

In Brief:

Walking for Reconciliation and justice

200,000 people made the 4.1k march across Sydney Harbour Bridge on Sunday 28 May 2000, to support national reconciliation with Australia's indigenous peoples. It was the largest demonstration ever in Australia, matched only perhaps by the huge demonstrations of the 1970s against the Vietnam War.

The march was led by many Aboriginal Elders as well as the Council for Reconciliation, but most of the marchers were ordinary people, Sydneysiders, but many from country NSW and interstate, too. Two flags flew on top of the bridge - for Australia and for the Aboriginal Peoples - and the sky was etched with a smokey word "sorry" from a little plane. But there was no "sorry" from the Prime Minister, John Howard, who continues to blind himself to present injustices and make excuses for past wrongs.

Some marchers demanded justice as an essential

prerequisite to reconciliation. There was increasing talk of Australia's "unfinished business" and the need for a Treaty, or Treaties, to give recognition to Aboriginal Sovereignty and traditional Law and to define the basis of future relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Some prominent Aboriginal leaders such as previous chairman of the Reconciliation Council, Patrick Dodson, did not go, saying that they need to see the Federal Government take steps which go beyond words.

5,000 walked in Canberra too, past the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. There must have been hundreds of thousands more participating vicariously, like me, through TV. The numbers are a mandate for real action, if the Government is willing to see it that way. Certainly they show that ordinary Australians are behind the Council for Reconciliation.

- Helen Bayes

The Role of DCI - Not just policing!

The Convention on the Rights of the Child represents the world's consensus on children's rights. However, all sectors of society must work together toward the success. If people get the feeling that this international instrument is only for 'policing' then I am afraid we have missed the boat and created only resistance.

An important part of the implementation of this international consensus has to be carried out at the local level. Defence for Children International has been

experimenting with strengthening the support for child rights by opening information centres and socio-legal defence centres for young people.

The UN bodies that monitor the implementation of human rights treaties should also be encouraged to ask the states parties to report on local developments. This would signal that not only are actions by governments important, but the people themselves can contribute to making human rights conventions a reality.

- Philip Veerman President, International Executive Council of DCI

DCI's costs are rising and aren't GST-free, either

The National Committee has adopted several changes to DCI Subscriptions. The idea is to place a relatively greater burden on better-funded organisational affiliates and higher-paid members, remembering that we rely on self-nomination as to what bracket you fit into. Subscriptions have not risen for several years whereas unavoidable core costs such as rent, printing and telecommunications have.

In addition we have decided to register for GST. This means that GST charged to DCI by suppliers such as our landlord,

telephone services etc, can be claimed as input credits against the GST we need to charge you. This will minimise the erosion of DCI's income that would have happened had we decided not to register. An invoice for all members, affiliates and subscribers is enclosed with this newsletter and the new rates and income brackets are included on the last page.

Your subscription is essential support to DCI. Please pay your 2000-2001 sub promptly.

- Helen Bayes

In Brief:

VOICES OF YOUTH DATABASE

The Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies (ACYS), together with the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), have created a database of youth organisations, as part of DETYA's Voices of Youth initiative.

The database, in its initial phase, will provide a brief description and contact details of youth organisations in Australia.

The organisations listed range from professional and research bodies to local youth services and outreach programs in regional areas of Australia. 'Organisation' includes networks such as the National Youth Science Forum, and organisations whose presence is purely online such as YouthForum Online.

This database will be of great benefit to the many types of users of the Clearinghouse and to anyone needing to identify and locate youth-related organisations and services.

Data is still being gathered, but entries can already be viewed at <http://131.217.14.75:591/VOYHome.htm>

To be listed, or get information, send an email to: youth.organisations@educ.utas.edu.au or phone (03) 6226 7181 or fax: (03) 6226 2578.

If you would like more specific details about DETYA's Voices of Youth initiative, please contact DETYA voicesofyouth@detya.gov.au

ACYS is a non-profit project based at the University of Tasmania and partially funded by DETYA. ACYS is a major information provider in the youth field and publishers of youth research - the scholarly journal, 'Youth Studies Australia', is now in its 19th year. ACYS also publishes books on youth research and a series of research reports from the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme.

The ACYS web site contains a variety of resources, including a database of abstracts of scholarly articles on youth research, and another containing summaries of press reports on youth issues in Australia. Access to these is from the following web page:

www.acys.utas.edu.au/ncys/res/dat.htm

ACYS: www.acys.utas.edu.au/

DETYA's Voices of Youth:

www.thesource.gov.au/voy/default.htm

GLOBAL EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

125 million children around the world don't attend class and never will, unless governments start keeping their promises. On April 3, in Washington, Brussels, Delhi, Durban, and Sao Paulo, the Global Campaign for Education started its effort to hold countries accountable for having every child in primary school.

The Global Campaign is an attempt of more than 200 citizen and teacher organisations to push for basic education for all children. It includes development NGOs and teachers' unions in 180 countries, including ActionAid, Education International, the Global March Against Child Labour, Oxfam International, Public Services International, Save the Children UK and World Vision International.

The campaign seeks to hold rich countries, poor countries and international institutions like the IMF accountable for their record on education. Ten years after 155 countries solemnly promised education for all by the year 2000, 125 million children haven't spent a day of their life in school, and another 150 million drop out before learning to read.

The root of the problem has been a lack of political will. At the 1990 Conference on Education for All, governments promised to increase aid for education, to reduce debt, and to ensure that IMF-World Bank programs do not undermine education systems.

Instead, they slashed aid budgets, while IMF-mandated programs resulted in cuts to school budgets in East Asia and East Africa, and the World Bank promoted "cost recovery", i.e., rationing school places by price.

The Campaign proposes a Global Action Plan to get every child into primary school by 2015, at a projected cost of \$8 billion per year. The human importance of the issue cannot be understated. "There is a vicious cycle between poverty, adult unemployment, illiteracy and child labour and none can be tackled in isolation. We need to break this cycle now and education is definitely the key," says Kailash Satyarthi, chairperson of the Global March.

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VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES UPGRADE OF CHILDREN'S COURT STATUS

On 14 April, the Attorney-General of Victoria, Mr Rob Hulls announced that the status and authority of the Children's Court would be enhanced. To this end, on 3 May, the *Children's and Young Persons (Appointment of President) Bill* was introduced into the Parliament.

The Children's Court is currently a Division of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria and is headed by the Children's Court Senior Magistrate. As a result of the announcement, the head of the court will be a County Court Judge who will be known as the President of the Children's Court. The President will have the authority to issue Practice Directions

for the Court in relation to its jurisdiction in criminal matters and care and protection proceedings, and to make Rules of Court together with the Magistrates who will also comprise the Court.

"This will result in a substantial elevation of the authority of the court with provision for specially-trained Magistrates, a reduction in delays and, ultimately, a better process for young offenders." Mr Hulls said in announcing the changes. He also said that the new President of the Children's Court would be Jennifer Coate. Ms Coate has been the Children's Court Senior Magistrate for a number of years.

DCI – Australia applauds the Victorian Government's announcement. By raising the age limit for the criminal jurisdiction of the Children's Court from 17 to 18 years of age, it is increasing conformity with CROC.

- Danny Sandor

MANDELA AND MACHEL LEAD GLOBAL CHILDREN'S INITIATIVE

Former South Africa President Nelson Mandela and child rights champion Graca Machel have proposed an ambitious global partnership for children and pledged to play a direct and personal role in urging other leaders to join them.

With UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, Mandela and Machel announced plans to build a partnership of global leaders who would be at the vanguard of a "bold new movement to turn the world around for millions of children. We will be personally calling upon leaders from all sectors to work with us to find solutions to the major problems faced by children and adolescents," Mandela said.

"Our purpose is to get specific commitments from these leaders and specific results. We will challenge enlightened government leaders to join us and turn their

words into deeds. We will ask innovators in the business world to put their unique abilities to work for children. We will call upon leaders in academia, the media, and other sectors to join with us to ensure that the world honours its obligation to children," he said. "We want a world in which children survive and develop in a caring environment free of abuse and exploitation, a world that offers every child a quality basic education, and a world in which adolescents are invited to participate in shaping their own futures," said Machel.

Bellamy said the involvement of Nelson Mandela and Graca Machel would be a source of inspiration to other leaders. "Together they have the power to pull people from a wide range of backgrounds, people who are willing to push beyond the traditional boundaries of what societies do for children," she said.

Mandela and Machel insist that, with committed leadership, major advancements for children could be made within a single generation.

**Seen any good TV lately?
What was that you were listening to in the car?
Have you read today's paper?**

Australian Children's Rights Media Awards

You can help promote the rights of children and young people by keeping your eye out for entries (print, radio and TV) to nominate for the Australian Children's Rights Media Awards. Nominations must be received by 8 September 2000.

The Awards will be presented at the Awards Dinner in November in Sydney.

More details of the dinner in next issue of ACRN!

For information on the Awards and a Nomination Form, go to:

http://members.dynamite.com.au/dci-aust/html/media_awards.html