

The Truth about our Colonial History

Through the course of the Referendum campaign some of us became aware that many Australians have little appreciation of the killings and massacres that were a core part of the process of colonisation. Those of us who are older were not taught about this in school. In fact it is only in the past couple of decades that historians have turned their attention to this grim and brutal part of the Australian story. There are some who suggest that the past is best forgotten, but we are shaped by our history, and our First Nations people are shaped by the trauma of those times. (The most recent massacres – Coniston, occurred a mere 95 years ago; people alive today heard first-hand the stories of these fearful times.)

In an earlier edition (No. 3 2022) we featured a review of *Truth Telling, History, Sovereignty and the Uluru Statement*, by Henry Reynolds, NewSouth Publishing, 2021. It is a thorough examination of the illegal and violent process of dispossession.

We have also made reference to the *University of Newcastle map of Australian Colonial Frontier Massacres*, which includes historical details, and can be found at <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>

David Marr's recently published *Killing for Country*, is another thorough investigation of colonial dispossession practices in New South Wales and Queensland, driven by squatters in their eagerness to acquire vast tracts of land for their sheep. Marr was shocked to discover that his own ancestors had been involved in the killings.

The documentary, *Lousy Little Sixpence*, is a good place to start to appreciate the indigenous struggle for recognition. It is available at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/tv-program/lousy-little-sixpence/939052099778>

We hope to bring you further reviews and information about the truth of our history.

Mourning Sunday

The Uniting Church recognises the Sunday before 26th January, (21st Jan 2024), as a Day of Mourning. Some UCAs in Bendigo will have Day of Mourning services in solidarity with our First Nations sisters and brothers. Watch out for them.

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Bendigo Uniting Churches Social Justice Group

This is the fourth Insert for 2023; it is circulated within all Bendigo Congregations. We thank them for their support and welcome opportunities to share their social justice concerns.

Lowering the Voting Age

The Vote 16 movement started at Castlemaine Secondary College. It is a group of students made up from years 7 to 12 who are passionate about social justice and the environment. The group has a petition to lower the voting age to 16. Of course, it is up to us older people to make this happen

It is young people who will be most affected by the decisions made by our leaders about action to hold global warming to 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels. You can find the petition here:

<https://www.change.org/p/lowering-the-voting-age-for-climate-action>

Social Housing

BUCSJG has a long-standing interest in social housing, and has made various representations to government, council, and churches over many years. We have sought to remind the church that it has underutilised property resources that could be used to provide homes for the poor and disadvantaged. We continue to maintain a watching brief, and will take further action when needed.



Magnificat Haiku

A new era comes
where the humble will be blessed,
the wealthy brought low

The proud are confused
in their thoughts, the strong justice
of God is revealed.

This is the era
of justice and hopefulness
that God has promised.

Capitalism
is eclipsed in Mary's song;
the rich sent away.

Let's stop pretending
that the bible is neutral,
politically.

Common Conspiracies

During the referendum campaign we became aware of a range of conspiracy theories, all designed to promote fear and distrust. The idea that a Yes result would result in vast swathes of land being handed over to First Nations peoples, or that land would be taken over by the government at the behest of the UN, that large sums in reparations would be required to be paid, and that lands and waterways would be locked up to restrict fishing and hunting.

Other conspiracies have come to the fore, being promulgated by many of the same groups of people. They both promote and arise from a growing distrust of governments, (some of which is deserved). We need to question our governments, but we should do so with reason and with factual information.

Here are some popular conspiracies that have currency among people, many of whom believe them passionately.

Vaccinations are harmful, leading to autism, result in a change to DNA, and are a means by which governments seek to control people. Science has refuted all these claims; we know that vaccinations save lives.

5G mobile phone networks negatively affect your immune system. This claim was particularly evident in the early years of Covid. There is no evidence to support it.

15 Minute City. This is a design principle that seeks to build cities wherein no-one has to walk for more than 15 minutes to have access to medical services, shops and other facilities. It is intended to lessen our dependence on private transport. Conspiracists see it as the government controlling us by restricting our movement.

Human caused Climate change is not real, it is a conspiracy by scientists to cause alarm. Therefore there is nothing we need to do about it.

The UN is decried as an attempt to create a world government that will over-ride the nations of the world. The UN has its problems, but it relies on consensus and agreement; it has no real power over its members. It may not be perfect, but it does play an important role in international affairs.

Electric Vehicles are more damaging to the environment than Internal Combustion cars, are more costly, and can't be recycled. EVs can be shut down by the government should they choose to. EVs do cost more to purchase, but they are much cheaper to run and maintain. None of the other claims are true.

You may encounter such ideas as you engage in conversations. It is good to be aware of them, and to be ready to question such beliefs. They are not based on fact or science, and do not help us come to informed positions on important matters.



Truth after the Voice

***Megan Davis** is a Cobble Cobble woman from Queensland, a pro vice-chancellor and professor of law at UNSW, and a member of the Referendum Council. She gives an indigenous perspective on the referendum outcome in the current edition of **The Monthly**. Here are some excerpts, including her concluding paragraphs where she finds something to celebrate.*

“ . . . (Hundreds of stories about Racist abuse) went unreported and will remain unreported. . . . many were disinclined to report the racism. . . . from the time the prime minister announced he would run a referendum, despite his laudable exhortation that he would not tolerate racism in the campaign, the First Nations communities have been subject to vile racism. Thinly veiled racism was given respectability and wide ventilation through conventional media because of its slavish adherence to “both sides”, a false equivalence approach to reporting, which in turn gave licence for it to run even more rampant on social media.

“The pain and the hurt of that racism and the rejection at the ballot box were the subjects of widespread Indigenous grieving in the week of silence that followed the result. Time has not diminished the hurt. The community felt utterly bereft in the rejection of recognition. . . .

“ . . . As we face the reinforcement of the status quo, the only solace we find is in the six million confirmed friends that we never knew we had. The six million Australian brothers and sisters who walk with us. This has been the tonic for our hurt and our despair. The kind and caring emails, the loving gestures and the cheering us up and cheering us on, the barbecues and the meet-ups with local community groups who joined with mob and devoted their past year door-knocking and letterboxing, and yarning to other Aussies.

“I have heard stories from Aboriginal colleagues and relatives of non-Indigenous Aussies bringing casseroles and lasagne each night in the week that followed. I draw strength from the thousands and thousands of emails from Australians I have not yet met who send their love and share their grief. And there are many, many more who did not actively join the campaign but who voted “Yes”. We six million are bonded together now. There is power in our voices. Collectively, we the people believe in recognition and rights. Those Australians who accepted the offer of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and listened to the dialogues, now make up an Australian chorus, six million voices in unison, who march on in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

“The other consolation is that the Voice was a solution conceived of by First Nations people in a historic First Nations process that no one has ever tried. But the status quo has prevailed, and time will show what a lost opportunity this was to bring about change.”

The Monthly, December 2023-January 2024 It is worth reading the whole article. <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2023/december/megan-davis/truth-after-voice#mtr>