

Appeal for support for the study of humanities at the Australian Catholic University.

I ask for your support for Humanities Study at the Australian Catholic University (ACU). The faculty is under threat of savage retrenchment, retrenchment which would impede the work of the faculty.

If you wish to join the petition without reading further, go to <https://chnng.it/y9tHqVCtkL>

If you are not a Catholic, I reckon that your help is especially welcome. I believe that a huge outcry against the retrenchment will likely cause the Philistines to retreat, at least for a time. In any case, the Dean of Arts at ACU, Dr Joy Damousi, has decided that if her faculty is going down, then she's going to go down fighting. I appeal to your chivalry and ask you to stand by her in whatever way you think best.

Dr Damousi refers to this account of the matter :—

A prominent priority of former ACU Vice-Chancellor Greg Craven AO (2008-2021) was to establish and strengthen serious study of the humanities at ACU, on the premise that these disciplines are central to the historic Catholic intellectual tradition that serves as the university's most distinctive feature in the wider tertiary education sector. Key initiatives in this domain included the creation of three institutes dedicated to research in the humanities, building upon the existing strengths in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy and the National School of Arts. Those institutes were the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry (founded 2014), the Dianoia Institute of Philosophy (2019), and the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (2020). The creation of these institutes represented one of the most significant and exciting institutional investments in the humanities in the Australian academy in recent decades and succeeded in catapulting ACU's rankings in the related disciplines, both domestically and internationally.

Upon Professor Craven's retirement in 2021, Professor Zlatko Skrbis, who came to ACU from Monash in 2018 as Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, became his successor as ACU's fifth VC. Almost immediately Professor Skrbis began attempting to dismantle the research strategy of his predecessor. His attempts to do so were slow moving and small scale until late 2022 when he appointed a new Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise, Professor Abid Khan (also from Monash). The key inflection point in this agenda was the release of a draft change plan on 12 September 2023, which proposes cutting 32 full-time equivalent academic positions, of which 29 are in humanities disciplines, mostly in the three aforementioned institutes (one of which is being completely shuttered), along with a sizeable number of staff in the Faculty of Education and Arts. An executive summary of the change plan in plain language is below.

Read the summary at

https://www.change.org/p/save-the-humanities-at-australian-catholic-university?recruiter=1316336623&recruited_by_id=fed8f980-5347-11ee-a5ce-11381cdc1b6a&utm_source=share_petition&utm_campaign=share_for_starters_page&utm_medium=copylink

Subject: Save the Humanities at Australian Catholic University
Change.org Petition

Please see the Save the Humanities at Australian Catholic University
Change.org

Petition: <https://chng.it/y9tHqVCtkL>

Professor Joy Damousi AM FASSA FAHA

Dean of Arts

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w: <https://www.acu.edu.au/research/our-research-institutes/institute-for-humanities-and-social-sciences>

I also urge you to email change@acu.edu.au expressing your opposition.

Cheers,

Martin.

Latin archbishop of Brisbane Mark Coleridge's "Pastoral Statement on the [Voice] Referendum"



Pastoral Referendum Statement

2.13MB · PDF file

[Download](#)

Extract:

Australia's first Catholic bishop, the English Benedictine John Bede Polding, spoke plainly of [the treatment of Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales].

In 1842 he wrote, "The life of an (Aboriginal) human being is valued no more than the life of a kangaroo, and far less than that of a bullock". Later he wrote, "The Aborigine will demand, 'What right have you to come here? We have not asked you to come, and you take away our lands, you drive away our means of subsistence'." Polding went on to denounce "occupation by force, accompanied by murders, ill-treatment, ravishment of their women...the white man coming for his own advantage, without any regard to their rights". He concluded, "I am making myself [an Aborigine], putting myself in that position, taking away all that I know except that this is my country, that my father lived by pursuing the emu and the kangaroo, that I am driven away from my hunting grounds, that my children and tribe are subjected to the grossest barbarities."

... But the issues surrounding the Voice are not primarily political; they are at their heart moral and ethical, which makes this essentially a conscience vote.

For Christians, it is also a summons to see the issues through the lens of the Gospel and ultimately with the eye of Jesus who is not above or apart from the Referendum process.

Essay by Queenslander Frank Brennan about the 'Voice'

The essay is now published in the Victorian Jesuit weekly *Eureka Street*, having earlier appeared in *Engage*, a journal of Charles Sturt University:—

¶Eureka Street

***[The Voice referendum: Bringing the country with us](#) — As Australia approaches a pivotal referendum, voters face a critical choice: endorse a new chapter in the Constitution providing a 'First Nations Voice' or leave it untouched. Whichever way the vote goes, we will be left with a Constitution not fit for purpose in these times.**

Extract:

Many voters who will vote 'Yes' will be convinced that the constitutional amendment is perfect, or they won't much care. But for the referendum to succeed, there will need to be a whole other cohort of 'Yes' voters – those who are not convinced that the wording is perfect but who nonetheless think it better for the nation and better for First Nations peoples that the change be made. I am one of those voters, and I would be happy if my example were to assist other voters who might be undecided to take a similar course. Regardless of the result, I do hope no future prime minister again makes a series of captain's picks without a process for public engagement. That's no way to bring the country *together* to 'Yes'. Sadly the country will be divided whatever the outcome of the vote on 14 October 2023.