to maintain their own faith in a conservative Church. It should convince Labor supporters that with dedicated leadership, the party can put principle before pragmatism.

In *Acting on Conscience* Frank Brennan pointed out that the Pope himself noted that conscience is the common ground enabling dialogue between Christians and others. In a society that values the separation of religion and politics, Keneally’s stance will reassure people generally that there is nothing threatening about a politician whose decisions are informed by a strong personal conscience.

While such achievements might not secure Labor’s return to government next March, they should ensure that Keneally will retain her self-respect and a degree of public gratitude.

Defending Rudd's aid agenda

HUMAN RIGHTS

Jack de Groot

In 2000, the then Australian Prime Minister John Howard, along with 188 other world leaders, signed the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Declaration. Australia's signature on this declaration was a commitment to help the *world's* poorest of the poor.



In a historic sign of solidarity with the world's most vulnerable communities, world leaders committed to a global action plan to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 — a commitment that Australian aid agencies robustly applaud.

For the world leaders who signed the declaration in 2000, poverty was not defined by the boundaries of states and regions. Needless human suffering is prolific, and as a leading international donor, the Australian Government is obliged to respond accordingly.

Caritas Australia is one of the largest Australian NGOs working in the Pacific. With more than 30 years experience in long-term development and emergency response, it knows the Pacific is a region enormously vulnerable to disasters and the impact of climate change; is plagued by HIV/AIDS and is in dire need of our support to build capacity in health services, education and agriculture.

In Papua New Guinea alone, Caritas Australia has facilitated HIV testing for 100,000 people, empowering communities to make informed health decision for themselves and their families.

The poverty and lack of opportunity endured by millions across the Asia-Pacific region is a disgrace, and ought to demand our Government's attention, but it is not enough to try to achieve the MDGs 'at home'.

It is impossible for Australia to turn its back on Africa. Former Foreign Affairs Minister, Stephen Smith aptly noted, 'Australia is a country of the Indian ocean as well as a Pacific Nation' — the distance from Perth to Nairobi is 8904km; from Sydney to Beijing is 8947km.

Africa is the poorest continent on earth and the region that is least on track to meet the MDG targets. Almost 50 per cent of people in Sub-Saharan Africa live on less than \$1.25 US per day.

Australia's recent shift to double the aid budget to Africa recognises this. That said, aggregated figures of despair should not outshine the remarkable gains that have been made in the region due to the long-standing efforts of church and non-government organisations.

For instance, in Zambia, Caritas Australia supports projects that have seen up to 3000 vulnerable people in one community alone yielding more crops, better managing livestock, and accessing clean water, sanitation and health services. Knowledge and prevention of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB has grown exponentially, women have acquired invaluable leadership skills, a once marginal community better understands its social and legal rights, and 500 children have the opportunity to attend school.

In Uganda, Caritas Australia and AusAID have supported almost 2000 households to increase and diversify their crop yields by adopting sustainable agricultural practices including soil conservation, water management and pest control. Consequently more than 11,000 people have improved nutrition and greater capacity to generate income: 74 per cent of families now sell enough produce locally to invest in their health and children's education.

It's a story that's repeated in communities in the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and indeed throughout the world where grass-roots organisations seek to break down the structural causes of poverty that permeate our international community.

In a recent article in *The Australian*, entitled 'Prudent aid agenda is a foreign concept to Rudd', Associate Professor of Public Policy at Australian Catholic University, Gary Johns, [challenged](#) the Australian Government's aid agenda, in particular its growing support of African nations.

Johns' views were surprising given the primary objective of ACU's Public Policy Institute – to inform and influence Australian public policy in line with the ethical and values-based mission of the Catholic Church. He suggests the Government's focus should be 'to keep an eye on its own back yard' and 'assist from within our region'.

In so doing, Johns blatantly dismisses the fundamental principles of solidarity, human dignity, common good and option for the poor that ought to define his work.

The Catholic Church and its institutions are called to engage in liberating mission of God. It advocates on behalf of and with the poor because that is what we are called to do. The very solidarity that is central to its mission obliges it to work alongside the poor, wherever they are.

On his first trip to the UK last month, Pope Benedict XVI remarked that global human development ought to command the world's attention no less than did the fall of global financial institutions: 'Where human lives are concerned, time is always short ... here is an enterprise, worthy of the world's attention, that is truly 'too big to fail'.'

Commentary suggesting Australia's aid budget is wasteful or self-serving is at best unhelpful and at worst a gross misconstruction of what Catholic institutions are called to do as contributors to public policy. Aid delivered at the grassroots has the capacity to bring lasting change the world over. Who are we to deny millions that grace?

What to do when trapped underground

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***Buried* (MA). Director: Rodrigo Cortes. Starring: Ryan Reynolds, Jose Luis Garcia Perez, Robert Paterson. 95 minutes**



Ninety minutes stuck in a box — not the most compelling sales pitch for a film. Until you realise that a set-up like that requires plenty of clever scripting and camera work and a great lead performance to succeed. The buzz is that *Buried* succeeds very well. I concur.

As the film's hero, all-American truck driver Paul Conroy, Ryan Reynolds offers an arresting performance. Paul spends the duration of the film inside a rudimentary timber coffin, buried, apparently, in the Iraq desert. Best known for his comedic work, Reynolds utilises his comic timing to match the beats and rhythm of this pacy thriller and to give the character a manic edge.

The camera takes us into every corner of the coffin. We share that confined space with Paul, along with his claustrophobia, his panic attacks, his fear and occasional hope, his determination to find an escape, his slumping hopelessness. Director Cortes serves also as editor of the film, and thus deftly controls the space and pace of his story.

The coffin is not bare; Paul has a selection of tools at his disposal. Primarily a mobile phone, left by the kidnapper, which Paul uses to make contact with his family, and with those he hopes can rescue him. These variously panicked, anguished and angry conversations allow Paul to spell out his back story: he's a civilian contractor who was working in Iraq delivering supplies. His last memory prior to waking up in the coffin is of his convoy being attacked by insurgents.

Lighting is key to the film's effectiveness. Long seconds are spent in total darkness, punctured by the arhythmic percussion of Paul's rasping breath and his bumps and scrapes against the sides of the coffin. At other times, he is (and we are) offered relief: the orange flicker thrown by a Zippo lighter; the phone's ghostly blue hue; the green of a glow-stick; the tenuous glare of the world's most unreliable torch. These shades and effects are cleverly used to control the mood of the film and provide visual interest.

To the viewer, the other characters in Paul's life exist only as disembodied voices set adrift within his isolation cell. In that regard *Buried* can perhaps be taken as an allegory for modern communication, where the handheld electronic device is the primary conduit to networks of interaction and intimacy.

In any case it is a credit to scriptwriter Chris Sparling that the briefest of phone exchanges

evoke nuanced relational tapestries. One terse exchange between Paul and his sister-in-law can make you picture what Christmas lunch might be like with these two present. And a heartfelt phone call to Paul's infirm elderly mother captures the essence of a loving relationship, and of age and the waning of life.

One of the most important voices is that of Dan Brenner (Paterson), head of the hostage working group in Iraq. Dan's reassuring, paternal tone help keep Paul calm and offer him hope that they are doing everything they can to rescue him. We believe him, although the reality of Paul's situation is such that you can't help but suspect Dan's role is more as palliative carer than knight in shining armour.

Despite its topical setting, *Buried* is not primarily a comment on the rightness of US military action in Iraq. That said, it does tick off a checklist of themes that set it alongside the fraught reality of hostage situations conducted by insurgents in the Middle East and broadcast on networks such as Al Jazeera.

It captures a sense of futility regarding such situations for both captor and captive. It contrasts the infuriatingly rational governmental policy of refusing to pay ransom money, with our intimate experience of Paul's human suffering. It elicits empathy for the 'villain': Dan reprimands Paul for describing his captors as 'terrorists'; they are driven by desperation and a desire to preserve their families' wellbeing.

But because Paul is not a soldier, but a civilian, the true evil in the film turns out to be cold bureaucracy. The responses of Paul's employer to his situation are downright Orwellian. It is this more than anything that gives the film's finely tuned thrills a lasting, sickening resonance that in the screening attended by this reviewer provoked sounds of disgust from fellow theatre goers.

Subterranean interrogation

NON-FICTION

Vin Maskell

A stranger approaches. Melbourne Central train station, a Saturday afternoon. Heading towards 4.30pm.

'Excuse me,' the young man says quietly. I meet his brown eyes, behind his spectacles. We stand at right angles to each other.

Pondering how many coins I have in my pocket I note the man's tidy dark hair, neat olive T-shirt, well-fitting jeans, and coloured sneakers.

Maybe he just wants to ask about the next train.

He is perspiring a little, above his top lip.

Carefully he says 'I need to try to conquer my ...'

But I miss the last word, due to my poor hearing, the man's accent, and the noise of the platform. Twenty metres away a group of teenage girls giggle about something. An automatic voice announces a departure on Platform 2.

Did the man say 'shyness'? Or 'phobia'? Or 'condition'? I remember once being asked, at Queen Victoria Market, a handful of survey questions by an overseas student practising his English. Perhaps this man is attempting something similar.

'Can I talk to you?'

It is a bare question, naked in its simplicity, moving in its humanity.

The man relaxes a little when I answer. A hint of a smile on his lips, in his eyes.

'You are waiting. For the next train?' he asks.

I say *Yes* and ask if he is also waiting.

'I am going to work. Here in the city.' The words are neatly placed, like train carriages.

'What sort of work do you do?'

'Kitchen hand. In Swanston Street.'

I ask if he works in a cafe or a hamburger place or a Japanese restaurant or an Indian take-away but my sentence is too long. He stands puzzled.

I ask again, but with less words.



'Chinese take-away,' he replies. His perspiration is receding.

'A Chinese take-away,' I confirm, imagining the man among pots and pans and woks, among knives and peelers and spatulas. Among meats and vegetables and spices.

The automatic voice announces the next train for Platform 3. The flock of teenage girls further down the platform giggle again. They sound like birds in trees.

I ask the man if he is studying.

'Yes. I am studying hospitality at TAFE.'

'Hospitality at TAFE,' I repeat.

'Yes.' He smiles. Confidence in his eyes.

'Is it a one year or two year course?'

'Two years. I am in my second year.'

I am about to ask if he hopes to become a waiter or a chef or a caf   owner or a motel manager, when he shifts the conversation.

'Your train is coming now.'

The lights, and the breeze, of the 4.29 emerge from the city loop tunnel.

'Thank you. Thank you for talking to me.'

He puts out his right hand and we shake.

The train pulls in. The man turns and walks away. I watch his olive T-shirt and his tidy black hair recede into the distance as he walks to the escalators.

Soon after arriving home I prepare the family meal. I chop and slice and dice. Carrots, shallots, onion, tofu. I toss them into the oily wok. Stir and fry, stir and fry. I add noodles and cashews. Sweet chilli sauce.

Working in my kitchen I imagine the man going up, up into the world from our subterranean conversation. Up, up into the daylight. Up, up to conquer.

Aussie Mary

Fiona Katauskas



Empathy for the buried as Chilean miners emerge

HUMAN RIGHTS

Catherine Marshall

It makes me gasp instinctively for breath, the thought of 33 bodies entombed more than half a kilometre beneath a dry, menacing desert in South America. For two months I have pictured these men measuring their days in droplets of sweat, warding off the terrors that fill their perpetual, enfolding nights.



I have pushed away thoughts of a *Lord of the Flies* scenario, where primitive instinct overrides moral rectitude, an outcome so easily enacted in a place from which escape is impossible and to which help cannot be easily dispatched.

Surely mine was not the only pulse that faltered when, not long after their discovery, one of the miners refused to speak into a camera that had been lowered into the cavern? He was too shy, his workmates laughed uneasily; they would speak on his behalf instead. I silently hoped that his family would insist on seeing evidence of his wellbeing, as the loved-ones of hostages are wont to do.

As the miners incubated and festered in their hell-hole, so their legend grew. Now, as they prepare to return to the surface, their aura thrums with a mysterious, murky undercurrent. 'Things went on down there which will never be spoken of. They have taken a pledge of silence,' said the wife of one of the miners.

These men will have the eyes of the world on them as, one-by-one, they are drawn upwards through 700 m of dense, compressed earth. The capsule in which they ride will represent freedom, but it will also reinforce the might of the earthly straightjacket into which they have been crammed these past months.

I have journeyed in one of these capsules myself, as a young journalist working in Johannesburg, a city set on a vast basin of gold. At a vacant plot on the East Rand, where mine dumps rise like hillocks from the bland, dun-coloured landscape, the Chamber of Mines was showcasing this clever mine rescue device. They had drilled a hole into a shaft perhaps 100 or 200 m below the surface, and had set up the contraption with its scaffolding and pulleys and other cleverly-engineered rigging.

Although the South African mining industry placed tremendous emphasis on safety, injury and death were considered inherent to deep level mining. So-called 'proto teams' were drawn from the ranks of fit, healthy and knowledgeable mine employees, and were trained by Mine Rescue Services to deal with all eventualities: rock falls, winding accidents, explosions, underground fires. They were also trained to squeeze themselves into 60-cm-wide holes

drilled by a rescue drill unit.

The hard-hat I was given would have looked out of place with the sundress I was wearing the day I went to interview the members of a proto team. I climbed into the capsule awkwardly, gripping my bulky, expensive recording equipment. With barely any space to exhale, claustrophobia-fueled panic rose in my chest. Raw earth passed by, just centimetres from my eyes. The light seeped away, and all that was left was the smell of earth, the squeaking of the cable above me, and the sound of my own breathing.

Then a beam of light from a miner's hard hat reached up towards me from the darkness below, and the capsule escaped from its tight channel into a dark, airy space. A voice greeted me and a hand guided me out. I fumbled with my equipment and did an interview, there in the dark, with the faceless person before me. I knew what to expect on my way back up, and was grateful for the light and fresh air that was waiting in abundance when I emerged.

A ride in a rescue capsule makes a good story. But the experience gave me pause for thought in the ensuing years, each time I felt the earth tremble or heard the sirens wail while living on various mine sites with my engineer husband. The earth's deepest crevices will yield resources, riches and jobs for people with little more than labouring skills. But it will just as easily snatch away their lives.

We will all bear witness to a miracle when the 33 miners are delivered to freedom. Their stories guarantee to enthrall us: will they forge lifelong friendships or bear eternal grudges? Will they honour their pledge to profit equally from their misadventure, or will some break away from the pack and tell different versions of one harrowing story? And will the last person to emerge tell of his fear of being left alone as he watched the capsule rise slowly to the surface, carrying with it the second-to-last occupant of the deathly cavern?

The outcome of the San Jose rock-fall will, hopefully, be nothing like a William Golding novel or a case study in severe psychiatric distress. Instead, it will be like a glorious rebirth, a second chance at life: transported in a capsule through a dark, constricting canal, the men will emerge into the loving arms of family and the bright light of the Atacama Desert, decorated now with shrines and icons and flags and the endlessly optimistic, death-defying, and accurately-named Camp Hope.

Police email scandal can't dampen Indian hospitality

SPORT

Vinay Verma



Australian inhospitality is once again on show to the world. Australia's High Commissioner in Delhi is having to explain an [email](#) circulated among high ranking Victorian police officers, which reportedly carries a video of an Indian being electrocuted on a train, with a comment that this would be a way of solving the 'Indian student' problem.

Despite this, Indian hospitality remains steadfast. Indian hospitality is not a cliché. The guest is God in an Indian household. The poorest among India's 1.2 billion will open their hearts and homes to a guest. All it takes is another cup of water into the ever present dhal.

What binds India together is not a sense of national identity but the 64,000 kilometers of railway tracks across the length and breadth of the sub continent. These parallel lines are a source of both connection and disconnection for a large majority of the billion that sweat and smile through the heat and the rain.

It is not unusual for travellers in the dusty and overcrowded trains to share their dry chapattis and pickles with those that have none. This instinctive generosity has its genesis in mythology where God comes in disguise to the richest and the poorest. To give and share is to be rewarded. Maybe not in this life but somewhere in the next.

Medal winners at the Commonwealth Games have been promised free rides on India's fabled Royal trains. The Royal Rajasthan, Golden Chariot and Maharaja Express are just three of these palaces on wheels.

For many of the athletes this is a world only of their dreams. The Commonwealth Games and the opening ceremony gave Indians, rich and poor, an opportunity to be satisfied that there is a reason to celebrate.

The resounding cheers for the Pakistan contingent showed the ties that bind these neighbours, kept apart only by the barbed wire cynicism of politicians protecting their patch.

India beat Pakistan in the hockey. But there was no beating of the chest. All India Radio called it 'a victory for sport and an affirmation of the ties that bind us together'. There was genuine warmth in the embrace of the Pakistani and Indian boxer; one a victor the other vanquished, but bound together by the Himalayas and the plains.

Peter Walsh, commentating on ABC Grandstand, would have been naked if not for Indian hospitality. He apparently did not have a belt to hold up his trousers. Promptly he was offered

one by an Indian journalist. When he arrived for the commentary the next morning there were another two waiting for him.

Kurt Fearnley, the Australian Paralympian, after qualifying fastest in the 1500 meters for disabled athletes, was asked what he thought of the village: 'Just fabulous mate, couldn't be happier.' This was a sincere valediction from a humble man who knows what adversity is.

Contrast this with the cyclist Perkins' churlish pout of anger after his track cycle race and you can comprehend why Fearnley is more credible. Some athletes' sensibilities are crippled by a sense of entitlement.

In his book *Beyond the Bazaar*, Mike Coward, the doyen of Australian Cricket writers, says the warmth stays with you long after your visit.

The hospitality towards Australian cricketers is legendary and a small group gets together every year at the Cricket Club of India in Mumbai to celebrate Sir Don Bradman's birthday. This is tinged with the disappointment that the Don never visited India even though his ship had berthed in Bombay in 1948. He did set foot on Indian soil at Dum Dum Airport in 1953 enroute to the UK and received a rapturous welcome from the press and the public.

It is reported that some overseas Commonwealth Games delegates have abused the Indian hospitality and availed themselves of expensive medical procedures at the Games Hospital. At least one portly African delegate will go back with brand new knees and another with gleaming white teeth.

Notwithstanding the 'electrocution email' scandal, India's hospitality has no caveats. The regret expressed by Premier Brumby should short circuit any angst.

At the end of these Games every participant will have been touched by India's hospitality. From the cleaners in the athletes village to the ever present security from the army and the police. The visitor is guarded with a fervour and diligence reserved only for gods.

This in hindsight will be India's greatest display of hospitality: delivering the athletes and officials of all the competing countries safe and secure passage back to their loved ones.

Anti-valentine

POETRY

Aidan Coleman

You

You skip through this gallery putting out eyes
of priceless Madonnas, Venuses, Helens.
You torch countless volumes of half-felt sonnets,
smash the guitar on which I would strum
my three-chord song of regret.
You bulldoze, trash and obliterate. You
lovely iconoclast, gorgeous barbarian;
you beautiful vandal.

Summer '98

The city open like a teenage heart.
Girls in singlets and
cotton dresses; every boy in love.
The afternoon drifts with ducks and swans,
before bright places on the foreheads of buses;
the mall bruised in orange and shadow.
Sprinklers in flower along North Terrace
and trees a million points of Christmas,
like perfume poured out.

Better than candle-light, to leave

the quiet on all evening.
Just conversation and the clacking of knives;
the windows glossy with darkness,
saucepans in the kitchen

shining like souls.

At this place where our talk ends, you smile.

I find there's nothing I want.

Rhyme

The way your slender-lovely neck
is revealed by your
taken-up hair.

How, when the bliss-cloud
passes over, I lose the
thread of where.

Because of your angel and mine
you wound with such
exquisite care.

Late

The wine sipped-down
to luminous buttons
and the last guests gone.

I snap the lights off, one by one,
leave only candles and a song to burn out.

On the couch you lie:
replete, content,
your beauty flushed and stacked
to tip. And then a kiss
like a latch.

Cats and dogs

These lazy days when cats bake
like loaves in windows

or sprawl on footpaths like accordions.

We lounge in the park
and contemplate what it might mean
to own a boat.

Every possible dog is here, slant-wise
on leads or nosing about
in a hundred rough and scratchy orbits.

Bees are bumping along the hedges.

There's not a care
in the sky.

Anti-valentine

You say to leave roses
for the overcrowded arms of bikies
You pop inflatable hearts and cut the strings
of pink and stodgy cherubs
You shoot down my skywriting plane mid-
clickÃ©

This is not
our day.

Each night

Each night the river of your slow undressing ... |

I contemplate the fall
of your breasts
and think the words
of the poet:

May her breasts satisfy you always,
if I think at all.

Name

You called me by my name; it was
a name I hadn't heard before.

Australia's feminist saint

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Father Paul Gardiner has described media discussion arising from facts presented in last night's *Compass* feature on ABC TV as inaccurate, and a 'nasty swipe' at the Catholic Church in the weeks leading up to Sunday's canonisation of Mary MacKillop.



For many years, Gardiner was the driving force behind the presentation of the case for MacKillop's canonisation. Media reports in recent weeks included a simplistic interpretation of friction between MacKillop and male church authorities. They portrayed her excommunication as a direct consequence of her exposure of sexual abuse of children by a priest.

Stressing that there's enough legitimate evidence of human weakness in the Catholic Church aside from this 'misinformation', Father Gardiner [told](#) Mount Gambier's *Border Watch* newspaper: 'Somehow or other, somebody typed it up as if I said Mary MacKillop was the one to report the sex abuse ... | It's the ill-will of people who are anxious to see something negative about the Catholic Church.'

Such negativity can be seen as an attempt to revive the sectarianism that marred Australia's religious landscape until recent decades. Narrowly focused, and often distorted, religious argument between Catholics and Protestants ensured division in Australian society for generations.

These recent attempts to rekindle sectarianism miss the point of MacKillop's elevation. The canonisation signifies her triumph over adversity on behalf of all Australians, and not a victory for Catholics over non-Catholics.

The inclusiveness of her struggle for education for rural and regional Australians in particular ensures her legitimacy as a role model for all. She faced and overcame obstacles such as the patriarchy that dominated both church and society around the turn of the 19th century.

In a [commentary](#) published last week at the ABC's Religion & Ethics portal, historian Father Ed Campion wrote of the trials of MacKillop's migrant Scots family as they struggled to make a go of life in Australia, which they found 'strange and at times uncomfortable'.

He went on to quote an American source which suggested that the mature MacKillop's combative response to the patriarchy's assault on the dignity of women at the time has 'made her a heroine to modern Australian feminists'.

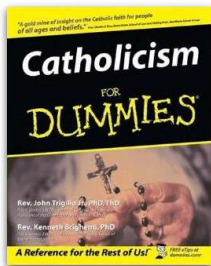
Campion says: ‘Living in isolated little cottage convents, young and unlearned, subject to chicanery and abuse — “ignorant servant girls” one parish priest called them from his pulpit — they nevertheless stuck to Mary and her understanding of their vocation.’

It’s easy to see that sexual abuse was part of the mix of challenges facing MacKillop and her sisters. But clearly it was one among many elements of disfunction within the church and society of the time.

Geoffrey Robertson's Catholicism for dummies

RELIGION

Paul Collins



Geoffrey Robertson may be a celebrity QC, but historian he is certainly not.

In his book *The Case of the Pope* and recently at Sydney's Festival of Dangerous Ideas, he touts the notion that the Vatican is not a real state and that as a consequence Benedict XVI should not be granted immunity from prosecution. Therefore he can be put on trial for his alleged responsibility in covering up clerical sexual abuse.

While to insiders it is obvious Robertson doesn't understand how the Church works (he even cites *Catholicism for Dummies* as one of his reference sources), I completely concede that Catholicism has a massive problem with sexual abuse and its cover-up.

Some Catholics, of course, have been saying exactly that for years. We know Catholicism faces a massive institutional problem, exacerbated by clericalism, and needs a radically new approach to Church government. But this will be achieved by committed Catholics, not articulate QCs.

In fact Robertson's boots and all approach diverts attention from the real issues. He focuses on what he calls the 'pernicious doctrine' of sovereignty, that is the legal inhibition that prevents states from interfering in the internal affairs of other states.

But first, let's get a bit of history straight. The Holy See is the oldest state in Europe. The popes first administered Rome during the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century. Then in the 680s several able popes were obliged to take political leadership in the protection of central Italy. This led to an independence movement that resulted in the formation of the *respublica Sancti Petri*, the forerunner of the Papal States. This was later recognised by Pepin the Short, Charlemagne's father.

The Papal States survived as a geographical and legal entity until 1870 when Rome was absorbed into the Kingdom of Italy. The popes never surrendered their territorial claim and in the three Lateran Treaties, a series of agreements between Mussolini's Italy and the Vatican Secretary of State, Pietro Casparri, the Holy See was recognised as a sovereign entity with a tiny territory, the Vatican City State.

Australia recognises the sovereignty of the Holy See. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in its 'Holy See Country Brief' correctly defines the Holy See as 'the central government of the Catholic Church'. It says that 'The Vatican City State was established ... [to provide] the Holy See with a small territorial base and consequent recognition as an

independent sovereign entity in international law.'

The DFAT Brief says that the Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with 176 countries (Australia has relations with 127) and that all Vatican territory is protected as a world cultural heritage site.

Essentially Robertson's attack on the papacy emanates from his preoccupation with limiting state sovereignty so that his particular notion of human rights can be enforced worldwide, and tyrants like Saddam Hussein (Robertson supported the bombing of Iraq) can be brought before the courts.

He sees himself as engaging in a kind of 'tyrannicide' who ranges across the world overthrowing 'evildoers' and bringing them to justice, like his Puritan hero John Cooke who prosecuted King Charles I in 1649 leading to the monarch's execution. Perhaps, like the regicide Cooke, Robertson sees himself as a kind of 'papacide'?

His ignorance of how the church works is revealed in his attack on Benedict XVI. He says that widespread sexual abuse happened 'because Joseph Ratzinger, both as head of the CDF and as Pope, has insisted for the past 30 years that all such cases be dealt with in secrecy under canon law' — a legal system Robertson derides — instead of reporting abusers to the local police.

The facts are, as New Zealand canonist Brendan Daly showed last year in the periodical *Compass*, bishops found that using the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* was inadequate to deal with the abuse scenario they faced. They decided 'that using the canonical law and process was too complicated and difficult, and so they simply made no attempt to use the provisions of penal law that existed'.

While theoretically sexual abuse had fallen within the competence of Holy Office since 1962, bishops ignored that provision. It was not until 2001 that Ratzinger's CDF was given full supervision over complaints of sexual abuse. So if anyone is to blame it is local bishops.

Once he understood the extent of the problem Ratzinger as Pope moved quickly. An example is the Mexican priest-psychopath, Marcial Maciel. In 2003 I was told by an official of the CDF that they believed a case had been made against Maciel. But he had strong support in the Vatican and was a friend of John Paul II, so the CDF was hamstrung.

As soon as he became Pope, Benedict XVI moved to deal with this serial abuser. Yes, he should have been handed over to the police, but apparently none were actually after him.

It seems to me that Robertson QC is more interested in his own sovereignty agenda than the actual pursuit of justice for victims.

