

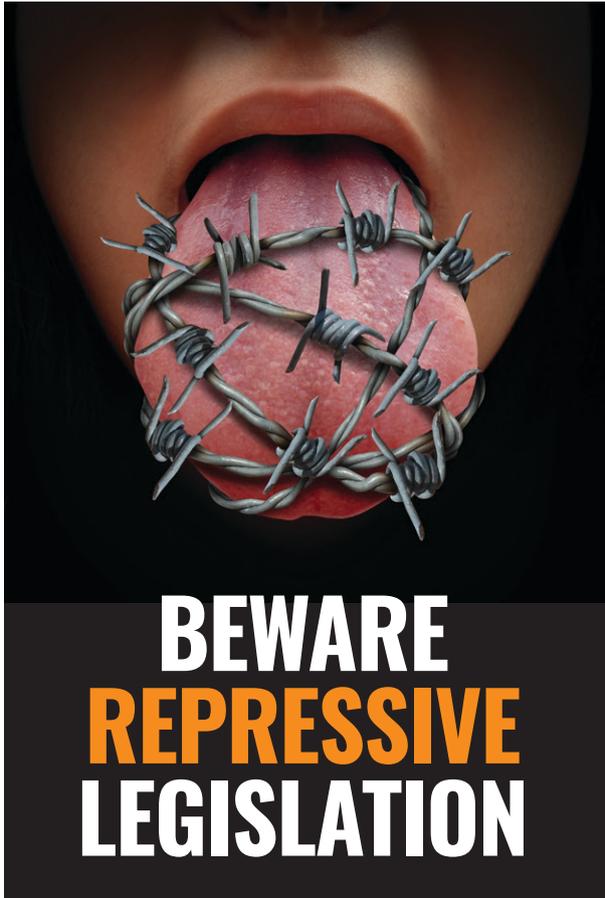


# SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

# the Beacon

Journal of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church

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While Australians watch bemused as our Federal Government lurches from crisis to crisis, making decisions on the run and locking us into what could well be another war, we are also witnessing the growing move to the extreme right across Europe. The extreme right, indeed the fascist right, is awakened and is strengthening around the world, strengthened by false information that blames the victims of wars for the economic downturn, thus blaming the failure of the capitalist system on its victims.

There are still those who call on the Melbourne Unitarian Church to refrain from politics, to look inward and not at the appalling results of the decisions being made at the top of society that result in the displacement, destruction, devastation and desperation we are witnessing around the world. Who are these people who say that churches should stay out of politics? What are their motives? Do they stand for justice and democracy? Are they misled ... or are they cowed by the forces of evil?

Who better than churches, expected to care for the welfare of society, to challenge these policies? Churches have an absolute responsibility to defend the growing millions suffering as a result of the politics of greed and power and injustice. Who better to research the policies being pursued around the world victimising people for their colour, their race, their religion? Who better to defend the disenfranchised, the poverty stricken, the wartorn?

Currently the scapegoating of the Muslim community is growing apace. This attack on a group within society in order to divert attention from the politics of greed is not new ... it has happened and is happening right across the world. It happened in the 1930s where Jews were the obvious scapegoat and today it is Muslims. Scapegoats historically have been used to divert attention from government policies that result in growing poverty and disengagement.

Wouldn't churches be failing their responsibilities if they didn't acknowledge and challenge what is happening in our society today? Repressive legislation is being introduced without our knowledge ... legislation that will diminish our democratic rights, target innocent sections of our community, outlaw the right to struggle for a better life and curtail our civil liberties.

Fearlessly the Melbourne Unitarian Church has since its inception fought for social justice, exposed corruption, challenged bad laws, opposed illegal wars and exposed fascist elements in our society working towards a less democratic and more repressive environment. Our church has used its journal, its programs and its policies to defend justice, democracy, peace and prosperity. We wear this reputation with pride.

We will not stand idly by while sections of our community are vilified unjustifiably, while people are forced into impoverishment and while exploitation and repressive legislation is growing. We will expose policies and programs that we believe are anti people and pro profit at the expense of the majority. We will remember that it was silence in Germany that allowed the growth of fascism. We know it was silence that encouraged the growth of fascism to embroil us in the Second World War and it was silence and acquiescence by people and governments that allowed the scourge of fascism to grow and destroy millions around the world. The people, in the Second World War, imposed a crushing defeat on the fascist forces of that time, and they will again. **This church will not be silenced.** ☮

EDITORIAL



The Federal Government may finally be realising that there are major problems with its implementation of the My Health Record. The glaring issue of the decrease in controls on accessing records for non-medical purposes by police, security services, and welfare services has been exposed and can and almost certainly will be easily addressed through appropriate legislation. The fact that it took so long for the Government to accept there was a problem is a very concerning sign of either the lack of understanding of the Government and bureaucracy or a lack of concern for individuals' rights or both.

### **Opt in vs opt out: Informed vs uninformed consent**

But this is only one of the problems with My Health Record. The opt out system requires those people who do not want such a record to go online by 15 October and follow the instructions to opt out or call a helpline if needed. For a person to opt out requires an awareness that a My Health Record system is in place, that the person is capable of going online or finding the Help number and understanding the instructions. If a person is not aware of My Health Record or can't understand what is required then a record will automatically be created on 15 October 2018. The process assumes that all those who aren't aware of the system or can't understand it will be comfortable having a record generated. This is a fundamental breach of the privacy of the doctor/patient or health professional/patient relationship.

It is not informed consent. It is not about citizen engagement.

The opt out option was chosen because after 5 years of an opt in system the uptake was only about 6 million. Since its inception the My Health Record required patients or individuals to decide whether they wanted to have a record. Usually that has been through their general practitioner asking them if they wanted to be a part of the system. It required advice and discussion about the pros and cons. Because it wasn't generating enough interest from doctors or patients, the decision was made to change from opt in to opt out. The failure of opt in was a failure of government leadership in advocating to doctors and patients the value of the scheme. The easy way out has been taken. Changing to opt out removes the responsibility for enrolment in My Health Record from the Government and doctors. It is a lazy solution.

It indicates that government, of itself and through doctors, has not been able to sell the advantages of the concept to enough of the public. Instead, in their commendable quest to get as many people enrolled as possible, they have negated their responsibility for explaining to patients and the public, relying instead on the lack of awareness, of knowledge, and of understanding of the public about what is being foisted upon them.

On the ground, what does it mean? Most of my patients today had heard of My Health Record. The majority thought it sounded like a good idea. Some were concerned and an ex IT worker intended to opt out until it was clearer that it was working well. Some had not heard of it. All of these patients came from a middle/upper class socio-economic group. Most of these patients have nothing in their records which would embarrass them. But when I spend a day in the country in an area of high unemployment, limited opportunities, and low socio-economic status, I expect many will not have heard about it, many will struggle to understand the positives or the negatives, unless someone has the time to explain the details, and some will not appreciate how accessible their personal information will be or how to control it.

### Secondary use of data

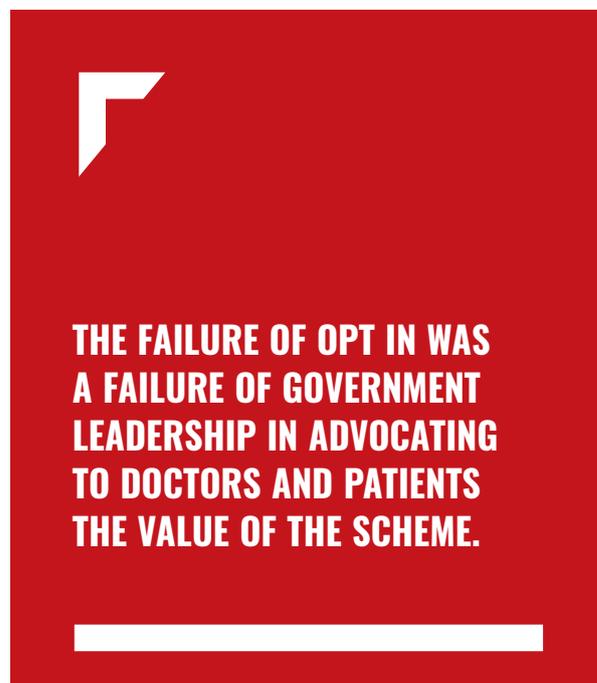
The second major area of concern is the secondary use of the data. The Federal Government has a framework to guide this secondary use. It refers to:

*to prepare and provide de-identified data for research or public health purposes ... collect, use, and disclose an individual's health care information (i.e. identifiable information) with the consent of the individual.*

The framework was completed in May 2018. It is only now starting to implement that framework. It is a guide. We don't know yet what the rules will be. Yet the data will be gathered almost automatically after 15 October 2018. The rules for use have not yet been determined. This is back to front. Rules should be determined first so people can see them; then people can make decisions about their data. Once again, this is not about informed consent.

### Benefits

The concept of My Health Record is excellent. It may save lives. It certainly has the potential to make our health system more efficient with less duplication of tests, less phone calls to find data from different healthcare providers, less reliance on a patient's memory of the drugs they are on and the tests and procedures they have had and the different doctors they have seen. The benefits may be overstated to date. In terms of numbers of lives saved there is no figure and it would be hard to measure but it is real. Efficiency gains would save time and money. Patients would benefit to some degree. The main beneficiaries of the efficiency gains are probably healthcare providers who don't have to chase data.



### Illegal use of data

The last concern however is that of illegal access to data. No data is safe. We can have world's best practice security and still get hacked. This risk has to be weighed against the benefits. The very fact that it is intended to be such a comprehensive data base increases the risk of hacking far above the lack of security of a doctor's individual record. The fact that the Government has failed to appreciate the problems with legal use of data gives us little confidence that they do have world's best practice security in place.

### The Government should opt out

If this illegal use of data was the only concern, patients could then make an informed decision, and be understandably concerned about how competent the Government is in minimising that risk. However, the current implementation process is deeply flawed. It is about uninformed consent. It is an attack on privacy. The Government itself should opt out until it understands the issues. It should revert to the opt in process of enrolment, sort out the rules for secondary use of data and then improve its processes for encouraging people to enrol. 🙏



A TALK GIVEN AT THE MELBOURNE UNITARIAN CHURCH ON 14 OCTOBER 2018 BY BURT BLACKBURNE VICE CHAIRPERSON OF THE MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE MAN WHO WAS THE SECOND FASTEST RUNNER ON EARTH, SOMEONE WHO WAS OUTSPOKEN ON HUMAN RIGHTS, WHO BECAME PART OF ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL IMAGES OF ALL TIME IN AN ACT OF DEFIANCE THAT SHOOK THE WORLD. HE LIVED NOT FAR FROM THIS CHURCH AND WAS A GREAT AUSTRALIAN FIGHTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND AGAINST RACISM. **YET THERE WAS A DELIBERATE CAMPAIGN BY THE ESTABLISHMENT TO SUPPRESS ALL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PETER NORMAN AND HIS LEGACY AND TO PUNISH HIM.**

# A FORGOTTEN GREAT AUSTRALIAN

PETER NORMAN DAY

Peter, born in 1942, grew up in working class Coburg, Melbourne. At the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, Peter waggled school and got into the MCG through a hole in the fence. He approached a man unloading pies from a truck and offered to help. The man agreed and Peter watched the Olympic Games whilst selling pies over two days. He was particularly interested in his favourite runner, Betty Cuthbert. The Normans were a Salvation Army family and Peter used to work to support the homeless with blankets and food. This activity was to have a big impact on his views on inequality, poverty and society.

Peter was good at many sports but his real love was running. He played football for West Brunswick and was a runner for the Footscray Football Club. Peter had tried out for the Commonwealth Games and the Olympic Games, with limited success. He was about to give away running. His coach, who was very impressed with his times, encouraged him to try once more for the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico. In the weeks leading up to Peter's arrival in Mexico City there were student riots as protests took place to highlight the huge amount of money thrown at the Olympics, compared to the poverty and squalor in that city. Helicopter gunships were shooting down demonstrators and hundreds were killed.

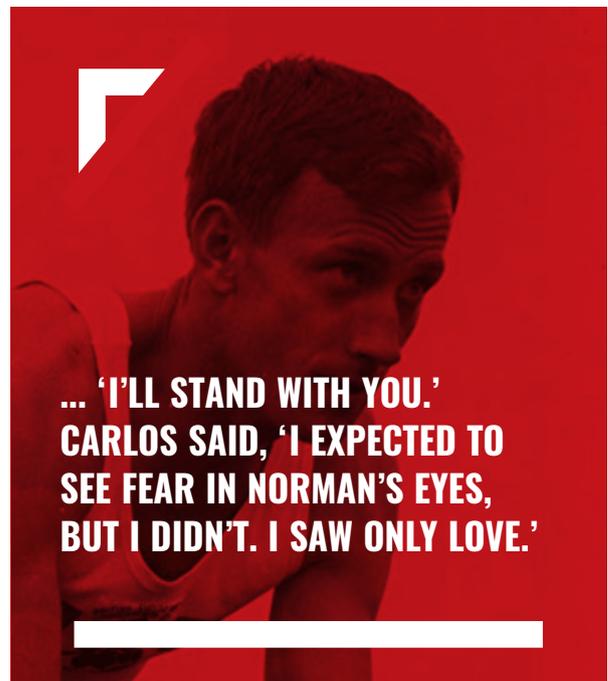
The 200-metre race was the hot event at the 1968 Mexico Olympics and aroused great interest. During the heats, Tommie Smith, John Carlos and Peter Norman had all broken the Olympic record, so it was an open book; but Smith was the favourite. Peter had always trained on grass tracks and when he ran on the sealed Mexico tracks his speed increased immensely. The arena was quiet and tense as the race was about to start because the Afro American athletes had threatened some sort of demonstration. Because of a medal presentation in another part of the arena, it was necessary for the race to be delayed. As the runners prepared on the blocks a phone rang to alert the officials of the delay. Quick as a flash, Peter turned to John Carlos and said, 'Hey, mate, I think that's for you'.

The race finally started and Peter won a silver medal, having covered the distance in 20.06 seconds. That was achieved in the rarefied atmosphere of Mexico City, where many tourists gasped for breath in the thin air. Peter also suffered from asthma. The USA team had been training for months in the US to prepare for the high altitude; Peter competed at Mexico not long after getting off the plane and there were no high altitude opportunities in Australia. Yet, despite these difficulties, no other Australian athlete has been able to equal Peter's time, let alone beat it since.

By the way, Peter's 20.06 seconds Mexico time would have won him a gold medal at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Peter still holds the Australian and Commonwealth records today, some 50 years later.

The environment in 1968 was not dissimilar to today. Afro Americans were dying in wars on behalf of their country, winning medals at sport and being brutalised at home. The Vietnam War was raging, Martin Luther King had just been assassinated and Australia had its own apartheid policies towards our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

The 1968 gold medallist, Tommy Smith, and the bronze medallist, John Carlos (Afro Americans involved in the civil rights movement) asked Peter whether or not he believed in human rights. He answered, yes. Peter told them what was happening to our Indigenous Australians. They told him that they would use the medal presentation to promote their causes. Peter offered to help, but the two Americans refused because they said it was an American problem. Peter disagreed and repeated about the problems here.



He told them, 'I'll stand with you.' Carlos said, 'I expected to see fear in Norman's eyes, but I didn't. I saw only love.' On the way to the medal ceremony, Peter asked the United States rower Paul Hoffman if he could borrow his badge that supported the Olympic Project for Human Rights. Paul agreed. Carlos had forgotten his gloves, so Peter suggested they share Tommy's gloves. The iconic podium image shows one black athlete with a right glove and the other a left glove, their stance showing the poverty and inequality of the US and sending a powerful message to the world on racial equality.

While Smith and Carlos gave the salute, Norman stood on the dais wearing Paul's badge to publicly demonstrate his solidarity with their protest. The music stopped and the arena erupted. Racial slurs were hurled at the black athletes and Avery Brundage, IOC Chairman, insisted they immediately be expelled. This same Olympics Chairman, Brundage, had no such problems with the Nazis' salute at the 1936 Olympic Games and in fact called an attempt to boycott these games a 'Jewish Communist conspiracy'. Brundage was a fascist sympathiser who hated black athletes and gave the Nazi salute at the Berlin Olympics.

Retribution against Peter Norman by the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) was initially a relatively minor reprimand by Team Captain Judy Patching, but later became brutal. He was pilloried and the media,

particularly the *Sun* and *Herald* in Australia, ostracised him when he came home. He was treated like an outsider, the 'N lover' word was used and his family outcast. Peter found work hard to find because of his stand. For a time he worked as a gym instructor, then as a trade unionist and occasionally working in a butchers shop. His nephew Matt talks of Peter butchering a steer for the family at their property near Bairnsdale in Gippsland.

John Carlos said: 'If we were getting beat up, Peter was facing an entire country and suffering alone.'

The AOC refused to send him to Munich in 1972, despite the fact that he had posted Olympic qualifying times in both the 100 and 200 metres. Peter qualified 13 times for the 200 metres and 5 times for the 100 metres races. The 1972 Olympics was the first time since 1876 that Australia had not been represented in the sprints. The AOC rubbed salt into the wound and in 2000 did not invite Peter to participate in the celebrations surrounding the Sydney Olympics. All other former medal winners were invited to do a lap of honour. He attended, however, when invited as a guest of the United States Track and Field Team who were outraged that he was not invited by his own country. Whilst sitting with the US team, Peter was approached by 4-time Olympic Gold Medal winner Michael Johnston. Peter was surprised that Johnston even knew him, but Johnston said that Peter had always been his hero.

It would have been easy for Peter to condemn his co-athletes John Carlos and Tommie Smith's gesture in exchange for a 'pardon' from the system that ostracised him – a pardon that would have allowed him to find a stable job through the AOC and to be a part of the organisation of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Norman never gave in and never condemned the choice of the two Americans.

Peter died from a heart attack (aged 64) on the 3 October 2006. Both Tommie Smith and John Carlos attended his funeral on October 9 in Melbourne, acted as pallbearers and delivered eulogies to a great Australian. Peter had been ostracised and forgotten by a nation's leadership that continues to give lip service to human rights. Mourners packed Williamstown Town Hall to capacity and the crowd flowed into the streets.

The United States Track and Field Federation, realising the personal cost Peter bore throughout his life because of his brave, dignified and moral stand in the struggle for universal human rights, declared October 9 (the day of his funeral in 2006) as Peter Norman Day, a day that is celebrated in the United States and ignored in this country.

For many years a gathering of concerned people has met on the corner of Collins and Swanston Street at midday on October 9. The campaign was to give recognition and have a monument to Peter erected in Melbourne.

### **Significant progress has been made, albeit after Peter's suffering, premature death and the attacks on his family.**

A wonderful film, *Salute*, and a more recent book have been made about Peter's life and contribution by his nephew Matt Norman. There is a likely new Hollywood version next year.

A posthumous apology was made to Peter and his family by the Federal Government, acknowledging the failure to send him to the 1972 Munich Olympics, despite him repeatedly qualifying and in recognition of his contribution to racial equality.

A statue of Peter is to be erected outside Lakeside Stadium and is due to be completed in 2019.

Athletics Australia has awarded the inaugural 'Peter Norman Human Rights Award' to runner Eloise Wellings. Dual Olympian Eloise raises money and support for struggling Ugandan communities.

Peter's family has been presented with a posthumous 'Olympic Order of Merit' for Peter by AOC President John Coates.

### **October 9 will now be recognised as Peter Norman Day in Australia, as it is in the USA.**

Peter's antiracist legacy lives on, not least by the brave souls who invaded the rugby pitch when the white-only South African Springboks toured here in Melbourne, by the Indigenous AFL players like St Kilda's Nicky Winmar, Essendon's Michael Long and Brownlow Medallist Adam Goodes, who took a stand against racism.

We see the courage by NFL American football players who defy Trump and who today 'take a knee' when the US national anthem is played at sporting events. Their actions enhance the 1968 protest and are about poverty, racism and police brutality towards the Afro American community there.

Just before he died, Peter was asked, 'How would you like to be remembered?' Peter's response summed up his humility when he replied, 'I guess I would like to be known as an interesting old guy.' 🙏

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.

# STATEMENT ON IMPENDING US, UK AND FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTION IN SYRIA

BY PROFESSOR TIM ANDERSON, BARONESS COX, AND PETER FORD

GLOBAL RESEARCH, 31 AUGUST 2018

GLOBAL NETWORK FOR SYRIA



*We, members of the Global Network for Syria, are deeply alarmed by recent statements by Western governments and officials threatening the government of Syria with military intervention, and by media reports of actions taken by parties in Syria and by Western agencies in advance of such intervention.*

In a joint statement issued on 21 August the governments of the US, the UK and France said that 'we reaffirm our shared resolve to preventing [sic] the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime and for [sic] holding them accountable for any such use ... As we have demonstrated, we will respond appropriately to any further use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime'.

The three governments justify this threat with reference to 'reports of a military offensive by the Syrian regime against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Idlib'.

On 22 August, **Mr John Bolton**, US National Security Adviser, was reported by Bloomberg to have said that the US was prepared to respond with greater force than it has used in Syria before.

**These threats need to be seen in the context of the following reports and considerations.**

**Reports have appeared of activity by the White Helmets group, or militants posing as White Helmets, consistent with an intention to stage a 'false flag' chemical incident in order to provoke Western intervention. These activities have reportedly included the transfer of eight canisters of chlorine to a village near Jisr Al Shughur, an area under the control of Hayat Tahrir Ash Sham, an affiliate of the terrorist group Al Nusra. Some reports refer to the involvement of British individuals and the Olive security company. Other reports indicate a build-up of US naval forces in the Gulf and of land forces in areas of Iraq adjoining the Syrian border.**

Continued overpage

# STATEMENT ON IMPENDING US, UK AND FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTION IN SYRIA

We therefore urge the US, UK and French governments to consider the following points before embarking on any military intervention:

- In the cases of three of the previous incidents cited in the 21 August statement (Ltamenah, Khan Sheykhoun, Saraqib) OPCW inspectors were not able to secure from the militants who controlled these areas security guarantees to enable them to visit the sites, yet still **based their findings on evidence provided by militants.**
- In the case of Douma, also cited, the interim report of OPCW inspectors dated 6 July based on a visit to the site concluded that **no evidence was found of the use of chemical weapons and that evidence for the use of chlorine as a weapon was inconclusive.**
- Western governments themselves acknowledge that Idlib is controlled by radical Islamist extremists. The British government in its statement on 20 August justified its curtailment of aid programs in Idlib on the grounds that conditions had become too difficult. **Any action by the Syrian government would not be directed at harming civilians, but at removing these radical elements.**
- Any military intervention without a mandate from the United Nations **would be illegal.**
- Any military intervention would risk confrontation with a nuclear-armed co-member of the Security Council, as well as with the Islamic Republic of Iran, with consequent ramifications for regional as well as global security.
- There is no plan in place to contain chaos in the event of sudden government collapse in Syria, such as might occur in the contingency of command and control centres being targeted. **Heavy military intervention could result in the recrudescence of terrorist groups, genocide against the Alawite, Christian, Druze, Ismaili, Shiite and Armenian communities, and a tsunami of refugees into neighbouring countries and Europe.**

In the event of an incident involving the use of prohibited weapons – prior to taking any decision on military intervention – we urge the US, UK and French governments:

- to provide detailed and substantive evidence to prove that any apparent incident could not have been staged by a party wishing to bring Western powers into the conflict on their side
- to conduct emergency consultations with their respective legislative institutions to request an urgent mission by the OPCW to the site of any apparent incident and give time for this mission to be carried out
- to call on the government of Turkey, which has military observation posts in Idlib, to facilitate, in the event of an incident, an urgent mission by the OPCW to the jihadi-controlled area, along with observers from Russia to ensure impartiality.

We further call on the tripartite powers to join Turkish and Russian efforts to head off confrontation between the Syrian government forces and the militants opposing them by separating the most radical organisations, such as Hayat Tahrir Ash Sham and Hurras Ad Deen from the rest, eliminating them, and facilitating negotiations between the Syrian government and elements willing to negotiate.

**DR TIM ANDERSON**, University of Sydney

**LORD CAREY OF CLIFTON**, Crossbench Member of the House of Lords and former Archbishop of Canterbury

**THE BARONESS COX**, Crossbench Member of the House of Lords

**PETER FORD**, British Ambassador to Syria 2003-06

**DR MICHAEL LANGRISH**, former Bishop of Exeter

# What's wrong with privatisation? PART 2



**PRIVATISATION HAS  
CONTRIBUTED TO  
PERVERSIVE CORRUPTION  
AND CRIMINALITY.**

There are six key consequences of privatisation, as I have defined it.

#### **Privatisation hasn't made the provision of services cheaper or better**

Even Rod Sims, Chairman of the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC), has been publicly critical of infrastructure privatisation in Australia. As he says, 'Replacing a public monopoly with a private monopoly makes society worse off'. For example, as Sims observes, privatising the ports at Botany Bay, Port Kembla and Port of Melbourne relied on conditions restricting competition from other ports. The result, unsurprisingly, was big increases in port charges.

While claiming privatising freeways and bridges will mean cheaper and more efficient freeways, bridges and tunnels, handing over the building and operation of freeways to entities such as CityLink has actually come at a massive cost to taxpayers. It is costing billions of dollars more than doing it the old way, chiefly because the private companies have demanded and got hidden subsidies and major tax incentives, all at a cost of billions of dollars in foregone taxes.

#### **Privatisation has contributed to pervasive corruption and criminality**

We have been hearing for some months now from the Hanes Royal Commission extraordinary revelations about the pervasive, almost systematic levels of corruption and criminal conduct in the deregulated banking and financial system. This was always to be expected. When you deregulate systems like this, corruption and criminality are given a green light. When you deregulate the labour market, why be surprised to discover that vulnerable workers are either not getting paid at all or are being systematically defrauded by their employers with under-award wages.

And, as John Quiggin reminds us, the public funding of for-profit vocational education has created a rich field for criminals to get in and defraud students and



## GOVERNMENTS HAVE LONG STOPPED LISTENING TO THE ORDINARY PEOPLE.

governments alike. The idea here was to open the state-funded TAFE system to 'competition' from private providers. Nationally the HECS system was extended to for-profit providers through FEE-HELP. The effect was to give strong incentives to enrol as many students as possible, while keeping costs to a minimum. Bogus courses and colleges sprang up and aggressive salesmen enrolled students who had little or no chance of completing their courses. This bipartisan policy began with the Brumby and Baillieu governments in Victoria and the Howard government federally. Privatisation creates a crisis of accountability that is directly connected to the crisis of democracy.

### Privatisation contributes to a crisis of democracy

Governments have long stopped listening to the ordinary people. Most Australians don't want it, yet governments made up of the major parties keep pushing it down our throats. As John Quiggin notes, 'From the viewpoint of ordinary Australians, privatisation is a policy that has consistently failed but is remorselessly pushed by the political elite. It is little surprise that voters are turning to populism in response'. As the Centre for Policy Development notes in its most recent report, a great majority of Australians don't want smaller government. What 75% of us want to see is a public sector embedded in more parts of Australia. They also want a federal anti-corruption commission (77%), a tougher code of conduct for parliamentarians (79%), putting citizens on parliamentary committees (68%), giving public agencies more independence from the government of the day (55%), and a constitutional convention on how we can update the Australian Constitution for the 21st century (57%). Another big survey carried out by the ACTU of 57,959 people conducted from September 2017 to February 2018 found:

- 81.4% say it's hard to get a decent pay rise in their workplace
- 91% are worried about the loss of permanent jobs for the next generation of workers in Australia
- 95.6 % agreed unions should be able to bargain with the decision-makers, whether it's at enterprise, franchise, sector or industry level
- 83.5% say it's 'extremely important' to change the rules so employers cannot get away with underpaying workers

Secondly, and worse, privatisation has created a vacuum of accountability. When governments do bad things they can be held to account at the next election. Privatisation creates a block to accountability by passing the buck on to NGOs and private companies and thwarting a basic mechanism of democratic accountability.

**Privatisation has contributed to a dramatic increase in economic inequality in Australia because governments have used the taxation system to provide hidden subsidies to wealthy people and companies in order to make it seem that privatisation operates on pure free market principles – when it cannot.**

We have seen in the last few years, massive levels of public investment in wealthy individuals and business. Since the 1980s, governments have created some 200 legal tax avoidance schemes, such as negative gearing, worth \$168 billion in tax welfare for the rich in 2016–17. Worse, as part of their apparent commitment to free market principles, over half of the 500 biggest companies in Australia pay no tax because they have lobbied governments to change the tax system in their favour so tax avoidance becomes legal.

**Neoliberalism works by playing tricks with our language. Doing this kills off truth. When truth is killed off, so is trust.**

Let me explain. Ideas such as 'competition', 'customers', 'markets' and 'contestability' are magic words ... and misleading. Neoliberals rely on magic words and use systematic linguistic tricks involving what philosophers call 'category mistakes'. For example, a 'dog' is a 'dog' and not an 'orange'. Calling a 'dog' an 'orange' is a category mistake. Neoliberals get the categories and names wrong – deliberately.

Neoliberals use words like 'customers', 'markets' and 'contestability' as if these words can apply to anyone and anything. A real 'market' is something like Camberwell market or the housing market where buyers and sellers are buying and selling and negotiating. A 'customer' typically knows what they want and how much they'll pay when they go into a Myer store. Let's be clear then: when someone is injured in a car crash or is sick, even dying, we are talking about sick people needing immediate care from the best equipped doctors, nurses, clinics and hospitals: they are not 'customers' in something neoliberals like to call a 'healthcare market'.

A young student is a young person whose lack of experience and knowledge will hopefully be addressed by caring, engaging, thoughtful teachers paid for by the whole community who together will transform that young person: unlike 'customers', students don't know what they want and that insight is what an education makes possible. An older person, who discovers, often slowly and in the company of friends and family that they need certain kinds of care, is not a customer. We need to start using the right words.

### **Neoliberalism has encouraged a flight not only from democracy but from responsibility, justice and fairness**

The language categories that neoliberals use lead them into very odd policies. In late 2016–17 we saw the result of decades of a persistent refusal to invest in young people. Young people, most of them on remand, rioted at the Parkville YJC in response to crumbling youth justice centres, all a result of 'tough on crime' policies as Labor governments try to appease populist tabloid media.

We have seen a similar refusal to invest in public health, especially for people with mental health and substance use issues, leading to unprecedented numbers of homeless people. Here in Victoria we have seen the ultimate obscenity: the Andrews' Labor government proposes to deal with the 'housing crisis' [i.e. too many young families unable to get into the first home buyer market] by selling off what is left of our public housing estates to private developers. These private developers will build houses for middle-income earners to buy while expelling existing public housing tenants for the next few years with entirely fake promises that they can come back ... even as we face record numbers of people on waiting lists for public housing ... they'll now never get.

In short: privatisation and the neoliberal project has failed yet the major parties have refused to give up on this unmitigated policy disaster.

And this is where local government now faces an historic choice and opportunity. Let me be very clear: politics always involve real choices. When the Iron Butterfly, Margaret Thatcher, said, 'There is No Alternative', she was either lying or ignorant.

Local governments in Victoria face a political choice: to acquiesce in a bad, even toxic policy, or to take a stand in support of democratic principles oriented to some simple ideas about justice, an idea about what care looks like, and how it connects to ideas about a good life. Let us be clear: councils are already making those choices – some badly, others well.

In late March 2018, South Gippsland Shire Council decided to withdraw from providing Home and Community Care (HACC) services and made 43 jobs redundant. HACC staff wept as council made the decision at a council meeting. The council said its decision was 'forced by changes in government funding'. One of its councillors (Cr Don Hill) said that in 'the lead up to the last elections, I asked everyone I met what they liked about the Shire. The number one service was the health and community service without a doubt'. Council will pay redundancy packages worth approximately \$1 million (The Great Southern Star, 4 April 2018).

On 30 April 2018 the Australian Services Union (ASU) attended a Home and Community Care meeting at Indigo Shire's Chiltern office. There, Indigo Shire announced that Alpine Health would be the new service provider. Staff would be made redundant on the 30 June 2018 and would be able to apply for positions with Alpine Health. THE ASU advised that the working conditions offered by Alpine Health would not equal the previous EBA agreement, leaving workers disadvantaged by the proposed changes.

In April 2015, Bendigo City Council voted to cease providing HACC. In May, Bendigo Council made the unanimous decision to reverse its original decision after it received a petition with 2,588 signatures, 123 phone calls and emails, 46 letters and countless calls to councillors. Mayor Peter Cox said that the Bendigo Council had agreed to implement efficiencies with the aim of the services becoming cost neutral and fully funded by contributions from the state and federal governments and client fees (Bendigo Advertiser, 7 May 2018).

Finally, in early July, Moonee Valley Council decided it would continue to offer aged care services despite what it called 'uncertainties about future Federal funding'. This council provides aged care services to about 16 per cent of seniors who live in Moonee Valley. Councillors voted unanimously to continue council services despite an officer's report that found the introduction of the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and national aged care reforms would change the way aged care services were funded. Councillors received a round of applause from the public gallery after rejecting a proposal to subcontract out and eventually exit the service area. One Councillor (Nicole Marshall) said she was sick of the provision of services being reduced to a dollar figure: 'I don't want to be a council that knows the price of everything but the value of nothing,' she said. Cr Marshall argued there was evidence the privatisation of care throughout Australia was not delivering the best results for 'clients' (*Herald-Sun*, 2 July 2018).

### **It's time ...**

To recall a famous Australian political slogan: It's time. It's time for ordinary Australians to remind all governments what an ethic of care looks like when we think about our most vulnerable people. It's time for ordinary Australians to remind the political class what democracy looks like and why democratic accountability matters. We face imminent existential challenges such as climate change, new disruptive technologies, dramatic increases in social and economic inequality, the persistent threat of war and a financial system that is out of control. We can no longer afford to stick with a policy frame based on competitive individualism, greed and free markets. It is time for a new political and policy framework that values solidarity, active citizenship, public service and a duty of care.

As Richard Denniss reminds us:

*The world is full of alternatives and choices. Neoliberalism's real power came from convincing us that we had none. We do, and making them is the democratic role of citizens – not the technocratic role of economists, nor that of any self-serving elite. 🙏*

BY JOHN WIGHT

# BUSH & BLAIR'S IRAQ WAR WAS THE KEY THAT OPENED DOOR TO SYRIA'S CURRENT HELL



John Wight has written for a variety of newspapers and websites, including the Independent, Morning Star, Huffington Post, Counterpunch, London Progressive Journal, and Foreign Policy Journal.

If the pain of birth is the price of life, Syria's birth as a truly independent nation has come at the price of eight years of brutal and merciless struggle.

As with the Vietnamese people, so with the Syrians. Their struggle against imperialism and hegemony has earned them a place at history's table that can never be relinquished. Because, if you penetrate beyond the obfuscations peddled by Western ideologues, the conflict in Syria at its core has been anti-imperialist in character.

The hell visited on Syrian society has been in many respects a continuation of the hell visited on Iraq in 2003, after 13 years of sanctions had already killed two million of its people, including half a million children.

During this sanctions period, former US secretary of state Madeleine Albright, in a rare moment of candour for a functionary of the empire, provided us with an invaluable insight into the pristine barbarism which lurks behind the mask of democracy and human rights that such people usually wear for the purposes of confusing the public mind as to who and what they truly are.

The interviewer, Lesley Stahl, put it to Albright that half a million Iraqi children had died due to the sanctions, and asked if she thought the price 'is worth it'. Albright without hesitation answered Yes. 'We think the price is worth it.'

Getting to grips with the beast of Western hegemony obligates us to grapple with the salient truth that

Albright's grotesque and perverse worldview, providing her with the ability to insouciantly account for the murder by sanctions of half a million Iraqi children, is the same worldview which drove the US war against Vietnam, that has underpinned the six decades of economic warfare against the Cuban people, the covert military interventions in South and Central America in the 1980s, support for the mujahideen in Afghanistan over the same period, and the ongoing effort to effect regime change in Venezuela.

It is also, be in no doubt, the thinking that informed the West's approach to Libya in 2011 when the country's difficulty presented itself as their opportunity. In other words, it is the worldview of those so sick with the ideology of hegemony there is no monstrous act, no crime or slaughter that cannot be undertaken in its cause, necessitating the abstraction of millions of lives as mere flotsam and jetsam in order to justify their suffering as a 'price worth paying'.

Returning to Iraq in 2003, the scourge of Salafi-jihadism that has scarred Syrian society was hatched in the course of that war, wherein ISIS (Islamic State) began life as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) under one Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

According to Stanford University, an institution not hitherto known to be a hotbed of pro-Assad sentiment, this particular history unfolded thus: 'The Islamic State (IS), also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS or ISIL) is a Salafi-jihadist militant organization in

Syria and Iraq whose goal is the establishment and expansion of a caliphate. The group has its origins in the early 2000s, when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi began training extremist militants.

The group was a major participant in the Iraqi insurgency during the American occupation, first under the name Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad and then, after swearing fealty to Al-Qaeda, as Al-Qaeda in Iraq.'

This reason why this trajectory is so important to reaffirm, and why it must detain us, is to emphasize that the roots of what later befell Syria were planted in Iraq by the US-led war unleashed there in 2003. Bush and Blair's war was the key that unlocked the gates of hell out of which this medieval barbarism sprung to devastating effect. Those who believe otherwise, such as former US ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, would do well to ponder that without Iraq being pushed into the abyss of societal collapse, carnage and resulting sectarian bloodletting, the Salafi-jihadism of al-Zarqawi et al would have been denied the conditions required to feed its growth and spread.

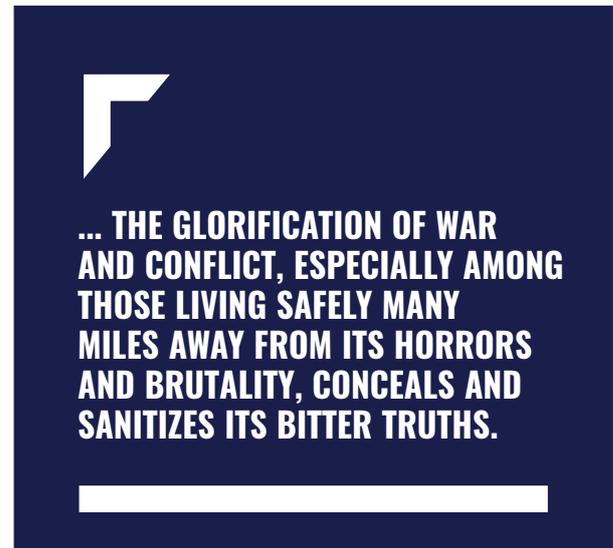
Washington not Damascus or Moscow created and incubated the Frankenstein's Monster of ISIS, in the same laboratory of US imperialism in which the Khmer Rouge was created in the 1970s and Al-Qaeda in the 1980s.

What Vietnam in the 1960s and '70s, Afghanistan in the 1980s, and Syria today have in common, of course, is Moscow's stance. It is a matter of historical record that without Soviet (Russian) aid to the Vietnamese in the 1960s and '70s, they would not have prevailed, and it is likewise a matter of record that the grim fate to befall Afghanistan in the 1990s was predicated on the forced withdrawal of Soviet forces as the country began to founder under the weight of the internal contradictions that were to lead to its demise.

Though the cost to the world of the end of the Soviet Union will never be compensated – measured not only in the medieval abyss into which Afghanistan was plunged, but also in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the aforementioned decimation of Iraq – without Moscow's recovery to the point of being able to intervene militarily in Syria in 2015, Damascus today would be occupying a place in the same graveyard. Iran and Hezbollah have also played an indispensable role in the struggle for Syria's survival, expending blood and treasure in the event, while the Syrian Arab Army's sacrifice has been immeasurable.

The glorification of war and conflict, especially among those living safely many miles away from its horrors and brutality, conceals and sanitizes its bitter truths. Those who do glorify it, who view it in the manner of a parlour game, should take a moment to study and imbibe the words of Jeannette Rankin, who said: 'You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake.'

The war in Syria confirms the abiding truth of those words when we take into account the mammoth destruction it has wrought, the tragic human cost, and how it has shaken Syrian society to the very limits of endurance. It means that while the country's survival as an independent non-sectarian state may by now be certain, its ability to fully recover from the earthquake Rankin describes is something only time will tell.



But the fact that the country has managed to achieve its survival and, with it the opportunity to recover, is predominately the achievement of the Syrian Arab Army, whose complexion is a microcosm of the very society and people it has defended – Sunnis, Shia, Druze, Christians, Alawites, etc.

Robert Fisk, whose reports from Syria since the conflict began have been indispensable in helping us navigate its trajectory, informs us that something of the order of 70–80,000 Syrian soldiers have perished. This constitutes a staggering toll in a country whose army stood at 220,000 at the start of the conflict. More crucially, it is a toll that could not possibly have been borne without the solid support of the Syrian people for the army and its government, led by President Bashar Assad, over these past eight years.

Idlib is now the last bastion of militant-held territory in the country and, though of course folly to count chickens, by all accounts events on the ground point inexorably to the complete liberation of the country sooner rather than later. Yet isn't it an interesting study in the space that exists between the ideology and reality of Western hegemony and unipolarity that not one mainstream journalist has joined the obvious dots between ascribing rebel status to the assorted Salafi-jihadist groups whose conception of a society is a living hell, and the government and armed forces fighting to prevent it from coming into being.

This is never better illustrated than the fact that not one Western journalist denouncing the Syrian government and its motives during the war would have dared to set foot within so much as an inch of militant-held territory, knowing that if they did they would be peremptorily abducted, tortured and slaughtered. In which direction Syria heads after the fighting ends is without reservation a matter for its people. It is hard to believe that it could hope to return to the status quo that existed before, though, not after the elemental suffering and sacrifice that has been endured and made by so many.

One thing that is quite certain: the nation and society that began life as a colonial construct has, over the course of the conflict, rallied at a seminal point in its history to assert the right never to be colonised by anyone again. 🕯

# from our readers

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## DEAR EDITOR

My husband subscribes and we have both been to your Sunday meeting in Melbourne more than once; we try and do this whenever we can when we are in Melbourne. I read the *Beacon* mostly on flights, on trains, etc., when I can have uninterrupted attention to it. We have introduced many friends to the *Beacon* and will continue to do so.

I have attached my National Newsletter and you are free to quote from it if you choose to do so. I am happy to keep you on my mailing list.

Keep up the great work. You are very much needed.

**(Husband: G Stoneberg)**

**President: Aloma Fennell**

**National Older Women's Network Inc., NSW**

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## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE LECTURE – 21 SEPTEMBER 2018

As usual, Justice Julian Burnside gave a very funny address and also a rather sad summary of the world's problems – particularly the social and also environmental one and we depend on it to survive. The St Jon's Cathedral choir sang hymns and other songs well but did not have amplification and was slightly drowned out by musicians. We had magnificent music from trumpets and trombones and the organ was great and filled the whole magnificent cathedral. A lovely tone poem written and composed by a talented Aboriginal musician. So much more to remember.

We should stop our wars so most of the arms could be recycled for better use and people in war-torn countries could rebuild their homes and businesses and would not have to breed huge families since they would not be fighting anymore and overpopulation is our greatest problem. Women should be given control over their reproduction as they usually end up 'holding the babies', which they often cannot afford. They need proper education and real, not voluntary, jobs.

World Peace Day was mentioned in none of the media, including dear old Auntie ABC but PEACE SHOULD BE ALL YEAR – no armies or weapons keeping peace since they take sides.

**A Sutherland, Qld**

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Some years have passed since I googled the word 'Peace' and found your magazine with the offer of 3 months free. I have every copy filed since then and I can honestly say I have not only extended my knowledge through many of your articles but have consolidated so many of my own thoughts regarding this world and the way it is being pushed and pulled by a few people who want to control every being on our planet.

Last week the UK admitted that they had gone back to their weather records to the early fifties and their average summer temperature had risen by .08% and their winter by 1.7%. That's an average of .89% in 70 years. The tipping point is 1.5% and already both poles are suffering even greater extremes. Australia and the US just don't seem to 'get it'!

I wish I lived close enough to attend your church. In the meantime, keep up the good work and the excellent research.

**Ann Jurrjens, Qld**

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**WE ACKNOWLEDGE**

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

## DEAR EDITOR

Enjoy your magazine, but am a bit concerned about your very one-eyed view about Israel. Not any impartial views about the 200 rockets fired almost daily. How would we feel if that were happening in Australia – would we retaliate? If only all the money spent on buying rockets was spent on raising the living standards of the Palestinians, supplied by United Nations. As far as I think, Israel belongs to the Jews – long before Jesus Christ. Just because they were constantly attacked throughout the ages and their country taken over by various religions. You can't blame them for making sure their country won't be taken away again. Why on earth did the Palestinians vote 'HAMAS' in, an organisation the whole world shuns because of its love of terrorism. They are the ones holding back peace in Israel. Certainly not the Israelis.

Yours sincerely

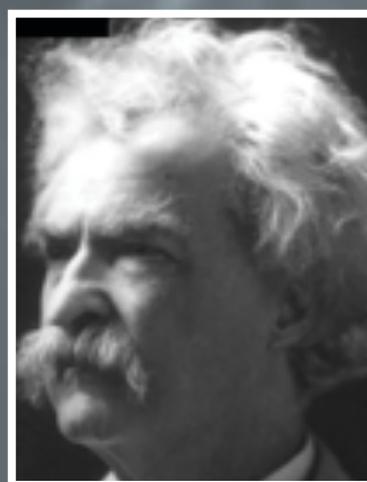
**I Jones, WA**

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SOMETIMES I WONDER WHETHER  
THE WORLD IS BEING RUN BY SMART  
PEOPLE WHO ARE PUTTING US ON  
OR BY IMBECILES WHO REALLY MEAN IT.

**MARK TWAIN**

[WWW.STATUSMIND.COM](http://WWW.STATUSMIND.COM)



## 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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## In this issue:

**Editorial**

**My health record**

**A forgotten great Australian**

**Statement on impending US, UK and French military intervention in Syria**

**What's wrong with privatisation? Part 2**

**Bush & Blair's Iraq war was key that opened door to Syria's current hell**

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