



# SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

# the Beacon

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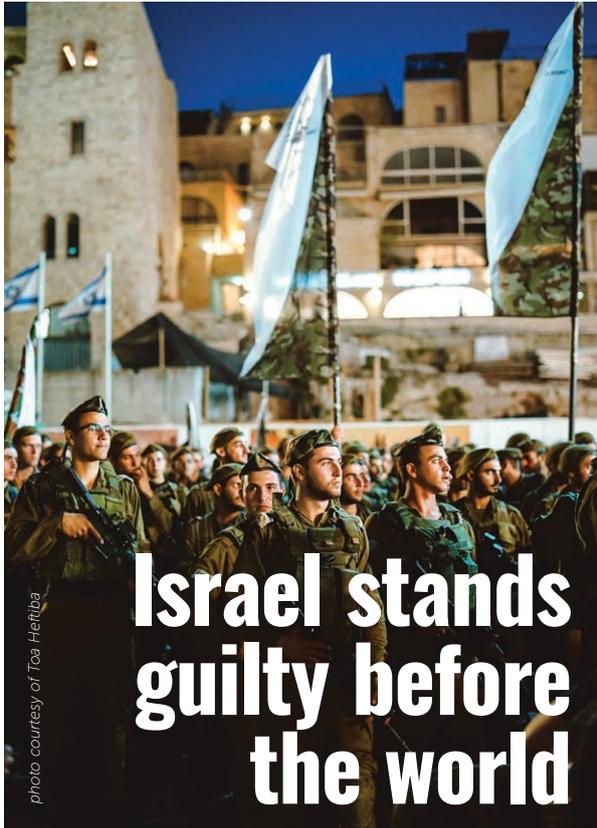


photo courtesy of Teo Heftiba

## Israel stands guilty before the world

**"I've been deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land. It reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa." – Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

The Israeli propaganda machine has been in full throttle corresponding with their vicious fascist-style suppression of the Palestinian people, their introduction of apartheid and the slaughter of a people with long historical ties to their land. It is a land that is being systematically stolen from them in front of the whole world and with the support of the most imperialistic governments: the US, the UK, and Australia.

In 2014 Israel launched a military offensive against Gaza, the third major assault in less than 10 years. That war killed 2,251 Palestinians, including 551 children. It also destroyed 142,071 housing units, 17 hospitals and 258 schools. This has resulted in the displacement of around half-a-million Palestinians exposing them to poor water and sanitation access, acute health problems and severely limited access to education for Palestinian children. This was a war crime by any standards. Oxfam has estimated that it would take over 100 years to rebuild at the current rate of progress.

As a result of Israeli atrocities Gaza has become the world's largest open-air prison. Israel has imposed an illegal blockade of land, sea and air, preventing the free movement of people and goods. It ensures that this coastal strip, with its population of 1.9 million, is completely cut off from the outside world.

Consider the facts:

- Eighty per cent of Gazans are dependent on humanitarian aid simply to survive and 47% of these people are food insecure.
- Gazans face electrical blackouts for 12–16 hours per day.
- Ninety-seven per cent of their water is not safe for consumption.
- Over 31% of essential medicines are unavailable.

Criticism of their policies is considered by reactionary Israelis to be 'antisemitic'. This is the weapon used by their propaganda machine to scare governments, politicians and journalists into suppressing the truth and this must be vigorously rejected. When we criticise the Catholic Church for covering up the crimes of their priesthood against children that does not make us anti-Catholic. When we criticised the US government for illegally invading Iraq that did not make us anti-American. Criticising our government for its savage treatment of asylum seekers doesn't make us anti-Australian. We must call out and expose the use of antisemitism as a weapon to silence criticism of Zionism.

It is not antisemitic to criticise Israeli war crimes. It is not antisemitic to expose the Israeli Zionist government turning Gaza into a giant pogrom. Jewish people fled similar pogroms around Europe and that is why many Israelis and many Jews around the world are standing up and opposing Israel's Nazi-style policies towards Palestine. Israeli policies against the Palestinian people mirror the experiences of many Jewish people at the hands of Nazism.

Silence in the face of what can only be described as genocide in Palestine makes us complicit in this Zionist crime. It is time to expose and reject the claims of antisemitism being used to silence dissent and criticism of the Israeli Zionist government and to stand firm in defence of justice for the Palestinian people.

Israel stands guilty before the world. We must demand that our government ceases to grovel to the US and takes an independent and firm stand against Israel's criminal policies. ☪

EDITORIAL



# The 2018 Federal and State Budgets

The Federal Budget for 2018 focused heavily on tax cuts. The majority of the cuts, however, will not be delivered for a number of years, raising major questions about how seriously they should be taken.

This financial year people earning up to \$37,000 will get up to \$200 back in their return. Those on up to \$90,000 will receive a maximum of \$530. The Government says it will flatten out the tax system over the next 7 years.

The first problem is that the cuts depend on revenue estimates going many years into the future, and such estimates are notoriously unreliable. Many commentators believe it is unwise to try to lock future governments into expenditure that depends on revenue that may well not be there. While the proposed cuts cost \$14 billion over the first 4 years, they cost \$140 billion – 10 times as much – over 10 years. The Budget deficit this year will be \$18.2 billion. Treasury forecasts that the Budget will go into surplus in the years ahead. It routinely forecasts this ... and it's usually wrong.

In particular the Budget forecasts that wages will grow by 2.75% this financial year, 2.25% in 2019–2020, and 3.5% in 2020–21. These forecasts are truly, in the words of the Chair of the Australian Institute of Company Directors of all people, heroic. Australian wages have been hovering around 2% for a long time

now, and this government does everything it can to keep them down. And of course if wages don't grow as forecast, the government's revenue from income tax, GST, etc., will not meet its forecasts.

The second problem is that the Prime Minister and the Treasurer who bring down this Budget may well not be the Prime Minister and Treasurer in three or four or five or six years time, either as a result of the electoral process or as a result of internal political party processes. A new Prime Minister or Treasurer may well have different priorities; so the tax cuts that have been the focus of a lot of political debate may simply never happen.

The Federal Government did announce some other measures that you may find of interest. It announced \$5 billion for the Airport Rail Link from the CBD to Tullamarine Airport. It didn't actually commit that money – once again we have to see what happens in future Budgets – and the State Government will also have to come up with \$5 billion if the project is to happen.

Nevertheless it is absolutely time for the Airport Rail Link to be built. In my view it should take what is known as the East Albion or Sunshine route and have a stop at Sunshine Station. This would be very beneficial to regional Victorians who already have direct train services into Sunshine from places such

as Geelong and Ballarat. It would make getting to the airport using public transport a real option for them. It would also give the many residents of the western suburbs who work in the airport precinct a public transport option to get to Tullamarine.

The Federal Government will be using half a billion dollars towards key infrastructure programs, such as the Building Better Regions Fund. It will provide \$1.75 billion for the North East Link and \$475 million for a rail link to Monash University's Clayton campus. It will provide an extra \$80 million over 4 years to support the Australian defence industry, and \$68 million over 4 years to support the development, maintenance and enhancement of defence industry capability for eligible small-to-medium enterprises.



**BUDGET FORECASTS  
THAT WAGES WILL  
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There is some extra money for training, including for mature age and older Australians. The Government will provide \$190 million over 5 years to support mature age Australians develop the skills needed to remain in work. Job seekers aged 45 years and over and registered with a Jobactive provider will be helped to develop digital skills and identify opportunities in local labour markets.

Forty thousand young people aged 15–21 who are at risk of long-term unemployment will be given intensive and tailored pre-employment support through an extra \$89 million over 4 years from the Transition to Work Program.

The Federal Government is also extending the Safer Communities Fund, providing \$30 million over 2 years to local government and community organisations to fund crime prevention initiatives, including closed circuit TV, lights and bollards.

Having said that there are many aspects of the Government's Budget and economic strategy that remain controversial. The Government still expects people to work until they are 70.

The Budget maintains the cuts to pensioners, including axing the Energy Supplement of \$14 a fortnight for single aged pensioners.

The Budget still has a freeze on Medicare rebates – increasing out-of-pocket costs to see a GP and making specialist visits more expensive. It has cut \$2.8 billion from hospitals; now elective surgery wait times are the longest on record. The Labor Opposition has committed to a \$2.8 billion Better Hospitals Fund to deliver more beds and shorter waiting times for surgery.

The Government still wants to cut company tax by \$80 billion, which the Opposition says is an unwarranted handout to big business and the banks. It is noteworthy that under the Liberal government, debt has doubled. When they are in Opposition they always talk up a storm about debt, but when they get into government the talk about debt – that raging storm – soon subsides, and becomes a few calm zephyrs while they get on with their real agenda of cutting taxes for their corporate supporters.

The Government's record in relation to schools, training and universities is also being challenged. It has cut \$17 billion from schools, \$2.2 billion from universities, and \$3 billion from TAFE, and this Budget cuts a further \$270 million from TAFE. Since the change of government there are over 140,000 fewer apprentices and trainees in Australia.

The Labor Opposition has said it will restore the \$17 billion from schools that the Government has cut. In relation to TAFE, it has undertaken to waive upfront fees for 100,000 TAFE students in high priority sectors. They will invest in a Building TAFE for the Future Fund – renovating campuses and providing 20,000 adult apprentice programs for older workers.

In my view the way Australia has dropped the ball on education and training in the past few decades has been nothing short of scandalous. It has been hit by a quadrella of evils: the introduction of large student fees and debts, the cuts to TAFE, the government subsidies for private training providers of questionable quality in the name of competition, and turning education into a business rather than an investment by bringing in massive numbers of overseas students and calling this export income.

The result has been falling standards, a skills shortage, and unemployed and underemployed graduates. In fairness I should add that both sides of politics have participated in this debacle. While John Howard did most to fit up students with debt, and turn education into an industry using overseas students, it was the Hawke government that walked away from the free education conviction and achievement of the Whitlam government.

And both Liberal and Labor governments at the state level have been guilty of unwarranted faith in the view that private providers would do a better job of providing training than TAFE. It has been free market ideology and greed rather than evidence-based policy calling the shots.

I will turn now to make some comments on the Victorian 2018 Budget. The Victorian Budget is being

run at a surplus – \$1.4 billion – and the Triple A credit rating remains. Total revenue is up by \$5.5 billion to \$69.5 billion, and spending is up \$6.2 billion to \$68 billion.

Major revenue items include Stamp Duty (\$7.1 billion), Payroll Tax (\$6.2 billion) and Land Tax (\$3.1 billion). Gambling taxes (\$1.9 billion) are a comparatively modest and over-rated component of Budget revenue.



The highlight of the State Budget in my view is the \$172 million for 30 TAFE courses to be made free, plus 18 Apprenticeship Pathway Courses, in areas such as mental health, disability, ageing support, education support, engineering, nursing and plumbing. Courses run for 2 years and commence in January 2019.

Making training courses free is welcome news in my view and amounts to an admission that the policy of introducing fees for these courses has been a failure. I hope that in future even more courses will become free.

On the health front there is a \$705 million initiative for mental health hubs, with 6 new hospital emergency department crisis hubs. They will be at Royal Melbourne, St Vincent's, Monash Medical Centre, Sunshine, Frankston and Geelong hospitals. The intention is to get patients with mental health problems or drug addictions out of emergency departments. Adults who pose a risk to others will be forced to have treatment under a \$59 million package. There is also a \$100 million Ice Action Program.

There is plenty of new money for roads and public transport infrastructure, schools, sports and community infrastructure, and so on.

Notwithstanding this, it is my assessment that neither the Federal nor the State Government is likely to get a tick from the electorate for its infrastructure effort. People can't really make an assessment about whether spending 'x' billion or 'y' billion on transport or health or education is enough or not. They make their assessment on how the outcomes feel to them.

Is it taking me longer to get to work? Is my children's education enough to get them a job? Can I afford a house in a suburb that has decent facilities?

In this regard governments bump up against the consequences of the bipartisan policy Australia has had for the past 15 years of rapid population growth. During this time Australia has started to grow at the unprecedented rate of an extra million people every 3 years. Much of this growth has been in Melbourne, which is now growing by over 100,000 every year.

The Queensland academic Jane O'Sullivan has done some excellent research work on the task of meeting the needs of a rapidly growing population. She says that the average weighted life expectancy of all our infrastructure is around 50 years. So a community with a stable population has to set aside 2% of its income every year and devote that to updating its infrastructure, otherwise it will get behind and run down.

But every new person needs infrastructure right now, or roads, schools, hospitals, etc., become overcrowded. So if the community is growing by 1% a year, it needs the 2% that I mentioned before, plus the extra 1% for the new people. It needs to set aside 3% each year. That means it has a 50% higher infrastructure task, but only 1% extra taxpayers or ratepayers to pay for it.

And if a community is growing by 2 per cent a year, it needs 2% plus 2% i.e. 4% to be set aside each year. It has double the infrastructure task of a stable community, but only 2% extra people to pay for it. Economic activity gets diverted to the task of capacity expansion and consequently is withdrawn from other provision of goods and services or solving social problems. It is like walking on a treadmill; you are going faster but not getting anywhere.

So, in rapidly growing communities, governments, councils, and so on are always behind the eight ball. It isn't that their politicians are lazy or incompetent or corrupt – the voters can put in someone else and the problem will continue as before.

There is no doubt in my mind that the rise of insurgent politicians of both left and right in recent years – think Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the US, Jeremy Corbyn and UKIP in the UK, and a plethora in Australia – Pauline Hanson, Clive Palmer, Nick Xenophon – has been in part a response to this problem.

I think the reaction to the Budgets of 2018 was calmer than that to some of the previous recent budgets, and perhaps the electorate is calming down a bit. But I still sense that there is an underlying dissatisfaction and a sense that we are going backwards, rather than going forwards.

For governments to successfully address this they need to do a lot more than simply use Budgets to direct resources to their supporters. We could start by moving away from GDPism – stop focusing on growth at the expense of goals. Bushfires and tsunamis boost GDP because the rebuilding activity is measured as economic activity, but that doesn't make them a good thing. Edward Kennedy said that GDP measures everything except the things that make life worth

living. Even the inventor of GDP, economist Simon Kuznets, never thought it should be used as society's key performance indicator.

I believe we should ditch GDP as a key performance indicator. We need to continue to have measures of economic performance, but we need to give equal billing to environmental indicators, health indicators, education indicators and social justice indicators.



In relation to economic performance the important indicators are employment, inflation, interest rates and a balanced budget. These things really do matter. We want full employment, or as close to it as we can get. We want low inflation, keeping prices as stable as we possibly can. We want low interest rates; we

don't want people in debt and going broke. And we want balanced budgets; we don't want countries in debt and going broke. Full employment, low inflation, low interest rates, balanced budgets.

Governments need to demonstrate a willingness to do their best to look after everybody and not allow people to fall through the cracks. And they need to demonstrate a sense of where the community is headed and that they are willing to tackle the challenges that come in the 21st century.

The Federal Government relentlessly repeats the mantra of jobs and growth. Yet during their watch unemployment in places like Sunshine and St Albans has risen, both in absolute numbers and in percentage terms, is well into double digits, and shows no sign of abating. And the pursuit of growth brings with it both the risk of environmental destruction and the problems I outlined earlier.

I think what the community wants is not so much growth as security. This could be job security – reliable full-time jobs rather than the insecure, casual, part-time work which is now so prevalent. It could be income security, rather than the underpayment and the attack on penalty rates and conditions we now see championed in the name of growth.

It could be environmental security – keeping our birds and plants and animals, keeping our vegetation cover rather than losing them. It could be climate security, rather than climate change and with it the extreme weather events such as droughts, floods and bushfires.

It could be personal security – being safe in your own home, and safe on the street at night. Or national security – being protected from terrorist attack or the risk of losing our sovereignty by being bought up by foreign companies or governments.

These are the things that people seem to me to value, and I hope that the Budgets of 2019 and 2020 and beyond are more attuned to what people really are looking for, rather than what large corporations are telling governments and us is good for us. 🇺🇸

Our church is a public and usable asset with portable seating and excellent conference, meeting and function facilities. We welcome its use by those who support our motto 'Seek the Truth and Serve Humanity'. Interested individuals or groups can contact the church office – we would be delighted to speak to you. A donation is payable.

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# THE CFMEU AND THE ASSAULT ON DEMOCRACY (PART II)

We must have equality for unions with employer organisations to be able to organise, to set the price and conditions of sale for our goods (our work), and to be free to act equally against all competitors who have a financial interest in the suppression of our interests within the marketplace.

As employers are free to act against us under the law, up to and including the use of scabs (a second party used against workers akin to a secondary boycott against workers' unions), we must be free to negotiate with all employers who have a direct interest in a dispute. All disputes are ultimately about price and conditions of sale, whether that be goods or human labour (work).

It is not merely an authoritarian legal arrangement to empower one side with rights and leave the other side without those same rights to control the price and conditions of sale. It is also far too constraining on an economy, too inflexible and importantly, in the days where socialised capital in the form of our superannuated wage underpins the financial system, simply does not reflect financial reality. The days of the private owner who manages and directs their workplace, creating their wealth from the work of others, making enough from that to invest in assets and thereby (at least temporarily) increasing their profits, has gone. Now massive multinational corporations dominate the economy using the investment by global superannuated wages funds to institute and maintain their dominance. Without unions, universal superannuation (for everyone) would not exist.

**Yet unions are the only sellers in the market for whom there is special legislation stipulating that people do not have to pay for our services; non-members and even scabs receive equal recompense with us for services which we negotiate the sale of, and they do not.**

No other stakeholder in the market is governed by legislation that deliberately sets out to advantage their competitor, in the case of unions, non-unionists. Unions are regarded as corporations under the Act, and yet do not have the same right to exclusively contract, as do other corporations. It is simply unfair and unjust that competitors of a corporation are able to benefit from the commercial efforts of that corporation.

Not so for unionists.

John and Shaun sat in that court not just in the 'normal' employer/Liberal Coalition use of 45 D&E to declare solidarity illegal within the industrial relations system. This was an attempt to turn them into criminals by redefining their activities, exactly the same activities, we repeat, which employers perform in the defence of their own interests every day of the week, as criminal blackmail. After the employer-driven court case collapsed, proving once again the folly of the mud-slinging exercise of the Royal Commission in relation to the CFMEU (out of which came the blackmail charges), John said 45 D&E:

'means if a union or members are being oppressed you can't step in to help them out. I think it is a very bad law. It was brought in by ultra-conservative governments and should be repealed.'

These sentiments are now being echoed across a number of unions and on up through the ACTU. For disputes like the Esso/Mobil dispute and other intractable disputes, let alone for the good of our country, the problem of 45 D&E must be resolved.

Underpinning the belief that workers in unions, because they are not owners and are therefore merely recipients of the market's benefits, as distinct from being fundamental stakeholders in it, is fear. What is that fear based upon?

The major ideological positions taken by capitalist theoreticians across the twentieth century, and so far this century, related to destroying any change by labour movements towards economic democracy. To accept a democratic economics is to see owners, shareholders and investors, and citizens in their true, relative numbers. The power of capitalists to do what they wish with 'their' wealth is defined as a right by capitalist theoreticians, whereas it can only be viewed as mere privilege taken within the bounds of unequal laws, by unionists and other economic democrats. Unions, of course, imperfect as any of our community organisations are, have always represented the democratic voice of communities within the economy – the more militant the bigger the voice. Unions have provided a beginning stage, some semblance of a democratic space within the Australian economy. 🕯

*Source: The Cooperator June 2018*



# FIGHTING MR FAKE

**TRUMP HAS A PRECURSOR – AND MAYBE EVEN A MENTOR – WHEN IT COMES TO WAGING WAR ON MEDIA HE DOES NOT LIKE.**

These days Maria Ressa, executive editor and CEO of *Rappler*, goes around the streets of Manila with police escorts. You can tell if she's in her office by the police cars parked outside the tower block in the eastern part of Metro Manila.

At one point extra guards were also posted inside *Rappler's* busy third-floor office. After President Rodrigo Duterte came into power in 2016, the online news outfit received threats from his supporters.

The Duterte administration has tried everything in its power to discredit his critics. In *Rappler's* case it's harder due to the credibility the outlet has earned since its launch in 2012. Also, Ressa is something of a legend in the media world. She was Manila bureau chief of CNN for nearly two decades before setting up *Rappler*, and broke key stories on international terrorist links.

But the Duterte administration is relentless in its attacks. It has revoked *Rappler's* incorporation papers, ordered an investigation into alleged cyber libel and tax payments, branded the organisation a peddler of 'fake news' and banned its designated reporter from entering the presidential palace.

## UNCOWED

Catapulted to power in July 2016, Duterte has flourished in the shadow of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Trumpeting his love for his country, Duterte is charming, down-to-earth but also thin-skinned and does not hesitate to use everything in his power to silence his foes.

Last year his department of justice put his toughest critic, Senator Leila de Lima, behind bars for alleged involvement in illegal drugs. She is still there.

Her imprisonment sent a chilling message to his critics, but not everyone was cowed. *Rappler* continued to publish critical stories.

It was among the first to report on Duterte's bloody 'war on drugs' by showing the victims of extra-judicial killings – the men, women and children who claimed innocence, and even the guilty who cried for 'due process' because there was none.

*Rappler's* multimedia reports caught the attention of the foreign press and human rights organisations, which portrayed Duterte for what he is – a leader with total disregard for human rights.

Early this year, *Rappler* and the Philippine daily, *Inquirer*, a Manila broadsheet, published a story about special assistant and long-time friend to the president, Christopher 'Bong' Go.

According to the report, Go was improperly involved in a \$286 million warship procurement deal. This story, which resulted in a senate investigation, was a big blow to Duterte who had fought on an anti-corruption platform.

## FAKE NEWS AND PRESIDENTIAL LIES

Duterte branded the story 'fake' and called *Rappler's* reporting malicious and baseless.

He also banned *Rappler's* palace reporter, Pia Ranada, from entering the premises.

*Rappler* stood by its story and pointed out that Go was unable to challenge the authenticity of the documents cited in its report. While the president accuses others of peddling fake news, he himself has been caught telling brazen lies, over and over.

Last year, he admitted making up a claim that his staunch critic Senator Antonio Trillanes IV had unexplained wealth in a foreign bank in Singapore. 'This is nothing, this is just a product of my imagination,' Duterte said in September 2017.

He also lied about his family background.

In response to an allegation that he had \$38 million in unexplained wealth, the president said his family was not poor because his father Vicente Duterte had been a governor of Davao. This is in stark contrast to earlier claims to have been born into a poor family and of growing up 'in the slums'.

Duterte's relaxed attitude towards truth telling is compounded by heavy use of social media. He depended on it for his electoral win. Facebook partnered with Duterte right from the start. In January 2016, six months before the election, Facebook flew in three employees to spend a week holding training sessions with candidates, including Duterte.

'After his team got that Facebook briefing, his allies went into overdrive, pushing fake news and accounts along with his other wider campaigns,' according to an MSNBC report.

Ressa and her team found out that the messages being posted consistently linked back to pro-Duterte pages. They put all these accounts into a database, which grew rapidly as they began automating the collection of information, scraping Facebook pages and other public sites. This database is called the Shark Tank and it now contains more than 12 million accounts that have created or distributed pro-Duterte messages. Presidential campaign manager Nic Gabunada claims the posts were done by real people and not by bots, but many industry sources say the accounts were fake.

Duterte's social media campaign has continued throughout his presidency.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Ressa herself was not spared from his social media attacks.

In October 2016, Ressa published 'Propaganda War: Weaponizing the Internet,' an article on how the Duterte administration has used the internet to spread fake news and alter the truth.

She and her team received a deluge of hate messages after this was published, including 'I want Maria Ressa to be raped repeatedly to death'. She was getting as many as 90 such messages per hour.

Ressa had to send her social media team to counselling. An 'Unfollow *Rappler*' campaign led to *Rappler* losing 52,000 – about one per cent – of its Facebook followers.

On 11 January 2018, on the instigation of President Duterte, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the official regulator, revoked *Rappler's* corporate registration.

The SEC said *Rappler* violated the constitutional foreign ownership rules because of funds from Omidyar Network, a company owned by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar. The SEC ordered the revocation of *Rappler's* certificate of incorporation and the Omidyar Philippine Depository Receipts (PDRs).

PDRs are instruments that give foreign investors a passive economic interest in a Philippine company. They do not indicate ownership, *Rappler* maintains.

In an interview with New Internationalist, *Rappler* managing editor Glenda Gloria said:

'We are tired of having to deal with these baseless attacks and flimsy cases lodged against us. Life used to be much simpler – telling stories, engaging your readers, making the business grow. Now we have to sit down with lawyers to try to make sense of these complaints that do not make sense. But we are also inspired by the support we have been receiving from our community. We walk on the streets or get stuck in elevators and are greeted by strangers who say they support *Rappler*,' she said.

Journalism has never been an easy profession in the Philippines. 'I always say that the Philippines is a tough country to love,' said Gloria. 'As a college student, I saw how Marcos clamped down on the press and jailed journalists. Under Estrada, I was news editor of a newspaper that he forced to close and sell to a crony. As an editor of an investigative magazine, I received death threats and our reporters had to deal with all sorts of harassment.

'The difference under Duterte is that technology has weaponised harassment and has made it easier for autocrats to promote propaganda and intimidate critical voices. Reputational attack is fatal to a journalist who has built his or her credibility over years of hard work. Social media has made it easy for anyone to bring down a name and rip apart a journalist through propaganda. That is akin to killing the journalist, when you attack their reputation and peddle lies against them. That is the struggle we are caught with now – hate, anger and lies.'

Journalists in the Philippines must hold the line and continue to write better stories, she added. 'Choose topics that are relevant and do not settle for the sensational or the clickbait stories. Be open to criticism; always strive to be the best. Stay sober and rise above the noise.'

In spite of all the attacks against the organisation, *Rappler* will continue to do what it does best – to tell stories, to tell the truth. In Duterte's regime, *Rappler* is the little boy who cried, 'The Emperor has no clothes!'

Gloria added: 'With the help of its community, *Rappler* hopes to outlast presidents.'

*Iris Gonzales is a Filipina journalist who writes regularly for New Internationalist.* 🙏

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## CHURCH BANKING DETAILS

**BANK: ANZ**

**ACCOUNT NAME: MELBOURNE  
UNITARIAN CHURCH**

**BSB: 013 275**

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# TUNE IN!

THE UNITARIAN HALF HOUR

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An American Unitarian Universalist,  
**Rev. David Bumbaugh,**  
summed up our Unitarian Universalist  
beliefs as follows:



**WE BELIEVE** that the universe in which we live and move and have our being is the expression of an inexorable process that began in eons past, ages beyond our comprehension and has evolved from singularity to multiplicity, from simplicity to complexity, from disorder to order.

**WE BELIEVE** that the earth and all who live upon the earth are products of the same process that swirled the galaxies into being, that ignited the stars and orbited the planets through the night sky, that we are expressions of that universal process which has created and formed us out of recycled star dust.

**WE BELIEVE** that all living things are members of a single community, all expressions of a planetary process that produced life and sustains it in intricate ways beyond our knowing. We hold the life process itself to be sacred.

**WE BELIEVE** that the health of the human venture is inextricably dependent upon the integrity of the rest of the community of living things and upon the integrity of those processes by which life is bodied forth and sustained. Therefore we affirm that we are called to serve the planetary process upon which life depends.

**WE BELIEVE** that in this interconnected existence the wellbeing of one cannot be separated from the wellbeing of the whole, that ultimately we all spring from the same source and all journey to the same ultimate destiny.

**WE BELIEVE** that the universe outside of us and the universe within us is one universe. Because that is so, our efforts, our dreams, our hopes, our ambitions are the dreams, hopes and ambitions of the universe itself. In us, and perhaps elsewhere, the universe is reaching toward self-awareness, toward self-consciousness.

**WE BELIEVE** that our efforts to understand the world and our place within it are an expression of the universe's deep drive towards meaning. In us, and perhaps elsewhere, the universe dreams dreams and reaches towards unknown possibilities. We hold as sacred the unquenchable drive to know and to understand.

**WE BELIEVE** that the moral impulse that weaves its way through our lives, luring us to practices of justice and mercy and compassion, is threaded through the universe itself and it is this universal longing that finds outlet in our best moments.

**WE BELIEVE** that our location within the community of living things places upon us inescapable responsibilities. Life is more than our understanding of it, but the level of our comprehension demands that we act out of conscious concern for the broadest vision of community we can command and that we seek not our welfare alone, but the welfare of the whole. We are commanded to serve life and serve it to the seven times seventieth generation.

**WE BELIEVE** that those least like us, those located on the margins have important contributions to make the rest of the community of life and that in some curious way we are all located on the margins.

**WE BELIEVE** that all that functions to divide us from each other and from the community of living things is to be resisted in the name of that larger vision of a world everywhere alive, everywhere seeking to incarnate a deep, implicate process that called us into being, that sustains us in being, that transforms us as we cannot transform ourselves, that receives us back to itself when life has used us up. Not knowing the end of that process, nonetheless we trust it, we rest in it, and we serve it.



*The seeds of Matt Carmichael's commitment to social justice were sown in his teenage years, when his father gave him a copy of Henry David Thoreau's Civil Disobedience.*

The John Rely Beard lecture at the 2018 Unitarian Annual Meeting was delivered by Matt Carmichael and was very well received. Using story and philosophy Matt encouraged Unitarians to reach out with social activism, underpinned by the supports of soil, soul and society. He hinted at some of his own experience of being a social activist and as an introduction to the first instalment of his lecture, which will be printed in three parts, the editor invited Matt to tell readers some more about his own background as a social activist.

Matt Carmichael spent the first five years of his life in Tanzania, the son of medical missionaries, and this early experience imprinted some deep attitudes which would later feed into his strong calling to work for social justice: he had seen extreme poverty, the difference between black and white meant nothing to him, and he had experienced the world through a different language, Kiswahili. His parents don't always completely understand Matt's life passion for social activism, but they were responsible for planting the seeds; his father gave him a copy of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* when he was a teenager!

## LIBERATION AND LOSS

Matt was raised within the evangelical tradition of the Church of England, but as a teenager started to attend a Baptist church, as they had better provision for youth, and by the age of seventeen he was preaching on the Baptist circuit. He was a member of Youth for Christ, a conservative organisation involved in setting up youth clubs and evangelising. He went to the University of Durham to study theology and was serving on the executive of the local Evangelical Christian Union when they created a post to organise social action. He was shocked to hear that the national governing body threatened to disaffiliate their local union for such an action, because their remit was for evangelism and not social action. He was further disenchanted by the very right wing political attitudes he experienced within evangelical Christianity, in particular by the refusal to accept gay and lesbian people within the church. By the end of university he had laid down his Christian faith, without an awareness of any alternative, which he experienced both as liberation and loss.

At this time he was drawn into social activism around environmental issues and international economic justice. He became involved in the protest of 1996 when eco-warriors tried to prevent the clearing of 10,000 mature trees for the building of the Newbury

bypass. He was involved in Reclaim the Streets demonstrations in Leeds and Newcastle, organising street parties to highlight that the city streets belong to everybody and not just to commerce. He was involved in protest at the G8 summit in Birmingham in 1998, where he saw riots and the use of tear gas and witnessed the way a crowd can influence the thinking of an individual. He got involved with an activist organisation in Leeds called Tidal, with whom he helped to successfully lobby the city council to commit to 40 per cent carbon cuts across the city by 2020.

Working as an English and drama teacher during the school year, Matt spend summers on activism work, including at climate camps at Heathrow Airport and at Kingsnorth in Kent. At Kingsnorth the protest was against a coal-fired power station and although there were direct actions, including trespassing and bringing down of fences, the organisers set up affinity groups to allow a variety of people to get involved at whatever level they felt comfortable.

## LIVING WITH AN OPEN HEART

During this time Matt was living in a social housing community, managed by the tenants. He was exploring Tai Chi and Buddhist meditation, reading about Taoism and philosophy. He also read *Resurgence* magazine, produced by Schumacher College, which contained much wisdom but raised for him hard questions about the value of absolute pacifism. He was facing more and more difficult questions and finding little resolution. He felt the need for a spiritual underpinning to what he was doing. This is when he met, and started working with, Alastair McIntosh, with whom he wrote the book *Spiritual Activism: Leadership as Service*. To an extent there had always been a spiritual underpinning due to his background in Christianity, though since leaving the church he has not found his way to another organised spiritual community. He says that his spiritual underpinning now comes from living with an open heart to what is miraculous in the world, including in the natural world and in being a parent to young children.

Sharing thoughts with others about the need for a spiritual underpinning for their work in activism, led Matt to devise what he has called The Delta Course for people thirsting for meaning, to facilitate the sharing of stories and insights. Matt is currently reorganising materials which he devised for this course and will make it available to Unitarians in the near future.

*Source: The Inquirer June 2018*

# from our readers

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## DEAR SIR/MADAM

Enclosed cheque for \$60 for 3 (three) years' subscription for the *Beacon* magazine, which gives me great pleasure to read (the Real News) in your publication.

Thanking you

**(Mrs) Mona Taylor, NSW**

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## HI DONNA

Herewith cheque \$20 (pension) for *Beacon* October 2017–September 2018.

Good articles – I'm often short of time to read.

Regards

**I Govaars-Downs, Vic**

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## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Please find enclosed a cheque for my sub due March 2018. I am sorry for the late payment. I have been ill and have now moved into a nursing home. Please note my changed address. I certainly still want to continue to receive the *Beacon*. It is excellent.

Yours faithfully

**D Atkinson, SA**

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## DEAR EDITOR

Annual sub plus donation

Please find enclosed cheque for \$30 being for old guys' concession sub and a donation.

Thank you for being there and keeping us sane.

Regards

**P Bamforth, NSW**

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# WE ACKNOWLEDGE

Traditional owners of the Kulin Nation, past Warriors, Elders past and present

## A UNITARIAN DOXOLOGY

Our philosophy consists of those actions, purposes and experiences that are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to a unitarian. It includes labour, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship – all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living.

We seek the fulfilment of life in the here and now – this is the explanation of our social passion.

We do not deny the possibility of realities as yet undiscovered, but rather we insist that the way to determine the existence and value of any and all realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and by the assessment of their relevance to human needs.

Our religious emotions are therefore expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social wellbeing.

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**Feature: The 2018 Federal and State Budgets**

**The CFMEU and the assault on democracy (Part II)**

**Fighting Mr Fake**

**We believe**

**A journey towards social activism**

**Letters to the editor**

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