

## ***Pax Christi Australia (NSW)***

*October 7, 2019*

*Report*

### **August 28 Statement of Solidarity with Human Rights Defenders, Religious People and Other Leaders Accused of Sedition in the Philippines.**

#### **Statement of Solidarity with Human Rights Defenders, Religious People and Other Leaders Accused of Sedition in the Philippines.**

Pax Christi Australia expresses deep concern and outrage at the condemnation of leaders in the Philippines such as lawyers, human rights defenders and bishops, priests and other religious leaders who have been charged with sedition and accused of terrorist links for speaking truth to power. We object strongly to framing any kind of activism or holding a contrary opinion as an attempt to overthrow the government. There are grave implications of red tagging or labelling individuals and groups as subversive, left leaning or as terrorists because they express dissent. Association with any organisation and belief in the principles it espouses is an exercise of the right to freedom of thought, assembly, and association. Curtailing this and may affect all other rights such as the right to free speech, expression, and movement among others.

With other organisation in Australia and the Philippines, Pax Christi Australia condemns the false charges against people who stand with people who are oppressed, disenfranchised, and have their human rights and right to life disregarded by the military and paramilitaries. We understand that some of the charges against bishops, priests and religious as well as the vice-president and other opposition members are linked to the release of a video that has linked the President and his family to the illegal drug trade.

Pax Christi Australia joins with Pax Christi Asia Pacific (Philippines, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Sri Lanka and South Korea), to stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the Philippines who have been accused of sedition and face imprisonment. The ongoing persecution of lawyers, human rights defenders, people protecting their lands, and religious and political leaders who stand with them must cease. The Philippines cannot be seen as a democratic nation if human rights are disregarded especially when people call out criminal actions. The best response to dissent in a community is to address legitimate grievances. >This would show a commitment by the government to work in the best interests of all its citizens.

Pax Christi believes that healthy dissent is a mark of a truly democratic and self-confident society. It points to better ways of serving the people, as no government can claim to have all the wisdom. Dissent should be enshrined in law, not criminalised and punished.

Father Claude Mostowik msc  
Pax Christi Australia  
National President  
August 28, 2019

#### ***Response from Pax Christi Filipinas***

Dear Fr Claude and Pax Christi Australia,  
Thanks again for the Statement PCAP issued in defense of the bishops and priests being persecuted in the Philippines.

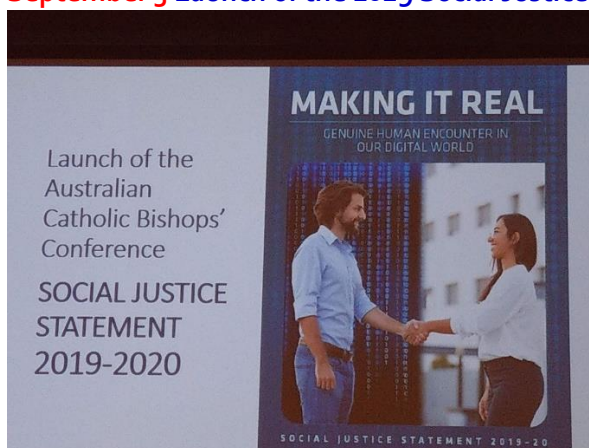
Here are their photos.

Dear Pax Christi family, please keep them in your prayers

Warmly,  
Jasmin



**September 3** Launch of the 2019 Social Justice Statement, Mary McKillop Place, North Sydney



**Beth Doherty**



**Margaret Van Heekeren**

**September 5** Training Day for Participants from the Inter-congregational Voice on Climate Change who were going to Canberra to meet parliamentarians on September 17-18. (Full day)

**September 6** Mercy College Chatswood students for social justice day. Claude took two groups that day.

**September 8** Cathy McGowan, former Independent member for Indi gave presentation on how to deal with politicians vis-à-vis asylum seekers at Mary McKillop Place, North Sydney. About 40 people attended. A very practical presentation. This presentation was repeated the following week at Mary McKillop Place, North Sydney. She is also going to Victorian and Tasmanian towns to give her presentation



**September 9** Pax Christi National Skype meeting with members from Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland. Much of the discussion followed a recent Skype with Pax Christi Asia Pacific relating to the general dissatisfaction with the relationship between the Asia Pacific region and Pax Christi International which has, for years, been perceived to be very Euro-centric. Claude has written a letter to the Secretary General calling for a meeting with the Presidents and the Executive to explore these issues.

**September 11** Media Statement - *Let Priya and Nades and their family stay*

'The command to love others as we love ourselves is not, of course, a uniquely Christian expression; rather, it is evidence of a universal truth – we cannot diminish others without diminishing ourselves.' Father Rod Bower, Archdeacon for Justice Ministries, Anglican Diocese of Newcastle (The Saturday Paper, September 7-13 2019, p 7).

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We, the organisations that have issued this statement, call on the Australian Federal Government to show compassion and empathy for Priya, Nades, Kopika and Tharunicaa – the Tamil family who have been adopted by the community of Biloela. The children born to this precious family are Australians. They belong here.  
We know that Australians are fair, they want everyone to have the same chance in life. We are sad at the division being sown in our communities over this situation.

We think the Australian people understand that policies are there for governing us - to keep us safe and secure - and at the same time, discretion is there to help in individual cases, such as this Tamil family that has called Biloela home.

Australia is not only rich in natural resources; it is rich in its moral compass of love and compassion.

Australia needs the leadership of our Prime Minister at this time. We call on you, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, to build our nation's understanding of itself as compassionate and fair. We call upon you to explain to those who do not understand the details of this situation that granting Priya, Nades, Kopika and Tharunicaa refugee status will build a future of diversity, acceptance and love.

There is in our law a provision for Ministerial Discretion in cases where the law alone does not deliver a just outcome. This is such a case. Priya's and Nades' children were born in Australia, they know no other world other than Australia, and their family has been accepted by an Australian community who regard them as important and valued members of that community. It is for cases like this that the Minister is given a discretionary power to intervene. And intervene he must.

We do not need to live in fear. We acknowledge that if the Minister exercises his discretion in this case, there may be concerns that it would be a precedent for future similar cases. However, the law provides that each case is considered on its merits, and so we do not think that a decision by Minister David Coleman will compromise interpretation of the law. That is, each case is weighed on its merits, and as each case is different, one cannot predict the outcome.

Now is the time to act. Let Priya, Nades, Kopika and Tharunicaa return to a place of safety on the Australian mainland. Let them be welcomed as refugees, so they can become Australian citizens.

Click here: [Online Petition...](#) share with your friends and networks...you will make the difference

Signatories and Contacts

NSW Ecumenical Council – The Reverend Dr Raymond Williamson OAM (President), and the Very Reverend Fr Dr Shenouda Mansour (General Secretary) – 0418 713 733

Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children, NSW – Gaby Judd (Coordinator) – 0412 554 541

The Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education – Phil Glendenning, Director  
Pax Christi Australia – Fr Claude Mostowik – 0411 450 953 and Wies Schuiringa (Co-Convenors NSW Ecumenical Council Peace and Justice Commission)

Church Council, Pitt Street Uniting Church, Sydney

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Justice and Peace Centre

The Josephite Justice Network (Sisters of St Joseph) – Sister Jan Barnett

**September 12 Politics in the Pub at the Toxteth Hotel, Glebe** with Sr. Susan Connelly and Dr Phil Glendenning. **Theme: *Australia's political Hostages as Scapegoats; Manus and Nauru, a ripartite Policy on Torture.***



**September 14 Rally and March Town Hall, Sydney in support of asylum seekers.**



**September 19 Media Statement - Let Priya and Nades and their family stay**

A coalition of NSW justice and peace organisations today continued their campaign to bring the Tamil family currently being held on Christmas Island back to the Australian mainland. Following a court

decision that further delayed a finding on this matter, the organisations called on Prime Minister Scott Morrison to bring the family back to a community setting while the court process continues.

Ms Gillian Hunt, Chairperson of the Pitt Street Uniting Church said 'This is a clear example of where we must listen to Jesus' teachings. He said 'let the little children come unto me', and his teaching compels us to show compassion to Kopika and Tharunicaa, and let them and their parents stay in mainland Australia with access to medical services while the court process continues.'

The General Secretary of the NSW Council of Churches, the Very Reverend Fr Dr Shenouda Mansour said 'We believe that Australians want people who are seeking asylum to be treated fairly. The Government can help Australians reach an understanding of the facts, and why it is fair and right to let them stay in Australia.'

### **Ministerial Discretion – why it must be used**

Mr Phil Glendenning, Director of the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education said 'There is in our law a provision for Ministerial Discretion in cases where the law alone does not deliver a just outcome. This is such a case. And intervene he must.'

He further said 'We do not need to live in fear. We acknowledge that if the Minister exercises his discretion in this case, there may be concerns that it would be a precedent for future similar cases. However, the law provides that each case is considered on its merits, and so we do not think that a decision by Minister David Coleman will compromise interpretation of the law. That is, each case is weighed on its merits, and as each case is different, one cannot predict the outcome.'

### **Conclusion – call to the Government to act with compassion**

Mr Glendenning said, 'It is important to remember that if Priya is deported she will be a stateless person. She has no documentation in Sri Lanka. Another reason to intervene'

Father Shenouda said that representatives of the coalition had invited the Prime Minister to discuss the best way forward, and how to build community support for a just and fair outcome.

### **Signatories and Contacts**

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*Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children, NSW – Gaby Judd (Coordinator)*

*The Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education – Phil Glendenning, Director - 0413 013 758.*

*Pax Christi Australia – Fr Claude Mostowik – 0411 450 953 and Wies Schuiringa (Co-Convenors NSW Ecumenical Council Peace and Justice Commission)*

*Church Council, Pitt Street Uniting Church, Sydney*

*Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Justice and Peace Centre Fr Claude Mostowik – 0411 450 953*

*The Josephite Justice Network (Sisters of St Joseph) – Sister Jan Barnett*

### **September 19 NSW Ecumenical Council Executive Meeting**

Bishop Michael McKenna, Bishop of Bathurst, attended as an observer. Claude and Fr James Collins (Anglican priest from Burwood) to meet with Jewish Board of Deputies to address concerns and give reassurances about perceived anti-Semitic stance of the NSW Ecumenical Council in its collaboration with the Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Network and calls for sanctions.

**September 20 School Strike for Climate Change.** Worship service at 10:30am at Pitt St Uniting Church. The school strike was an amazing action with people from the Edmund Rice Centre, the

Pacific Calling Partnership and many other religious from various congregations present. Some Pax Christi members were with members of other organisations that we are associated with.



**September 21 Rainbow Catholic Inter-Agency meeting.** Planning of National Symposium in February 2020

**September 21 International Day of Peace Interfaith Service at Parramatta Mission.** Keynote Speaker: Professor Peter Shergold, Chancellor of Western Sydney University. Representatives from the Aboriginal, Baha'i, Brahmakumaris, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jain, Jewish Mandaean Sikh, Sufi and Zoroastrian communities who offered prayers for peace. Most of the prayers were offered by young people.





**September 23 Community Justice Coalition.** Items discussed computers in cells— project; developments; continuing education prospects with universities given that TAFE is no longer available; prepare new Seminar for women's education in prison at Parliament House in early 2020; ministerial meeting report.

**September 25 Meeting with human rights lawyer** re: West Papua situation and the threats to Indonesian human rights lawyer, Veronica Koman, who working with the Papuan people. Possibilities of action by MSC and Pax Christi in support.

**September 26 Pacific Climate Watch – Inter-Congregational Voice on Climate Change.** Reports from participants who met with parliamentarians in Canberra re: Pacific Islands and the climate emergency. Very positive responses. Claude to meet with Senator Kristina Keneally on October 4

**September 26 Meeting at NSW Ecumenical Council** re: organizing an interfaith service in support of asylum seekers and refugees with a focus on the Tamil family currently held in Christmas Island immigration detention centre. The service will be held on October 10 Pitt Street Uniting Church from 5.00pm The purpose of this service is to bring people of faith together to worship and show spiritual leadership and compassion towards refugees and asylum seekers. For security purpose, an Eventbrite Registration will be set up. Claude is drafting a letter on behalf of the Peace and Justice Commission of the NSW Ecumenical Council to be signed by the general secretary and sent to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Greens and members of the cross parties..

**September 26 Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition/IPAN (Independent and Peace Australia Network).**

**October 2 Meeting at NSW Ecumenical Council** re: organizing an interfaith service in support of asylum seekers and refugees with a focus on the Tamil family currently held in Christmas Island immigration detention centre.

**October 3 Mass for Cana (De Porres) Community, Darlinghurst**

**October 4 Letter sent to the politicians listed below on Uluru Statement as prepared by Peter Griffin and Maggie Galley with thanks**



## **Pax Christi Australia - International Christian Peace Movement**

**National President: Father Claude Mostowik MSC**

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**[mscjust@smartchat.net.au](mailto:mscjust@smartchat.net.au)**

1 October 2019

Prime Minister  
Hon Scott Morrison  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

The Biennial Conference of Pax Christi Australia (16-18 August 2019) supports efforts of Indigenous Australia to address the longstanding structural wrongs rendered to it by its exclusion in the Australian Constitution. Aboriginal Australia has never been on equal footing with any other cultural group living in this land, even though its sovereignty, which has never been ceded, has spiritual roots which go back in excess of 60,000 years. Before 1788 there were an estimated 300,000 to 1 million Indigenous people. By 1920 the number may have been as low as 80,000.

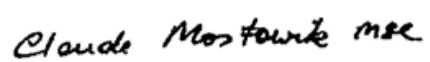
The complete absence of any role for the First Nations people in the Constitution confirmed and set in concrete, structural disempowerment. The result is an international scandal, when after 66 years, a referendum was hailed as successful which barely achieved recognition in the right to be governed by the Federal Parliament and the right to be counted. In so many other ways, there remained, as is stated in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, "torment of powerlessness."

The road to positive recognition in the Constitution has been supported by both sides of politics for more than 15 years. However in 1999 it was rejected in the referendum as a change to the preamble. What is now proposed is a change to a relatively few carefully chosen words which will cement into the Constitution the principle that Indigenous people must be consulted when Parliament makes laws about them.

This change will do no more than provide for the Parliament to establish an advisory body outside the Constitution and outside the Parliament. It would be a deeply longed for Voice which would show respect for the First Nations people in its co-design in partnership with them. It will give to all Australians the opportunity to acknowledge the truth of the great compromise of our national beginning since 1788.

The Biennial Conference of Pax Christi Australia urges the Government to promote as widely as possible the necessary preparations to ensure the support for these changes to be approved by a majority of Australians in a majority of States by referendum.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claude Mostowik msc". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

(Father) Claude Mostowik msc

National President

Prime Minister

Leader of the Opposition

Ken Wyatt

Pat Dodson

Linda Burney

Richard Di Natale

Adam Bandt

Andrew Wilkie

Zali Steggall

Jacqui Lambie

Dr Helen Haines

Rebekha Sharkie

Rex Patrick

Marlarndirra McCarthy

Warren Snowden.