

No LONGER DOWN UNDER

AUSTRALIANS CREATING CHANGE

Grosvenor Books Australia has just published *No Longer Down Under: Australians Creating Change* by South Australian Mike Brown. In its 300 pages, the book tells of Australians who, through following a call of conscience and compassion, have made their mark on vital national issues. It was launched at Dymocks' city bookshop in Adelaide by the State's Deputy Opposition Leader, Dean Brown, and the book topped the shop's weekly list of best-selling books.

One chapter of the book tells of Queensland's former Police Commissioner Ray Whitrod, known for his courageous fight to expose corruption in that State. At 87, the veteran campaigner for public morality and for the rights of victims of crime is wheelchair-bound in a nursing home.

But he sat up reading his copy til 2.30 am. Next morning he phoned, ordering 24 copies to send to family and friends for Christmas.

Another campaigner, the Rev Tim Costello, describes the book as "a colourful and direct contribution to the world of moral ideas and moral people from the upside down continent. I love its directness and challenge."

South Australia's former Premier, Dean Brown, is a brother of the author. At the launch he congratulated Mike for writing about the people who had inspired him and given him "the

passion to go on and do the things you have". He listed some of the people in the book, starting with Max Gale, who raised the money to fly 165 breeding cows to India to help improve Indian milk production. "Here was a dairy farmer looking not only at his region but thinking globally. This book has a whole series of stories about people who did the same. It goes from the local and very personal to the global and international."

He drew highlights from the experiences of politician Kim Beazley Senior; of indigenous "pioneers" Margaret Tucker and Reg and Walda Blow; and of "Barnardo boy" Stan Shepherd, who came to Australia at the age of 10 and who "set out after World War II to bring peace through creating friendships around the world".

Max Gale's daughter, editor Mary-Anne Gale, had edited Mike's bulky manuscript down to the final 85,000 words. "There's a pervading Christ-like quality about each person featured in this book," she said at the launch. "Mike has realised that if

change is to occur in this world, it has to come from within us all."

The well-known young people's author Christobel Mattingley is the subject of another chapter. At the launch Christobel paid tribute to Mike Brown's "turn of phrase, the freshness and originality of his writing style". She concluded, "You've given the world a book it needs so badly, right now in these down times, when evil and intolerance are happening. It will

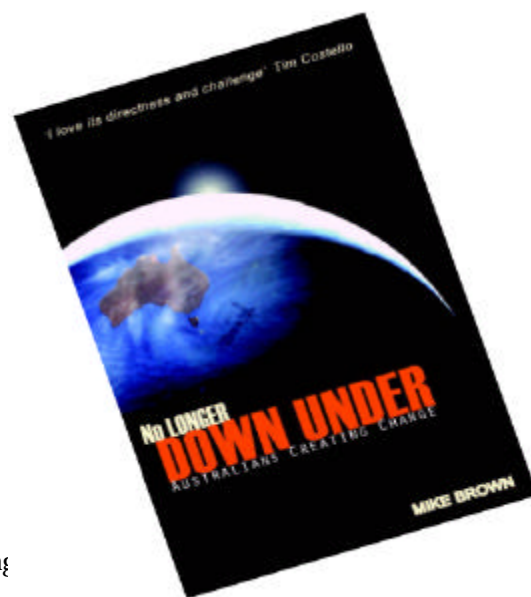
bring a shining light, encouragement and hope."

ABC radio presenter Matthew Abraham, in a 20-minute morning interview, commented not only on the book but also on the peace-building Mike Brown had been engaged in.

Recognising the high profile of Dean Brown and Mike's architect father, Abraham commented that Mike had "led a remarkable life in his own right".

As *Newsbriefs* goes to press, the book is being launched in Melbourne by an inter-generational, multicultural group of Australians. Some of them feature in the book including wharfie leader Jim Beggs, the

family of public servant Allan Griffith, Aboriginal community leaders Reg and Walda Blow, Lebanese-Australian former Mayor of Dandenong Naim Melhem, and stirrer/peacemaker Jim Coulter.



**“I love its directness
and challenge”**

- Tim Costello

SPECIAL OFFER FOR CHRISTMAS!

This book is the ideal Christmas present. So Grosvenor Books is offering a dramatic discount on orders before Christmas. If you buy 10 copies, you get them at almost half price, post-free within Australia. The offer for 5 copies is almost as good. Please see the enclosed flyer.

"A refreshing alternative ..." says social worker

Audrey Stratton is a social worker who counsels victims of crime in South Australia. She had scarcely heard of MRA when she met Mike and Jean Brown two years ago. So Mike asked her to read the manuscript of *No Longer Down Under*. She writes:

For someone like myself who had become disillusioned with conservative, fundamentalist Christianity, the book offered a refreshing alternative to exclusivity, focus on dogma and judgment, and individualism.

The book is credible as it starts by outlining the author's own experience of transformation. He describes his commitment to a spirituality based on listening to the inner voice rather than on defending a set of beliefs and following man-made rules of religious practice. I had been struggling with doubts about many

beliefs with which I had grown up. I had become disillusioned with the lack of interest in social justice issues in some Christian traditions. The book's ideas about spirituality hold out to me a way past the doubts (if I can find the courage to pursue them more vigorously) and to connect faith and social action. It offers a way of being involved in the world with people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs without judging them or trying to decide on their eternal futures.

It encourages me to pursue global issues with compassion, mutual understanding and genuine love rather than with a predetermined agenda to "convert" individuals to a particular dogma. It encourages me to develop positive relationships rather than simply focus on programs or campaigns on issues.

The style of writing makes this book very easy to read. The stories are

interesting, moving and challenging. However, reading about individuals' struggles to live according to four key values - love, unselfishness, purity, and honesty - raised many questions for me. How do we determine in complex situations what is the loving thing to do, what is pure, what is honest, what is unselfish? Many people claim to listen to God and be led by the Spirit and yet reach different conclusions.

I wonder whether the answers to such questions are less about absolute truths and more about heart and commitment? If people genuinely want to be spiritually sensitive and make a difference in the world, and allow time to listen to the inner voice, their lives **will** be transformed and they will make a positive difference regardless of belief systems, personal flaws and mistakes made along the way. That seems to be the message from the lives of those in the book.

Federal Parliament hears of Journey of Healing

**- by John Bond
Secretary of National Sorry Day
Committee and Journey of Healing**

The Journey of Healing took a difficult step last month. We decided to challenge the half-heartedness of the response of Australian governments to the Bringing Them Home report.

Five years ago the Federal Government allocated a substantial sum - \$63 million - to implement a few recommendations of the report. But most of this money is missing its target. And though the state and territory governments have apologised for the removal practices, they have not done a lot beyond that.

So we booked the Main Committee Room of the Federal Parliament and invited all who wished to take part. Two hundred and thirty came, from all over the country. We prepared a 42-page report, detailing both the positive outcomes of the Government responses to *Bringing Them Home*, and the inadequacies.

Philip Ruddock, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Shadow Minister

Carmen Lawrence and other Members and Senators listened for two hours to a compelling presentation of our report, backed up by heartfelt experience from stolen generations people, *Link-Up* workers, counsellors and others.

Credit was given for constructive

seminar as "extremely powerful".

In his response, Mr Ruddock thanked the participants for the spirit in which the reports had been presented. "I lament when I hear the concerns expressed," he said. "I want to ensure that the efforts are achieving results. I'm more than happy to

consult on this, and I would seek to involve some of my colleagues as well. I hope we can move forward together and get better outcomes."

Within hours we were invited to meet his senior advisors, who went through our criticisms, point by point, and asked our advice on what should be done about them. As a result,

various Government Departments are being asked to develop new initiatives, which we hope the Minister will authorise.

It was encouraging to receive this response, when so often in the past we have felt that the Government wasn't listening. Perhaps the element which changed attitudes was our initiative

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PHOTO: IVAN COPLEY

At the end of the seminar many of the participants, including the Minister, Philip Ruddock (in dark suit, centre) danced to the *Journey of Healing* song, sung by Johnny Huckle and Helen Moran

initiatives. Men who had grown up at the notorious Kinchela Boys' Home told of a week-long reunion they developed themselves, which the Federal Department of Health funded and which was an important step towards healing. But there was also a trenchant exposure of programs that are not working. One Member, writing to us afterwards, described the

Together we can make a world of difference

- by John Mills

With the tragedy of the Bali bombings still fresh in our minds and security issues testing the cohesion of Australia's multicultural community, the International MRA-IC conference Together we can make a world of difference... at Collaroy NSW, 23-27 April next year comes at an important moment. The conference brochure outlines its aims:

- to deepen the processes of reconciliation and community building;
- to foster networks of individuals working for integrity and unity in the region;
- to strengthen understanding, trust and common cause between people of different faiths and cultures.

Last month 34 people from across Australia gathered in Tumut to plan the conference program and outreach to the Australian community. Speakers from this country and abroad are being invited who can present evidence of social transformation through personal transformation.

Among those we hope will come is a group of Lebanese, who include former militia leaders - Christian and Muslim - who have experience of a profound change of heart following the civil war. They show how, in a crisis, ordinary people can take effective initiatives.

Speakers will include Dr Cornelio Sommaruga from Switzerland, former head of the International Red Cross and currently President of Caux Initiatives of Change. Also attending will be members of the Initiatives of Change Council from Canada, USA, South Africa, India/Fiji, New Zealand,

Australia and Kenya. The Kenyan, Joseph Karanja, is a lawyer and an instigator of the *Clean Election/Clean Kenya Campaign* which is tackling corruption and focusing the need for sound motives in nation building.

An international conference is a huge venture in faith. Voluntary donations form a significant part of MRA-IC's finances. Those preparing the conference are giving their services, as will the speakers. The travel costs, particularly from overseas, and conference fees will be well beyond some who are being invited. We are approaching funding sources for help, and we ask you to keep this undertaking in your prayers.

For more information and conference invitations, please contact **David and Jane Mills**: 64 Barnsbury Grove, Bardwell Park, NSW 2207
Tel/Fax: **(02) 9599 1428**, E-mail: **collaroy_conference@mra.org.au**

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over the stolen generations commemoration at Reconciliation Place in Canberra. This commemoration had been designed without consulting the stolen generations, which provoked immense anger.

Our Committee offered to arrange proper consultations, and the Government took up our offer. I believe that the Minister recognised, from the way in which we conducted the consultations, that we are committed to truth and to healing, not to politicking. He said to the seminar: "These consultations are an example of the way in which we might be able to work together on a wider range of issues."

We hope this will happen, both with the Federal and state and territory governments. The wounds resulting from the forced removal policies are deep and painful. And as we all sang to conclude the seminar:

*"To move forward together we must
heal the past
For the lies of history are revealed
at last
For our native children to trust
again
We must take this journey together
as friends."*

Across the world ...

Moral framework for development

The *Caux Round Table* (CRT) is a network of business leaders from industrialised and developing nations who recognise that business must take a leadership role in developing a more fair, free and transparent society. They have just held a Global Dialogue in Mexico, co-sponsored by the Global Compact Office of the United Nations. Following the meeting, a group met President Fox.

During the Dialogue the newly elected Chairman of the CRT, George Vojta from New York, took over from Winston Wallin. Mr Wallin established the CRT's vision of "principled globalisation with better outcomes for the poor". In Mexico George Vojta proposed that the CRT convene a global movement to support progress along this path.

They are now working on a set of *Principles for Governments* to go with their *Principles for Business*, so that public and private sectors can support each other in a moral framework for development. In response to the scandals that have rocked corporate America, the CRT is about to publish a paper, *What Corporate America Needs to Do*.

This month Mr Vojta visited Japan, where he discussed the CRT with business leaders and spoke on "Business ethics after Enron" to the Keidanren nationwide business association, and at Waseda University.

Laboratory in Richmond

Last month a breakfast forum in Richmond, Virginia, organised by *Hope in the Cities*, brought together 560 people to hear David Rusk, described as America's hottest urban expert. Rusk said that in cities throughout America, segregation by race is being replaced by segregation by income. He emphasised the role of faith communities in developing policies that encourage mixed income housing.

Rob Corcoran, *Hope in the Cities'* national director, shared a vision of Richmond as a "community learning laboratory" and announced a new project for leadership training, funded in part by two local foundations. "We're going to build on the skills such as honest dialogue that have already begun to make Richmond a centre of excellence for the nation. We will do it in partnership with people from other continents who are facing their own challenges."

Come and be challenged

- by **Chichi Seii**

The MRA round table discussions in Sydney always leave me challenged and excited. This time the theme of the evening was "Individuals can make a difference". My husband Joseph and I were asked to host a table, which meant bringing something to eat and facilitating discussion at our table.

We had three guest speakers. The first was Mahboba Rawi. At the age of 14 she fled her homeland, Afghanistan, and was a political refugee in Pakistan. She married an Afghan-Australian and settled in Sydney.

In 1997 she received a letter from an Afghan doctor telling her about the appalling conditions in her motherland. She decided to raise funds to help, and started off assisting 35 children. Today she has over 4,000 in her care, having set up schools, computer classes for young women, a chocolate factory and a business where women make beautiful traditional rugs. All done without professional aid.

As Mahboba spoke, her eyes were full of emotion, her voice gentle yet strong. We felt her burden, her passion, her pain as she told of working 18-hour days and relying on volunteers.

She told us of her recent trip to Afghanistan, her first in 18 years. In Kabul, where she grew up, she could not even find her old home, so severe was the bomb damage. Beggars and starving orphans were all around, so different from the days when there was laughter in the streets.

She visited all her projects and schools. Mahboba is a loving mother, giving the children hugs and kisses, crying with them as they told of their memories and nightmares.

On her last three days in Kabul she walked around the town picking up orphans from the streets. She ended up with 120. She says with a painful laugh, "I cannot afford them but I have to help them. I have built myself a high mountain but I will climb it with the help of God and others."

Most of her financial support comes from

Australians in Sydney and her strength is from God, to whom she prays every night asking for resilience and love.

Then Brian Lightowler from Brisbane, a journalist who has worked with MRA-IC in many parts of the world, spoke about corruption. He is writing a booklet on the subject and quoted figures to give us an idea of the scale of the problem. For instance, it is predicted that by 2005 drug barons will have US\$1,500 billion available for investment.

Brian challenged us to reflect on our own attitudes to corrupt practices like tax cheating and social security fraud. He encouraged us to assert honesty as this would awaken it in others. Tackling corrupt practices calls for absolute moral standards; relative standards do not stand a chance. He described the action which he and his friends took in Queensland to challenge corruption, which proved to be the laboratory experiment for Clean Election Campaigns in numerous countries.

Our third speaker was Trish McDonald-Harrison, who has worked with Sydney City Mission and Mission Australia for 20 years, and is Company Secretary and Executive Manager of City Mission World Association. This year Trish took part in the conferences at the MRA centre in Caux, Switzerland. There she interacted with people from all walks of life and was "blown away". Before her visit, she said, she had been carrying a heavy burden, wanting to contribute to world needs but not knowing how. At Caux she realised that this would not come through tremendous plans, but through spending time in quiet each day, looking into her heart and soul and hearing what God had to say. This had helped her match her daily actions with what she feels called to do, keeping her ego and insecurities at bay. "We can't help but make a difference," she said. "The question is: is that the kind of difference we want to make?"

To hear more of these great stories and be challenged to do your bit to change the world, come to our next round table discussion in March.

Shaping values for Australia

- by **Teresa Lawler**

Over the past 10 days the first Australian course in Humanity, Belief and Freedom has taken place near Melbourne.

It is based on *Foundations for Freedom*, a course created by Erik Andren from Britain specifically to meet the needs of an Eastern Europe emerging from totalitarian rule. The nine participants were led on a journey of self-discovery.

The course provided an all-too-rare opportunity to focus on the basics of philosophy, psychology, anthropology and sociology and how they shape our values. From this foundation we are able to instigate positive, practical change in ourselves and society.

The close friendships made on the course taught us the most valuable lesson of all: despite the diversity in age and background, we were drawn together by many of the same hopes and fears. If we can learn to recognise this in our daily lives, with everyone we meet, we will surely go some of the way towards a freer world.

MRA - Initiatives of Change is financed largely by contributions - in money and in kind, small or large. Each initiative, each need, is approached with an expectation of sharing resources and with the faith that people acting with unselfish motives will find support from unexpected sources.

Donations can be sent to:
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