



## Kevin Rudd in Caux

A prominent participant in the 2012 Caux Forum for Human Security (8-15 July) was Kevin Rudd, the former Australian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

In inviting Rudd the Forum's Chairman, Mohamed Sahnoun, had specifically mentioned the international impact of the Apology by the Australian Parliament to Aboriginal Australians for mistreatment under past national policies. (See *Newsbriefs*, August 2011.)

international audience in Caux rose in a spontaneous ovation. Rudd at once responded: "Thank you for your warm applause - but it should be for the indigenous people of Australia, so please acknowledge here their strength and dignity, they who kept the faith over all those years". He then

### **Apology must be authentic**

Is an apology just empty words? Rudd suggested specific factors for an apology to be effective. First, the apology itself "must be authentic; people can tell." He had written his speech alone and by hand, and only after a three-hour meeting with a senior woman of the Stolen Generations who had told him her story. "It's difficult for a politician to shut up for three hours and just listen," he said. "To be effective, the apology [also] has to be received. There is a risk in all this." But then "it can be fundamentally transformational". He described apology as "a secular sacrament that could have a deep spiritual and emotional impact". Next, an apology should be factually based. This one had been founded on evidence collected by many people, including the *Bringing them home* report. Civil society groups had played a critical role over ten years in preparing the ground for the Parliament's apology.

Finally, "an apology without actions is meaningless". Hence the Government's "closing the gap strategy with specific measures and specific time-lines" which "must be sustained into the long-term future". The Prime Minister now has to report to parliament every year to measure progress. "There's a massive national effort, billions of dollars. It's words and deeds - it's both," Rudd concluded.

Jackie Huggins, Aboriginal activist and historian and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Queensland, said that the act of recognition, justice and healing "was very important for our people, but also for all Australians". It had been hard to watch the video of



(L to R) Daryle Rigney, Jackie Huggins, Kevin Rudd (Photo Marion Bouvier)

One of the Human Security Forum's five central themes is "Healing Memory". A highlight of Rudd's three-day participation in the Forum was an evening when he, together with Aboriginal academics Jackie Huggins and Daryle Rigney, spoke about the background and implications of the Apology.

The evening was introduced by John Bond who had been Secretary of the National Sorry Day Committee for eight years preceding the Apology. After viewing part of the film *The Apology* by Reconciliation Australia which captures the powerful atmosphere of that day the

led a still greater ovation in honour of the Aboriginal representatives.

For generations Aboriginal leaders had fought on these issues, said Rudd, whereas "we whites are perhaps slow learners". "There comes a time in the life of a people or a culture when telling the truth is not a bad strategy." He referred to other healing processes in which Caux had played a part and said, "Everything is possible if we have the heart to do it. We should be inspired by this place. Never underestimate your power as civil society. You can knock down walls over time."

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the apology again, she said. "The emotions are still raw around the magnificence of that gesture." Now she wanted her people to reach parity, to see real changes. She embraced Rudd with the words, "Thank you so much for giving us our dignity back."

Professor Daryle Rigney of Flinders University had not been interested in the process around a public apology, and had only watched it on TV because he had to stay at home to look after a sick daughter. To his own surprise he had wept. "It touched me. I can't explain why or how," he said, "but 'sorry' actually does mean something... What else does Australia need to apologize to the indigenous



Kevin Rudd meeting interns in the Caux Cafe.  
(Photo: Marion Bouvier)

people for? There's a long list perhaps..."

As a Member of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability Mr Rudd also spoke in the opening day of the Forum which was devoted to the theme of Restoring Earth's Degraded Lands. The day was conceived and led by Luc Gnacadja (Benin), Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to combat Desertification. UN Assistant Secretary-General Elizabeth Thompson who coordinated the recent "Rio+20" Conference on Sustainable Development also spoke.

Being a new grandfather "does cause you to reflect on sustainability," Rudd shared. He called for the elaboration of a much more comprehensive "sustainable development index" beyond single issues, to help policy-makers whose mentality was "If you can't measure it, it doesn't exist."

Outside the formal presentations Kevin Rudd was keen to get to know individuals of all ages and to understand Caux and IofC as a community, not just a conference. He asked some of the younger ones: "What have you learnt here?" and

listened also to the stories and views of those with longer experience. He met groups from Ukraine, newly independent South Sudan, and other countries struggling to achieve political and cultural transition. He evaluated Caux as one of the few places where the ethical dimension of global issues is highlighted.

"The spirit of Caux is alive and well as I see it in the faces and the lives of the people here," he said on leaving.

"What I see is this constant thematic of personal change to bring about social and global change – easy to say, hard to do. But unless we are refreshed in that mission by coming to oases capable of providing that water then we lose sight of both the spirit and the power of that mission.

"I hope some of things that Jackie and Daryle and I were able to share last night about the experience of reconciliation in Australia are of some small relevance to the challenges which you face."

*Report by Peter Thwaites with additional material from IofC website reports. You can access the Reconciliation Australia DVD The Apology at: [www.reconciliation.org.au/home/archived-pages/the-apology](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/archived-pages/the-apology)*

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## IofC: Back to the future

I'm writing this en-route to attend the General Assembly of Initiatives of Change International in Caux, Switzerland. Over a week, representatives from IofC's work around the world will search together for strategic direction and better cohesion, using a Framework for Common Action which has been developed by IofC International over the last months, with input from teams around the world, including Australia.

This movement of Initiatives of Change, like so many other movements, started with a charismatic individual, Frank Buchman. It is now half a century since Buchman died, and his legacy is still being evaluated. I think that the best description of him is a Prophet, in the best Abrahamic tradition.

Prophets are future orientated. They are visionaries looking ahead, warning about looming dangers and inspiring action to a better future. But prophets also look to the past. It is their grounding in history and reading of the trajectory of history which enables them to take a leap of faith into the future.

When charismatic leaders die, there is often a crisis of authority. Where previously authority was invested in the leader, now it becomes invested in the memories, writings and practices of the leader. The question behind every decision becomes, "What would the leader have done?" At this point there is often a danger of the movement becoming past orientated instead of future orientated.

I believe that over the next few days as we work together using the Framework for Common Action (FCA), IofC will be remaking itself as a future-orientated movement, using the past as a springboard to leap forward. I am particularly drawn

to the mission expressed in the FCA: "to inspire, equip and connect people to address world needs, starting with themselves". In 2012 there is a widespread sense that traditional frameworks of politics, business and economics have proved inadequate. In response we see a groundswell of individuals stepping forward to meet the vacuum. Let's seize this moment, using the best of our past traditions as well as embracing new methods and working in partnership, to inspire, equip and connect a new generation of changemakers.

**Mike Lowe**

# Communities can change the world

Brian Lightowler Reviews *Out and Out* by Dave Andrews

In today's world millions of people are attracted to mass movements to change society and the world, some through political or public pressure, some by persuasion and strong advocacy and some by violence. In *Out and Out*<sup>1</sup>, Andrews points to a better and more effective way, backed up by convincing evidence, both on a personal and international political level. Central to this, the author writes, is the building of community. He draws on his experience as a convinced Christian but not in a way that excludes or is irrelevant to people of other faiths or no faith. He gives a step by step account, vivid and down to earth, of how he and his wife set about building a community in Brisbane's West End on their return from Asia.

He writes, "Most attempts to bring about change in society haven't come unstuck because the groups involved lacked the funds or the numbers. Most came unstuck because of power struggles that caused the groups to self-destruct. The people involved lacked the power to change themselves, let alone their society. Hence, Christ taught that the most important single issue in bringing about change, was for groups to discover the power to be able to manage their affairs in a way that gave everyone a fair go."

One of the many examples from West End, a diverse, multi-racial community close to Brisbane's CBD, he gives is the story of a group of squatters, threatened with eviction and the destruction of their squat by bulldozer. Andrews and his group visited the squatters regularly and, while learning a lot about "the art of survival in an urban slum", discussed with them what the long term future could be. When the arrival of the bulldozer was imminent there was much talk about what to do, for instance throw bricks through the windows of the police station. Eventually the squatters decided this would be counter-productive and surprisingly agreed among themselves to invite the police around for a cup

of tea. As a result a truce was called and the squatters agreed to stop causing trouble and the police not to beat up the squatters. Still the longterm problem and need was not solved.

A year later the council decided to clean up West End and ordered the squatters to leave the block of land. If they refused the bulldozers would probably come. They urgently discussed the situation. In the heat and frustration of the moment someone asked, "What would Christ do?" Not that they would have seen themselves as a Christian group by any means. The New Testament doesn't deal of course with squatting under threat of bulldozers, but someone nevertheless suggested the parable about the old widow who out of desperation repeatedly knocked on the door of a judge to gain justice. The squatters decided that they would knock on the door of the city council to seek a just solution to their situation. They drew up a petition to the council and gained the public's support. Eventually the council gave them land and houses for them to live in and paid the costs of their move!

The impact of all this was not limited to the squatters. The move also opened up new doors and improvements in the wider community. Andrews comments: "At the centre of all this activity was a group in the community who remembered that the personal growth and social change had come about because they had followed the agenda of God, personified in Christ."

Andrews explores many of the world's initiatives in community building. On the international level he writes in detail on the role of Frank Buchman and others in Moral Re-Armament (now Initiatives of Change) in the reconciliation of France and Germany in the aftermath of the Second World War. He quotes from his friend Jeff Fountain, director of the Schuman Centre for European Studies, whose detailed research shows how Western Europe was refashioned in the immediate postwar years and the role

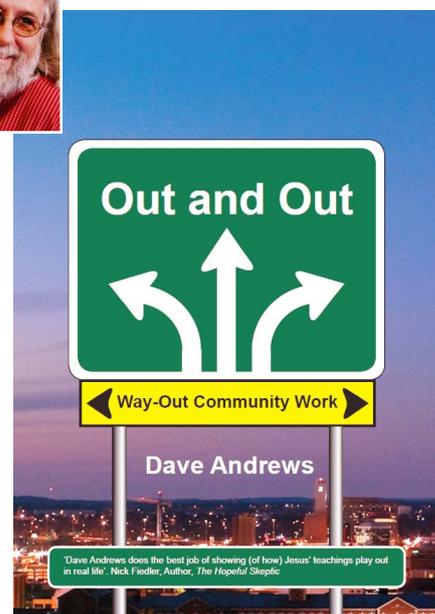
MRA played in that.

Andrews also writes about IofC's collaboration with Nigerian peacemakers Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye. These two men previously had violently fought against each other, became reconciled and helped reconcile their communities. Now IofC works with them to share their experience in trouble spots around the world. Andrews comments that "some of the best answers to questions about how we can create peace in the midst of war are being forged in Africa."

The Twelve Steps Movement, he writes, is a direct offshoot of Buchman's work in the prewar years in the United States. Alcoholics Anonymous now has 87,000 groups around the world and its approach is now being applied in many other areas of human need, such as Gamblers Anonymous.

Whether building community or remaking the world grabs you or not *Out and Out* is a book to read. It is radical and challenging because it is not somebody's theory, theology or academic reflection, but is a story of real experience, sometimes of hard knocks and setbacks, but also of great advancement and joy for both people and nations.

*Brian Lightowler is the author of Corruption: Who Cares? and Abseiling into the unknown*



<sup>1</sup>*Out and Out*; Mosaic Press, Canada; ISBN 9781743241356; RRP A\$26.95 Available in Australia from Booktopia online and bookshops.

# News from Armagh, the IofC centre in Melbourne

A course focussed spiritual community was piloted in Melbourne, 6 -8 July, titled 'Listening, Integrity, Transformation – An Introduction to the Armagh Community'. Glennis Johnston led the course, with contributions from members of the resident Armagh community and local friends. The course opened on the Friday night with a chance to hear very different and moving life journeys from Jim Coulter, a pioneer of IofC in Australia, and David Vincent, a South Sudanese Australian whose autobiography, *The Boy Who Would not Die*, was recently published by Allen & Unwin [see below].



*Chloe Jiang writes:*

The weekend focussed on story-sharing. Joanna and Chris joined us from Queensland, along with Clara Cheong from Sydney, Jacques Birnberg, Liz Brumer, Des and Lina Ang from Melbourne.

Jacques shared his colourful and moving life story from his birth and childhood in Belgium to the loss of his mother in Auschwitz, his Jewish Youth Communist activities while studying at Warsaw University, then his life in Australia with visits to Israel. He ceased lecturing at Monash in 1996 but remains an honorary member of the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics.

Nigel and I led a session on the theme of moving from personal change to global transformation to outline the connection from our personal experiences and outreach. Clara led a session on the main theme on Saturday and Sunday with an exercise to review past and present and to look at the context and vision for the future. Xiao Nan and Chloe led us in a lively and honest session on marriage and relationships, with a question for discussion, "What are the key ingredients to growing a relationship with someone who is important in your life?" Natalie

Phillpot shared with the group some of her journey towards faith and healing. Majid Khan took us in another direction, talking about Islam and the West, faith and spiritual growth based on his experiences in Pakistan and Australia. Kuan Wei from Taiwan was also an Armagh community participant before his return to Taiwan in July. At the beginning of his year in Australia, he attended the Asia Pacific Youth Conference organised by IofC in Philip Island, and we have been grateful for his hard work in his time at Armagh.

A few days earlier **Saara Sabbagh** from **Benevolence Australia** spoke at Armagh on Wednesday, 27th June, about her faith journey and of how Benevolence Australia came into being over the last few years. "Benevolence Australia is a non-profit community organization dedicated to serving the Australian



community through the teachings exemplified and inspired by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him). Our methodology embodies love and mercy to all. Our call is to facilitate the path of connectedness between the human experience and the Divine."

## **The Boy who Wouldn't Die**

Melbourne's *The Age* newspaper featured extracts from David Vincent's autobiography on 5 July in an article headed "Freedom fighter's new frontier"



"David Nyuol Vincent survived a childhood in war-torn Sudan and 17 years in a refugee camp. Now he continues the struggle for peace as an Australian," writes *The Age*.

The book was launched in Fitzroy Town Hall on the first anniversary of South Sudan's independence. Co-written with Carol Nader, a journalist with *The Age*, the book is a gripping account of Vincent's 17 years as a refugee leaving South Sudan first for Ethiopia and then to Kenya. He also pays tribute to the part that the Life Matters course at Armagh played in his life, and the support given by IofC to his peacemaking work.

Read more: [www.theage.com.au/national/freedom-fighters-new-frontier-20120704-21hko.html](http://www.theage.com.au/national/freedom-fighters-new-frontier-20120704-21hko.html)

*(All photos by Chloe Jiang)*

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