

Religion & Ethics Australia

No. 184, 27 Apr-3 May 2009 ✧ A weekly public affairs review from the Tinsley Institute ✧ Edited by Rod Benson

News & analysis

Aboriginal & Indigenous affairs

AUSTRALIA needs a Human Rights Act with explicit protections for indigenous people, says federal Race Discrimination Commissioner Tom Calma. [Age 1 May 09](#)

Abortion

A young Queensland woman has been charged with procuring her own abortion after she allegedly ingested a drug imported from the Ukraine. Pro-choice activists say the charges make it very clear that Queensland's abortion laws need reform. [ABC Law Report 28 Apr 09](#)

Advertising

THE battle of the bulge turned into a skirmish of statistics yesterday as health groups and advertisers traded blows over the level of junk food TV ads aimed at children, confirming the issue is back on the political agenda. [SMH 1 May 09](#)

Alcohol

AMBULANCE call-outs for drunks have more than doubled since 2002, as the health system bears the weight of worsening problem drinking in Victoria. [Age 2 May 09](#)

Baptists

British Baptists are to gather this weekend to celebrate 400 years of Baptist witness in Europe. [Religious Intelligence 27 Apr 09](#)

Burma

WHEN President Barack Obama was elected, I was filled with hope that America would regain the moral standing to aid the world's impoverished and oppressed. I have since rejoiced to see him reversing the most obnoxious policies of the Bush administration. But there is another issue on which America's moral leadership is desperately needed: the struggle for human rights and justice in Burma, writes Desmond Tutu. [Age 2 May 09](#)

Catholic Church

Adelaide Archbishop Philip Wilson has said that Catholics should not tell Jewish jokes or use the Jewish name Yahweh in readings and songs. [CathNews 27 Apr 09](#)

In a much anticipated meeting with members of Canada's First Nations, Pope Benedict has apologised for the physical and sexual abuse and "deplorable" conduct at Catholic Church run residential schools. [CathNews 29 Apr 09](#)

Climate change

BLUESCOPE chairman Graham Kraehe has warned the economy may not survive the Government's "flawed" carbon reduction plan. [Aust 28 Apr 09](#)

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told envoys from 17 major economies meeting in Washington yesterday that the US is ready to lead the fight against global climate change. [Aust 28 Apr 09](#)

THE Rudd Government has given big polluters a break by allowing them a generous exemption from contributing to the nation's mandated renewable energy target. [SMH 1 May 09](#)

Having personally carried the flag for Australia at the 2007 Bali climate conference, the Prime Minister is at risk of having few feathers to fly with when he attends July's "major economies" climate forum in Italy. Not to mention the danger that Australia's policy, and the strategies to implement it, will look insubstantial at the December Copenhagen conference that is supposed to set the new international order, writes Michelle Grattan. [Age 1 May 09](#)

Defence

THE new defence white paper will transform Australia's defence for a generation, asking taxpayers to dig deeply in their pockets to fund the creation of one of the most potent military forces in the Asia-Pacific, writes Cameron Stewart. [Aust 2 May 09](#)

It makes no sense for Australia in 2009 to base its long-term strategic policy on the highly contentious proposition that Australia is on an inevitable collision course with a militarily aggressive China, argues Malcolm Turnbull. [Aust 2 May 09](#)

THE navy will acquire a formidable arsenal of long-range cruise missiles for its new submarines, destroyers and frigates, able to strike at targets thousands of kilometres from Australia's shores. [Aust 2 May 09](#)

East Timor

SIX-YEAR-OLD Marko Susnja has never seen his father, and probably never will. Marko is one of dozens of children born in East Timor to impoverished Timorese women who have been abandoned by their United Nations-employed fathers. [Age 2 May 09](#)

Economics & finance

Barack Obama has described the US Government as a reluctant shareholder in the nation's banks, car makers and insurance companies. [SMH 1 May 09](#)

Ethics – business

When Justice Heerey imposed a \$36 million fine on Visy, he said: "Cartel behaviour of the kind with which this case is concerned is extremely destructive of the competition on which the prosperity of a free market economy depends. Often the profits can be immense, and the risk of detection slight." [SMH 1 May 09](#)

If the ACCC really did pursue an unsustainable perjury case because those directing it believed there was no better option, the regulator should not be left in a position where it might be tempted to do so again, says *The Age*. [Age 1 May 09](#)

Family violence

NEW provisions in the Family Law Act may be dissuading women from raising allegations of family violence and should be removed, the Chief Justice of the Family Court, Diana Bryant, has said. [SMH 2 May 09](#)

Freedom of expression

Behind the benign English facade bubbled an unapologetic disdain for politicians and media, and a warning the blogosphere is hell-bent on forcing a political revolution. And first on the list to go are the so called "lobby rules" - the conventions that govern the authorised media's Westminster coverage. [SMH 2 May 09](#)

Freedom of the press

There are few more attractive sights than a hall full of reptiles of the media feasting in the cause of free speech and freedom of the press, writes Richard Ackland. [SMH 1 May 09](#)

Gambling

The Federal Government's attempts to stimulate the economy are allegedly hurting some of the most vulnerable in Victoria by fuelling spending on poker machines.

[Age 27 Apr 09](#)

Health

AUSTRALIANS have been advised to stockpile food and water after the World Health Organisation raised its swine flu alert to phase five. [SMH 1 May 09](#)

Homosexuality & faith

A Christian teacher has been suspended from his job after complaining that a staff training session was used to promote homosexuality. [Christian Today 26 Apr 09](#)

The discussion we are inviting through the launch of *Beyond Stereotypes: Christians and Homosexuality*, is a discussion we need to have in Australia, and especially in Sydney, at this time, writes Rod Benson.

[Australian Christian Lobby 4 May 09](#)

Human rights law

Why are people entitled to the legal protection of human rights? Answering this question would make the answers to technical constitutional questions involving the balance of power between the courts and Parliament easier to determine, writes Bede Law. [Canberra Times 27 Apr 09](#)

To argue that human law must always supersede conscience is an invitation to tyranny. The U.S. Bill of Rights is an acknowledgement that certain rights—like freedom of religion—are simply, or should be, beyond government's reach.

[BreakPoint 27 Apr 09](#)

Islam

Encounter looks at Islamic finance - where it came from, how it works, who uses it, and how it has fared in the global financial crisis. [ABC Encounter 3 May 09](#)

Islam – Australia

THE Family Court has rejected the argument of a Muslim man who claimed his marriage was invalid because it was potentially polygamous. [Aust 2 May 09](#)

Israel & Palestine

Driving into Gaza City, through the tangle of refugee camps, broken roads and mounds of debris, the more things stay the same, the greater the feelings of despair. [SMH 27 Apr 09](#)

Politics – Australia

The prospects for a return to social democracy are grimmer than widely assumed, writes Lindy Edwards.

[Age 27 Apr 09](#)

Population

No one would have believed in the early years of the 21st century that there lived among us, beings whose cool and calculating aim was to depopulate the earth, starting with Australia, writes Malcolm King. [O-Op 27 Apr 09](#)

Refugees & asylum seekers

THE Afghan Government says it is grateful to Australia for its treatment of asylum seekers and particularly for the rescue of those on the boat that exploded into flames on April 16. [Age 27 Apr 09](#)

A week ago, we were debating whether we should be turning back tiny boats of desperate people seeking asylum on our shores. This week the Federal Government has assumed the power to put people suspected of having swine flu in mainland mandatory detention, a policy option it has abandoned for asylum seekers. [SMH 2 May 09](#)

Religion & media

The director of the UK Churches Media Council has said that whether the new head of Religion and Ethics is 'a Muslim or a Methodist, a Hindu or a Humanist' is irrelevant - as long as they believe something with a passion.

[Ekklesia 28 Apr 09](#)

Smoking

In America, a conga line of medical associations wants any smoking scene to trigger an R rating, the kiss of death to box office success. [SMH 27 Apr 09](#)

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a much higher ratio of military personnel to population than India or even Pakistan, making it the most militarised country in a region bristling with weapons. Military spending has surged to 5 per cent of gross domestic product and soaks up about 20 per cent of the Government's budget. [SMH 2 May 09](#)

Torture

The release of four Bush administration memos on US interrogation techniques has intensified public debate about the use of torture. Two ethicists discuss torture and its moral limits in an age of terror. [Religion & Ethics Newsweekly 1 May 09](#)

War

The UN's chief of humanitarian operations, John Holmes, has arrived in Colombo to try to persuade the Sri Lankan Government to halt its military campaign against Tamil Tiger rebels so tens of thousands of civilians still trapped in the war zone can leave. [SMH 27 Apr 09](#)

While the Battle of Long Tan hung in the balance and Raw hesitated, a young Australian flight lieutenant, the RAAF's most experienced Bell UH-1B Iroquois pilot, Bruce Lane, took the initiative. The story has had profound consequences for the RAAF and the army: consequences that are still unfolding and will continue to resonate for years, writes Patrick Walters. [Aust 30 Apr 09](#)

Women

The idea that women are innately more moral than men, and less greedy and aggressive, has many champions, and I used to be one, writes Adele Horin.

[SMH 2 May 09](#)

Of related interest

It's everywhere, in shops, cars, films, computers, on the street and in the air. Neil McCormick wonders whether we are in danger of being overwhelmed by music.

[SMH 2 May 09](#)

Reviews

Nigel Warburton, *Free Speech: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2009), reviewed by Jeremy Lott.

[Washington Times 1 May 09](#)

Quote

America did not invent human rights. In a very real sense human rights invented America. – former U.S. President Jimmy Carter

From the vault

“Burma's ‘slow genocide’ is revealed through the eyes of its child victims,”
[Telegraph 24 Jun 2005](#)

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