



SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

the Beacon

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photo by Leonardo Miranda on Unsplash

When a government loses its credibility as a result of corruption, inaction or duplicity, it can no longer govern. This federal government has reached that stage; it has been exposed in so many scandals, rorts and disclaimers that the people no longer have any faith in its ability to govern with honesty and integrity. When each night there is another exposure, another rort, another scandal, we say enough. This government has a long history of such dysfunction.

Remember their 'audit' under Treasurer Hockey in May 2014? Family payments, childcare, healthcare, education, unemployment and pension payments, aged care and the National Disability Insurance Scheme were all among those areas in the firing line. We are proud that our church commissioned and funded the Australia Institute to investigate that 'audit' ('Auditing the Auditors') exposed this.

There are many examples of the Morrison government's toxic rule, including:

- the robodebt, unfairly and illegally targeting Centrelink recipients causing huge distress and angst, destroying the lives of many innocent people
- the aged care bombshell, now exposed by a royal commission, involving criminal treatment of the elderly in care homes, and huge profits resulting from lack of care

- the 'sports rorts' affair allowing the government to illegally target its own electorates with cash and win votes in the very narrowly won election
- the *Four Corners* program exposing the toxic, sexist workplace that is our federal parliament and allegations of rape in a minister's office
- the accusations against the Attorney-General.

So, the latest proposal to ask employers to 'dob in a worker' is no surprise when it targets the most vulnerable in our society. According to 'Business Insider':

A weak job market has serious ramifications for all, no matter your employment status. It means more than 700,000 unemployed Australians can't get jobs no matter how qualified they may be for one. It means 1.15 million underemployed Australians can't get the full-time hours, the job security or the consistent pay cheque they need.

Business leaders and welfare advocates have blasted the Morrison government's decision to establish a hotline for employers to dob in unemployed Australians who refuse job offers, calling the measure out of touch with small business owners who believe 'most unemployed people are not dole bludgers' (The Guardian, February 2021). There are many justifiable reasons why a worker may refuse a job and penalising them for doing this is tantamount to forced labour.

There is worldwide growing dissatisfaction with governments and a rise in people's militancy in many countries where austerity and neoliberalism have exacerbated poverty and discrimination, followed by the pandemic with its further devastating impact. Governments have become isolated from the people they purport to represent and respond more readily to the demands of huge marketing lobbies, pharmaceutical manufacturers and the military/industrial complex.

Taxpayer money is being wasted on redeveloping the Canberra War Memorial at an estimated cost of \$500 million; purchasing submarines that will become obsolete before we get them; and financially supporting military regimes that slaughter their own people, such as in Myanmar and the Philippines.

It is time the Australian people stood up and recognised that politicians are our servants and not our masters. Governments must develop programs that meet the needs of the people and not those designed for private profit.

EDITORIAL

BY DON SUTHERLAND

CO-CONVENOR OF THE NEW LIVING INCOMES FOR EVERYONE CAMPAIGN (LIFE)
ZOOM SUNDAY SERVICE ON 28 FEBRUARY 2021

THE LIFE CAMPAIGN

**Challenging and Breaking
Apart the Poverty Machine**

Photo by Frederick Lee on Unsplash

It is a national disgrace that we have a government that as a matter of policy is determined to push more of its citizens into poverty and to drive thousands of wage earners closer to the poverty line. We need a movement of the people that is strong enough to say NO to this direction and to make sure that it is reversed.

The Living Incomes for Everyone Campaign was started nearly 12 months ago in the early stages of the pandemic.

A group of us were talking informally about the prospect of a drastic increase in unemployment and poverty and systematic government decisions that would return to the extreme austerity agenda of previous years.

We could also see, from our direct experience, that the solidarity bonds between unions, unemployed, including unions' own unemployed members, pensioner and migrant organisations, and welfare activist groups were not as strong as they needed to be in the circumstances that were about to prevail.

The focal point started with what had been happening with the unemployment benefit. Forty dollars a day since the early 90s; the associated,

repressive 'mutual obligations'; and the underpinning dole bludger ideology. Highly credible research, skilful advocacy and lobbying, as essential as they are, are not enough to win the demands around incomes, job creation, housing, healthcare and transport that had been on the table for a long time.

Our campaign began when JobSeeker doubled the dole, and other government responses to COIVD-19 unexpectedly met people's needs for the first time. At the same time, the PM announced this would last only for six months, until September 2020.

We invited a range of organisations and individuals into a discussion about these issues and those discussions led to the formation of LIFE in the midst of the pandemic and its shutdowns. Like many others, we learned to use ZOOM to set up an organisational infrastructure. You can see a list of endorsing organisations here: <https://www.livingincomes.org.au/endorsed-by/>

We are an entirely voluntary organisation. We are not affiliated with any political party and do not seek endorsements from them.

We are still developing as a network of organisations that can meet together regularly to create and build

action that builds the power that working-class organisations need to start winning their demands and to break apart what is now being called 'the poverty machine'.

Over the following months we established agreement on a 'Statement of Demands'. The 'Demands' cover five main themes:

1. \$550 a week for income support!
2. No one left behind!
3. End harassment! For social security with dignity.
4. Secure homes for everyone.
5. Well paid, socially useful, sustainable work that mitigates climate change.

Please read the detail at our website:
<https://www.livingincomes.org.au/about/>

We held a hugely successful national launch (by ZOOM) on 20 July 2020, which you can watch on video. In particular, check Eileen Darley's excellent introduction to the LIFE Campaign at that site.

Since then, we have developed other activities to build and consolidate the network. We initiated and supported actions around the September Budget and that included a ZOOM national public meeting that analysed the Budget.

Recently, we joined with GetUp and the Australian Unemployed Workers Union, and many of our endorsing organisations, for a week of action leading up to the March 31 shutdown of the JobSeeker supplement and of JobKeeper.

We have much work to do and many weaknesses to understand and to overcome. Especially we must focus on First Nations solidarity, issues faced by migrant workers, homelessness, and the bonds that are necessary between unions, unemployed and welfare activist organisations.

We thank you for your support in the Melbourne action on Friday 19 March. We invite you to keep



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helping us build a new type of movement that builds genuine and effective power in the hands of low income Australians.

An essential principle for LIFE is that it does not seek to replace the work or the decision-making of the participating organisations. We do, however, say that current practice is not adequate and that everyone participating must discuss how to organise TOGETHER far more effectively. Learning together how to do things differently so that together we build more power into the hands of low income Australians.



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.

CHURCH BANKING DETAILS

BANK: ANZ

**ACCOUNT NAME: MELBOURNE
UNITARIAN CHURCH**

BSB: 013 275

ACCOUNT NO: 3011 30386

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When Told You Are Anti-American

Domestic critics of the United States are sometimes accused of being 'anti-American'. We're used to the phrasing, but it is a little strange. If you're a US citizen, how do you go from American to un-American so fast?

Ok, so we know anti-Americanism has nothing to do with losing citizenship. Much the reverse. The charge is never levelled against anybody but citizens for its traitorous connotation. But there's no substantive difference between anti-American and un-American, so the terms may be loosely interchanged.

What makes someone susceptible to being characterised un-American? It has little to do with American culture or anything else that Americans deal with in their ordinary lives. It has everything to do with American policy, particularly America's foreign policy, policy that is not made by Americans per se but by a small, select group of Americans.

Everyday Americans are not incentivised to interpret, let alone challenge, the country's foreign policy. We're supposed to thank our lucky stars for belonging to the country that flies God's favourite flag and leave American policy to the learned specialists that serve it.

When discussing anti-Americanism, it's important to distinguish the individual from the state. Disliking other Americans is not anti-American in the sense of the accusation. The concept is misnamed because it is only when you take issue with the state that the charge takes on a sensible meaning. The more precise term would be anti-American state, or anti-state or anti-government, but these do not make for a proper, personal slur.

The House Un-American Activities Committee of the past century is a good reference point for a further understanding of the government position. The committee investigated people who were suspected of not being American enough. Notably, this did not include the Nazi fascists that our government invited here after the defeat of the Third Reich. The only people targeted were those suspected of being communist or leaning leftward enough to be considered sympathisers.

This is also a little strange because we were not fighting communists in WW2. We were fighting Nazis, and the communists were on our side. The crucial distinction between the two ideologies that led to differences in their treatment is that Nazis are pro-capitalist and communists are anti-capitalist.

That tells us something. Being anti-American, or un-American, must have something to do with being anti-capitalist. As Americans we're supposed to understand that socialism is a creeping disease, and militarised capitalism, even if associated with fascist goons, is the cure. If we've been waiting for capitalists to get rich enough, billionaires are looking for their first trillion, while the hollowing out of the working class continues unabated since 1968.

That's where today's federal minimum wage is in terms of what you can buy with it.

The days of McCarthyism are over thanks to some national image polishing, but in the eyes of the state, if you're socialist or a left sympathiser you still aren't American enough. That some individuals come to a similar conclusion is not surprising. We're predisposed to take the side of our country. We identify with it in the same way that most people in a city, say Baltimore, root for Baltimore's sport teams and not the teams of another city.

With the virtual merger of corporation and state, the political centre has been crossed. We live under a two-party capitalist dictatorship consisting of a Republican Party that ranges from right to far right including the newest concoction, alt-right, and a Democratic Party that is near right but likes to think of itself as centrist.

Currently, there are individual progressive Democrats trying to move the party leftward with some success, but there are things a true party of the left would stand for that are well beyond the horizon of this party.

Chiefly, this would entail dispensing with the military and economic enforcement measures of capitalist imperialism. Another way to say this is to recognise the right of self-determination of foreign countries. How cynical it is to choke out the life in socialist countries like Cuba and Venezuela and then use their suffering against them as a comparative with our surpluses!

There are many other things a true party of the left would stand for. How many people, if not persuaded by lifetimes of hyper anti-communism, would be against reorganising economic life to serve social needs, and not private profit? How many Christians would be against it?

Leftists are painted as radicals when many left positions actually enjoy majority support, like the elimination of a private-profit healthcare system. The left has been at the forefront of many people's movements: anti-war, nuclear disarmament, worker's rights, civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, racial and ethnic equality, and environmental stewardship.

In contrast, US foreign policy is the right-wing foreign policy of imperialism, developed in tandem with the interests of multinational corporations giving this sector of the capitalist class inordinate control over all of society.

WHEN DISCUSSING ANTI-AMERICANISM, IT'S IMPORTANT TO DISTINGUISH THE INDIVIDUAL FROM THE STATE.

With wealth and income inequality proceeding at runaway speed, the state is in the delicate position of having to maintain a capitalist system that is increasingly at risk of coming apart. Weighing the moral component of left struggle that the state is up against, what other strategy is at its disposal other than to demonise capitalism's nemesis, socialism, as being too radical for America?

The absence of a left party to countervail the right wing opens ground for authoritarianism, like we're presently witnessing in many right-wing countries around the world. Brazil is a far-right state, but at least it has a workers' party. The spectrum of far-right parties in Europe now includes alt-right and neo-fascist, but Europe has its share of left parties in opposition. Israel has become an alt-right state, singularly distinguished by having no left opposition at all.

This does not bode well for the future of the democratic principle, and, as nebulous as what it means to be 'American', we know that its antithesis means you're out of line. The charge of being anti-American relies on the unsupportable assumption that people and the government that rules over them are inseparable. This is incompatible with the idea that we are a free people.

James Rothenberg writes on US social and foreign policy. jrothenberg3@gmail.com

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US-Australia Alliance:

Australia's Continued Involvement in US-Led Wars

Thank you for the opportunity to express my great anxiety on the military paths on which Australia is increasingly involved, to the detriment of improvements to our welfare structures.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The Prime Minister has issued statements that he is proud that Australia is shaping up to be the 10th biggest producer and exporter of arms in the world. His justification appears to be the creation of jobs, but principally it assists the US in its military operations destabilising the globe.

As a Quaker, member of several peace organisations, including WILPF and secretary of Alternatives to Violence Queensland, I have a concern for the sanctity of human life and the belief that all humans are part of one family. Diplomacy, not killing, will lead to more peaceful outcomes.

As a member of *Just Peace*, my reading of their last quarterly newsletter fills me with alarm. In particular, the article on the 800 US military bases encircling the globe paints a picture that does not promote peace. In Australia, Pine Gap, the Darwin US military training base and the regular Talisman Sabre joint exercises off the Yeppoon coast all reduce Australian sovereignty over our own land. These are all potential targets in the event of enemy aggression.

My first problem with the US military alliance is local arms manufacture. As a resident of Brisbane, I am alarmed at the number of companies producing arms, including drones, tanks, weaponry, technologies and services. These items are to be included in a *Land Forces Exhibition* at the Brisbane

Convention Centre from 1–3 June 2021 promoting these agents of destruction to be used by the Australian Army and many other countries. The expo is about big business, involving multimillion dollar commercial deals, but hides behind the curtain of defence and national security. Australia spends \$98m a day on the military industry but baulks at providing a sure, strong, adequate income and housing safety net for many Australians.

The Australian government recently launched a new grants program to offset up to 50% of the costs of Land Forces Expo exhibitors. My understanding of government grants is that applicants produce evidence of benefits to the community. In this case it is difficult to fathom any benefit our community might receive from arms manufacture.

It's chilling to note that a weapons component manufactured in Queensland was found in a downed Azerbaijani military drone recently. We may be saddened for the plight of besieged nations and their civilian populations from the safety and comfort of our lounge rooms, but we may also be assisting in their demise! We think of all the housing, jobs, and quality aged and healthcare that could be provided with the millions spent every day on the military.

Our Parliament is never consulted on expansions to warfare spending. Prime Minister Howard did not even consult with his cabinet prior to Australia becoming part of the Bush/Blair 'Coalition of the

Willing' in 2003. As such, he is a war criminal who acted against the wishes of tens of thousands of people all over Australia who marched the day before our troops entered Iraq.

A second problem with the Australian government is their unwillingness to sign the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) despite agreement from New Zealand, most of the Pacific Island countries, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and, soon to come on board, most other countries in our region. Seventy-nine per cent of Australians are in favour of Australia signing the TPNW, with a mere eight per cent indicating they are against it.

Previous prohibitions on chemical and biological weapons, cluster bombs and landmines, to which Australia has signed agreement, have reduced their usage. The US is in virtual compliance with the landmine ban treaty despite opposing it. However, they speciously claim that their stockpile of 7000 nuclear bombs is contributing to world peace and many Australian politicians hang on to this promise.

Former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane, said in 2014: How many states today boast that they are 'biological weapon states' or 'chemical weapon states'? Who is arguing now that bubonic plague or polio are legitimate for use as weapons under any circumstance, whether in an attack or in retaliation? Who speaks of a bio-weapon umbrella? It is inconsistent and morally bankrupt to deny the use of biological or chemical weapons, meanwhile maintaining a right to threaten millions of civilians with radioactive incineration and famine.

Through hosting key intelligence and communications facilities at Pine Gap and elsewhere, Australia is a target for a nuclear strike. These facilities assist the command, control and targeting of US nuclear weapons. We cannot have it both ways. We cannot claim to be working for a world free of weapons of mass destruction while also claiming that we need US nuclear weapons. This makes us part of the problem of the most acute existential threat humanity faces. We should be part of the solution instead. The danger posed by nuclear weapons is a fundamental issue of humanity, the right to life, international law, intergenerational justice and sustainability. It should be above party politics. Australia should ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and implement it in good faith.

Other nations have demonstrated that supporting this treaty is compatible with a military alliance with the US. More than half the states that the US designates as its 'major non-NATO allies' voted to adopt the treaty. New Zealand and Thailand have ratified the treaty without causing any disruption to military cooperation with the US. This is because their cooperation does not involve the use of nuclear weapons. Another US ally in our region, the Philippines, has also signed the treaty. Joining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is an effective way to build a safer future for all Australians. It will help advance the peace and security our world so desperately needs. Notably, Australia is

the only member of a nuclear weapon-free zone anywhere in the world to also claim 'protection' by nuclear weapons.

In fact, there has never been a plausible nuclear threat to Australia, other than as a consequence of hosting US intelligence bases. Moreover, the US has never made an explicit promise to protect Australia in the face of a nuclear threat as it has done to its NATO and East Asian allies. Given the long and opaque history of Australian involvement with US extended deterrence, ending any agreements or policy arrangements with the US on nuclear deterrence must be demonstrated.



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The Australian government has declared that two Australian defence facilities regarded as 'joint facilities' with the United States and which are operated 'with the full knowledge and concurrence of the Australian government', make the Australia-US alliance incompatible with Article 1(1)(e) of the TPNW. These are the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap and the Joint Geological and Geophysical Research Station – a US Air Force operated seismic monitoring station, both in or near Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. Pine Gap is by far the more important of these two facilities. A careful examination of precisely what Pine Gap does shows there is a viable pathway for Australia to become compliant with the TPNW without disrupting its alliance with the US. The US has for some time built technological warning satellites which are known in US military jargon as Overhead Persistent Infra-Red, or OPIR, consisting of older

satellites and more powerful modern satellites. The infrared OPIR sensors detect the heat bloom of intercontinental and submarine-launched nuclear ballistic missiles launched against the US. Data from these sensors is downlinked to Pine Gap and sent automatically in virtual real time to the system's Mission Control Station at Buckley Air Force Base in Colorado, US Strategic Command and the White House, as early warning of nuclear attack. Pine Gap is a US-constructed and financed intelligence facility operated by the US National Reconnaissance Office. More than 800 Australians and Americans staff the facility, including units from all four branches of the US military. Pine Gap's multiple and complex intelligence activities can be basically characterised as providing big ears and big infrared eyes. There are three distinct major surveillance systems installed at Pine Gap, one of which has a critical role in US nuclear command, control and intelligence. This is the Relay Ground Station (RGS) in Pine Gap's western compound.

The TPNW provides the first comprehensive framework outlawing nuclear weapons. It bolsters the safeguards regime set up by the NPT, and has the ultimate goal of universal adherence and a world free of nuclear weapons. The TPNW gives Australia an opportunity to fulfil our existing legal obligations under the NPT. It broadens the taboo against the spread of nuclear weapons and makes real the taboo against the very possession of nuclear weapons. The TPNW helps to fulfil the promise of the NPT and provides an avenue for the implementation of Article VI. The first step to getting on the right side of history is for Australia to sign the TPNW, signaling an unambiguous commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Ratification should follow, binding Australia to abide by the TPNW and bringing consistency to Australia's existing position on indiscriminate weapons. The absurdity of a world bristling with nuclear weapons is that the consequences of their use are almost unthinkable awful. By joining the TPNW, Australia would honour the victims and survivors of nuclear weapons and nuclear testing, respect the wishes of the vast majority of Australians and uphold our international obligations. It is time for Australia to choose humanity.

My third objection to the Australian/US Alliance is its slavish and blind support for Israel's far right-wing government, following the Trump US decision to relocate its embassy in East Jerusalem. This will serve to prevent Palestine ever becoming an independent state with its capital in East Jerusalem. I also note that DFAT assistance to Palestine in this current year has been reduced from \$20,000,000 to \$10,000,000. I have witnessed IDF (Israeli Defence Force) atrocities and humiliations perpetrated on Palestinian citizens when serving as a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron.

Conclusion: It is now time for Australia to take an independent stand, not mindlessly following US into wars and producing lethal weaponry. We refute any notion that signing the TPNW would put us at great risk of nuclear attack. We are an educated, prosperous, democratic nation and deserve better government than is now on offer. I have not addressed climate change – which is not directly relevant to this discussion – but we need newer, clearer thinking, which will translate into policies that bring peace, not division, in Australian civil society. ♣

BY JACK WATERFORD

AUSTRALIAN JOURNALIST AND COMMENTATOR ([HTTPS://JOHN MENADUE.COM/](https://johnmenadue.com/))

The abuse culture comes from entitled boys from almost all the most expensive and privileged private schools – the germ of Australia's ruling class.

Is anyone surprised that in this environment of contempt for the public, the disadvantaged, and for principles of public stewardship, that disrespect for women rages, and that abuse of women is seen more through the lens of political damage?

There's probably not a politician who does not pay lip service to the idea that sexual harassment and assault are crimes and that victims should be treated with decency, compassion and help. But appalling and sexually oppressive misbehaviour is but evidence of far wider cultural problems on both sides of politics.

The general culture, and the subculture of sexual oppression it embraces, is entrenched. It was evident in two separate ways over the past week as parliament continued to wrestle with the case of a woman allegedly raped while virtually insensible on

a couch in a minister's office. One can more or less take it as read that not a single politician would have wished such a fate upon her. But the spontaneous reaction to the news that it had occurred was essentially partisan, if disguised by tender expressions of sympathy for the victim.

The culture was also on display in another context. If one Googles 'petition for consent to be included in sex ed earlier', one finds hundreds of accounts of sexual assaults on girls attending private single-sex high schools by young men from the private single-sex schools. The abuse culture comes from entitled boys from almost all the most expensive and privileged private schools – the germ of Australia's ruling class. It was not a culture as strong and pervasive when I attended such a school 60 years ago, but when one looks at the moral, ethical

environment, and the approaches to respect for women in these men destined to be leaders in politics, law and finance, one can only despair of the future.

It's not only women who are disrespected and abused, *sui generis* though that may be. It's a pervasive culture of contempt for almost anyone outside the political class.

It involves the conscious demeaning of, and disregard for, people who are unemployed, and conscious cruelty in the way miserable benefits are administered and managed. It involves conscious cruelty, and outright racism, to some classes of refugees and immigrants. It involves a studied indifference to the mistreatment of elderly Australians, and complacency about continuing, even increasing, disadvantages for many Indigenous Australians. These are not accidents. They are policy – in many cases ideology. The odd backbencher actually embarrassed by it – and there are all too few – has learnt a few slogans or 'cruel to be kind' rationalisations to distract from their fundamental lack of humanity, charity, and common decency.

A robber baron culture is emerging by which ministers think that public money is there to dispose of as they will. Not by principles of equity, need, or open process, but secretly to party donors, party friends and relations, for political purposes. Ministers are increasingly taking over the distribution of public grants, and more blatantly using their discretion to distribute them to cronies.

The culture also embraces chronic secrecy, lack of transparency, failures of proper documentation and refusal to answer questions, FOI requests, or other forms of account. That comes from contempt for the process and the presumptions of any system of fairness or accountability.

Hard to be surprised that a government that laughs at ordinary citizens and holds them in contempt treats women so badly.

I don't point this out to again call for strong anti-corruption mechanisms. Rather, it is to show that the government is laughing at ordinary citizens. Phrases about giving a go to those who have a go means no more than that those who donate money to the governing party, or when the government needs partisan assistance. They will be lavished with public money, tax concessions and special privileges. Those in similar circumstances but not playing that game are out of the game. So are more deserving causes. Indeed, a good deal of the tens of billions of dollars handed out to private sector cronies have been distributed without rules of accountability, accessible public records of who got what, when and for what reason, and on what terms.

It is not new that some of those most given to abuse of the public trust, duties of public stewardship, and assumptions about charity, honesty and respect for others are among those most given to pretending they are guided by their religious values. The 'Christianity' of many in the present government is not recognisable to most Christians, even if Matthew 23:14 seems to apply.

We live in an age of dismemberment of the sense of community and citizens living in a society, of a common cause, mutual respect, and mutual obligation. Community is becoming more atomised, politicians thriving by setting groups against each other, with politics of blame and resentment, and of punishment and coercion, and with appeals to selfishness and self-interest.

Even if the tendencies are most obvious in the present government, they are not unique to one side. Even though every side is keen to point to significant problems of culture in the other.

Can anyone be surprised that in this environment of contempt for the public, for the disadvantaged, and for principles of public stewardship, that disrespect for women rages, and that physical or sexual abuse of women is seen more through the lens of political damage than a sincere desire to help, to comfort, or to create the circumstances where such things cannot happen again?

The very number of reviews commissioned by the prime minister after he finally became aware of the alleged sexual assault are a measure of the embarrassment in which he found himself – remember, he didn't 'get it' until his wife explained. But he doesn't need reviews. He has access to reports tackling the problem head on, but they have been generally rejected by Morrison himself as well as his cabinet. One gets sensitivity to abuse of women only when the media spotlight is on it.

We don't need more studies; more consultation; or more evidence or bad examples. What we do need, in spades, is leadership. From people who can command respect. And who show us by example they 'get it' and that they will not put up with the culture of the status quo. The problem is that such people are in short supply. Morrison is not in their number and cannot be reinvented to fit.

That's why the public should be cynical. This government does not have the cred to change the culture. Indeed, it has yet to show that it disavows it in practice. Or that some of the arch practitioners, from the top down, would relent except when it suits them.

John Waterford AM, better known as Jack Waterford, is an Australian journalist and commentator.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE

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

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are aliened from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.



THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART



from our readers



DEAR BEACON READER

This is a letter from Beacon Board ... we need your help.

This year, due to the enormous impact of the worldwide pandemic, and because of the growth of corruption and repressive legislation that will impact us all, Beacon Board has decided to mount a campaign to grow the number of *Beacon* readers across our nation – seeking the truth has never been more urgent.

As a committed *Beacon* supporter, you can assist in this campaign. Do you know a friend, neighbour, workmate or relation who may be interested in *Beacon*, which as you know, is based on 'Seek the truth and serve humanity'. If so, you could contribute to our *Beacon* reader family by giving us their contact details and in return we will send them the next three issues free of charge.

Please help to increase *Beacon* readership.

DEAR BEACON BOARD

I wish to advise you that my husband, Ken Wilcox, who had been a subscriber to your journal for some time, passed away last year.

I have included payment so that I can continue to obtain your interesting and informative journal.

Thanking you

**Best wishes
D Wilcox, Qld**

DEAR DONNA

I have deposited \$50.00 into the church account this morning to cover my subscription, which is excessively overdue, and for which I apologise. Thank you for keeping on sending me the *Beacon*. I appreciate it. Keep up the great work. All the best.

**Regards
D Poynton, NSW**

FEBRUARY BEACON - EXCELLENT AND IMPORTANT READING, YET AGAIN!

Thanks, and best wishes to you all.

**Cheers
B McPhie, Vietnam**

DEAR BEACON

Thank you for sending the print edition of the *Beacon* for February 2021.

Enclosed is my subscription/donation for 2021.

The push for justice reform by the Justice Reform Initiative and the words of Dame Quentin Bryce continue to be ignored by the Queensland Labor Government afraid of appearing 'soft on crime'.

**Yours sincerely
H Williams, Qld**

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Editorial: It is time to stand up

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the poverty machine**

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involvement in US-led wars**

**The abuse culture comes from entitled boys from
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schools –the germ of Australia's ruling class.**

The Uluru statement from the heart

Letters to the editor

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