EDITORIAL May 2016 A plan for the common good

Whether the Budget Scott Morrison is called on to produce for the nation on July 2 benefits the whole of society including the most vulnerable is a question Catholic social teaching asks us to ponder constantly. Yet the Budget is too often merely an exercise in balancing the books and keeping wealthy voters happy.

Andrew Hamilton writes of the government’s talk of a plan rather than a budget giving hope to those of us who are committed to a society which cares equally for all, a budget which looks at the political, social and cultural as well as the economic needs of all. It offers hope that the election may provoke a discussion of the economy that goes beyond dogma and technical issues to ask how the economy may serve a just and humane society.

This is our calling as Catholics – to study the actions of the government and of those in power everywhere and use our voice and our vote to ensure fair treatment for everyone.

The Panama Papers show what those in power will do to maintain their privilege. Holding money in trusts overseas is not illegal but it indicates that there are those who will go to such lengths to avoid paying tax in the country in which they made their money. The secrecy surrounding such trusts shows the desire of the trustees not to be challenged on this practice. The fact that tax is avoided on such earnings means that others in the country have to pay more tax to enable the government to provide services to all who need them. We need to ask ourselves how we feel about the role that tax avoidance plays in boosting inequality in our own country and in the region?

What other factors come into play when the government decides who should benefit from the measures it puts in place? Are people of colour treated differently in the Budget? Is there a difference between the ability black immigrants and white immigrants have to establish themselves and to get ahead in our society?

Indigenous Australia

Down the radioactive rabbit hole

Adnyamathanha Elders are "shattered" that, of the six sites shortlisted by the Federal Government for a national nuclear waste dump, the one on Wallerberdina Station in the Barndioota region of South Australia, is now the only one pegged for further assessment, writes Nat Wasley for New Matilda. Read more

The Political Community

What kind of society does this budget enable?

It is important to move from the budget to consider the plan it enables. If the budget is for the whole nation, it should look to the good of all, with each person and business having a responsibility for the good of others, particularly the most vulnerable. When budgets are constructed in such a way that the cost of their balancing is gross inequality and the exclusion of vulnerable people from participation in society, they should be rejected. They do not serve but betray the economy, writes Andrew Hamilton for Eureka Street. Read more

What Nakba Day means in Australia

Australia Day marks the date of the colonial invasion by the First Fleet. Thus, while many Australians celebrate the day, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples mourn it as Invasion Day or Survival Day. The creation of Australia meant their dispossession, and the devastation of their peoples and cultures. Likewise, Israel’s founding is celebrated on Yom Ha’atzmaut. This is held on the Jewish calendar’s equivalent of 14 May, the anniversary of the day in 1948 when Israel declared independence. Read more
When Israel was the anti-Semite’s Homeland

It was an assessment no one expected from the deputy head of the Israeli military. In his Holocaust Day speech last week, Yair Golan compared current trends in Israel with Germany in the early 1930s, when Nazism took hold, writes Jonathan Cook for The Palestine Chronicle. It was an assessment no one expected from the deputy head of the Israeli military. In his Holocaust Day speech last week, Yair Golan compared current trends in Israel with Germany in the early 1930s, when Nazism took hold.

New Nationalist myths entrench white denial

Dismantling white myths about history is a positive step, a potential pin in an ethnic nationalism which lingers here. Yet these posters pop up often not in bastions of that denial, but rather on walls across Western Sydney, in suburbs whose demographics hardly tell tales of fortresses of white privilege. It seems that, less than a project to dismantle white myths about history, the popularity of these stories is more an attempt to bring non-white Australians into a new myth in the making.

Does New Zealand have a problem with anti-Maori racism?

New Plymouth mayor Andrew Judd has said he will not seek re-election after receiving abuse for campaigning for greater Maori representation in Taranaki.

Refugees and Migrants

JRS welcomes Pope’s controversial visit to Lesbos

As member states of the European Union close their borders to desperate refugees, Jesuit Refugee Service Australia has welcomed Pope Francis’s dramatic gesture in taking back to the Vatican refugee families from the Greek island where so many refugees are stranded as a timely intervention that highlights the need for global solidarity and generosity.

Environment

Bangladesh rice harvest ruined in flash floods

Catholic charity Caritas is assessing the emergency needs of thousands of farmers after recent flooding devastated thousands of hectares of agricultural land in northeastern Bangladesh.

Climate change in the Solomons

The Solomon Islands have lost five atolls and seen at least six more severely eroded, as sea levels have risen over recent decades, writes Thom Mitchell for New Matilda.

Ecology to be taught in Indonesian schools

With some 70 million out of 127 million hectares of forestland in Indonesia facing destruction because of industrial exploitation and plantations, the country’s priests are welcoming plans to introduce a new subject into schools. The government hopes ecological education in schools will help raise awareness about this and encourage future generations to look after their natural world.

The imperative of human responsibility – an ethics for the technological age

Hans Jonas opened my eyes to how ethics must become part of the fabric of the future as well as of the present, writes John Pawlikowski.

Peace

Mindinao prelate calls on Duterte to address peace process

A leading Filipino church official has called on the country’s newly elected president to immediately address peace issues in the southern Philippine region of Mindanao.

Use It

Watch The Film The Government Didn’t Want
You To See

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC), Australia’s largest independent not for profit whose mission is to uphold the rights of people seeking asylum will hold a fundraiser screening of the year’s most controversial documentary, Chasing Asylum. Saturday 28 May, 4pm, Cinema Nova, Carlton. For more information and to buy tickets ($25), click here.

Palestinians are last defenders against Zionism – Gaza-born journalist Ramzy Baroud

In this speech recorded for conferences in New Zealand and Australia (March and April 2016), Dr. Ramzy Baroud explains the nature of the fight ahead and why Palestinians need to reach a critical mass in their fight for equality and justice. Baroud has been writing about the Middle East for more than 20 years. He is an internationally-syndicated columnist, a media consultant, an author of several books and the founder of PalestineChronicle.com. [Watch video here](#)

Cecily McNeill

*editor*