



April 2022

# Whāia te Tika

*Seek Justice*

Justice & Peace Commission Catholic Diocese of Auckland

## In the shadow of bombs falling on Kyiv, in a bunker in Kharkiv, there we find the Lord



Rescuers remove wounded after an attack on Kyiv.

**Since the relatively peaceful dissolution of the USSR in 1991 under Mikhail Gorbachev, Ukraine, one of the 15 separate nations, went on to embrace democratic elections and systems.**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has always lamented the dissolution of the Soviet Union and has attempted to regain some of those states, annexing Crimea in 2014.

A month ago, on February 24, Putin launched a “special military operation” in Ukraine intended to “demilitarise and

**Editorial by Pat Lythe, Editor and**

**Chair, Justice & Peace Commission**

denationalize or de-Nazify” Ukraine. This operation was a hostile invasion of a sovereign state. Despite UN disapproval and NATO and European sanctions, Russia has continued to advance into Ukraine with bombs, missiles, tanks and an army.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky epitomises his country’s spirit and determination to be a free democratic nation and not to fall under Russian ► **To Page 8**

## Justice & Peace Commission continues



**ABOVE:** *Bishop Stephen Lowe*

Bishop Steve has given interim approval for the Justice & Peace Commission to continue its work.

Once a diocesan Bishop resigns or retires all the bodies responsible to him cease to operate until the new Bishop reinstates or reconfigures those bodies.

### **Justice & Peace Commission Catholic Diocese of Auckland**

**Website:**

<https://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/care-of-the-poor/justicepeace/>

**Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/JusticeAndPeaceCDA>

**Peter Garrick, Executive Secretary, Justice & Peace Commission, Catholic Diocese of Auckland.**

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## Plight of overstayers creates New Zealand's own humanitarian crisis

The constant struggle of overstayers in New Zealand to obtain government support or a pathway to legal residency is creating New Zealand's own humanitarian crisis.

The International Peace and Justice committee has written to the government urging a re-think of the way overstayers are treated, called for an amnesty and urged that they be provided with adequate support.

This year the committee will continue to focus on overstayers and will also maintain a watching brief on other vital areas.

### **West Papua**

These include the continuing crisis in Palestine and the continuing struggle for independence from Indonesian occupation by West Papuans. The committee will also monitor the various discussions taking place in Germany under the synodal process, which are likely to have long term significance for the church.

Prominent among the German clerics involved has been Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich, who has spoken out on a range of issues, including the role of women as part of the programme of dialogue initiated by Pope Francis. He has also advocated changing the rules on celibacy.

### **For this edition**

Editor: Pat Lythe

Layout and design: Philip Cass

Proofreading: Susanne Montgomerie

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## After five years veteran member puts energy into North Shore Vinnies

After five years, Garth Clarke has resigned from the Affordability of Housing Committee, feeling he can be more effective working with St Vincent de Paul.

Frustrated by what he described as “the glacial decision making process in the Diocese” he will concentrate his efforts on working with Vinnies, which he helped set up on the North Shore.

In the past year Vinnies has given out 320 food parcels.

He said he was volunteered for the position with the Justice & Peace Commission by Pat Lythe in 2017.

Clarke said he was moved by the poor housing outcomes for many New Zealanders living in cars.

“My main concern was getting transitional housing on vacant parish land,” he said.

Clarke was born and bred in Takapuna, attending Takapuna primary school, Belmont Intermediate and Taka Grammar.

His family moved to Sydney in December 1967 and he stayed on after his parents returned to New Zealand in 1969.

He worked for Qantas in the reservations department for 20 years.

He had a strong link with aviation through his father, who flew Solent MkIV flying boats for TEAL and was the youngest passenger on the last flight of the *Aranui*.

“I had my mid-life crisis by leaving to purchase a French polishing business after completing the trade course over three years at Sydney Tech,” Clarke said.

“I was dux of the course and happy as a pig in mud. My mum, an Australian, advised that her father was a French polisher, so it’s in the blood.



**ABOVE:** Garth Clarke

“The business went well, but I developed a serious heat rash and decided to return to New Zealand in 2001.

“I started up from my garage and with business advisers grew the business. I had a chance to sell the business in 2014 and took it.

“That was the start of working for the parish in the RCIA program and help set up the Vinnies stores on the shore.”

Clarke will still attend Commission meetings while he is still a DPC member.

## Where to get help

**Depression Helpline-0800 543 354**

**Kidslines:0800 942 8787**

**Lifeline: 0800 543 354 Free text 4357**

**Need to Talk? Call or text 1737**

**Victim Support: 0800 842 846**

**Rainbow Youth: 09 376 4155**

**Samaritans: 0800 726 666**

**What’s Up: 0800 942 8787**

**Youth line: 0800 376 633 or text 2342**

**Shine (get-help):0508 744 633**

**Safe to talk 0800 044 334 FT 4334**

**Better Blokes: 09 378 6812**

**Rape Crisis Centre: 0800 88 33 00**

**Sexual Abuse HELP Foundation: 09 623 1700**

**Youthline 0800 376 635 Free text 234**

**Women’s Refuge 0800 733 843**

**Suicide Crisis Helpline 0800 543354**

Devastating new Vinnies report reveals:

## New Zealand faces six-fold crisis with families trapped in debt and poor housing



New Zealanders are facing a multiple crisis of housing, debt, work, government support, life insurance and Covid, according to a report by St Vincent De Paul in Otahuhu.

Presenting their findings to the Justice & Peace Commission's February meeting were Simon Collins, who retired from journalism after 50 years and now works as a financial mentor with Vinnies, and co-worker Alanah Baker.

They said there was a desperate need for housing, a strengthening of laws around debts and insurance sale, problems caused by WINZ and the lack of proper support for overstayers during the Covid crisis.

They said housing seemed to be the hardest problem to make any progress on.

They said Whānau were stuck in motels or transitional housing, or paying unaffordable private rents, with no social housing available. More social housing had to be built, but the industry was at capacity, so private houses also had to be purchased.

This would push prices up, but could be offset by abolishing development levies, removing urban boundaries and converting ownership of

Photo credit:

<https://www.unitec.ac.nz/whanake/index.php/2016/10/27/community-development-in-aotearoa-new-zealand-a-historical-journey/>

land to long term leases to account for value increases. Housing subsidies had to be reformed to make private rentals affordable.

### Debt

"Almost all our whānau are struggling to repay loans they could never afford," Collins and Baker said.

"For instance, they borrow \$15,000 to buy a car worth \$9000 and end up paying back \$30,000 with interest and add-ons. They often have multiple car loans."

People also took out loans from companies like Zip, Laybuy and Humm and ran up debts at pawn shops like Cash Converters and Dollar Dealers.

They wound up with multiple debts and had attachment orders made against their benefits that often lasted for decades.



They said the Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance Act 2003 had been strengthened so that evidence had to show that loans were affordable. The same rules should apply to after-pay loans, pawn shops and debt collectors. Attachments on benefits had to be banned.

### **Work and income**

For those living in poverty, government support through WINZ could be a trap. For many, having a paid job was not worthwhile because wages were clawed back at 70%, housing subsidies at 25% and family tax credits at 27%. There were also transport costs. Marriages and relationships were penalised by the existing arrangements. A sole parent with one child received \$519, a single jobseeker \$278. A sole parent with one child could obtain a jobseeker allowance if living apart from their partner, making a total of \$797. However, a couple with one child get \$567, or \$230 less. This meant adults often chose to live apart to increase their income.

### **What can be done?**

Collins and Baker said benefits should be paid to individuals regardless of relationship status via a Universal Basic Income (UBI), with enough money for one parent to care for children under five. There should not be a separate single parent benefit.

Money should be recovered at a lower rate of 30% as part of a reformed tax scale rising from 30% at low incomes up to 70% at high incomes to support a UBI.

“Adopt these changes and not income insurance which pays more to the rich and gives no help to long-term beneficiaries in welfare traps,” they said.

### **WINZ**

While WINZ was essential for whānau facing hard times, many dreaded dealing with WINZ because they felt its staff acted like police, not helpers. They found rules about relationships and budgeting intrusive. Complex rules made them feel confused and helpless.

Most one-off support for items like rent arrears, car repairs and dental treatment was clawed back out of benefits at up to \$50 a week for debts over \$8000, forcing whānau to use foodbanks to survive.

WINZ and Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry for Children, should be merged into an entity called Whānau Support to show its purpose was to help, not police.

Time-limited appointments should be abolished. There should be a massive boost for training, job-finding and in-job support.

Parents should be supported so they were able to keep their children. Debt repayments to WINZ and Kāinga Ora should be stopped while people were on benefits.

### **Life insurance**

Life insurance remained a major problem, with many whānau paying \$20-\$100 each week for policies they did not need because they were on benefits or super.

Insurance premiums rose steeply, from \$10 per week at age 40 to \$320 at age 70. People paid for years then could not keep paying, so the policy lapsed before they died. Insurance law reform was promised in 2019, but had not happened yet.

### **Covid emergency**

Many Pasifika whānau were supporting family members who arrived on short-term visas, could not return home because of border closures and could not get welfare support because they were not New Zealand citizens.

An emergency benefit was provided for people stuck due to Covid, but this ended last August. The government needed to restore emergency benefits for people stuck in Aotearoa.

### **Giving for Lent**

In Lent, the NZ Bishops invite us to provide for the needs of the poor and suffering through its agency Caritas. Caritas funds both development and emergency relief around the world. Donate online at

[www.caritas.co.nz](http://www.caritas.co.nz)



## **Tribute paid to John Wong for work on Social Hazards Committee**

Peter Garrick, Executive Secretary of the Justice & Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland, has paid tribute to the work of John Wong, who has resigned as convenor of the Social Hazards Committee.

Garrick said Wong's work over many years had been outstanding.

"Your courage, empathy for others and strategic advocacy have been an inspiration to us all," he said.

"A lasting legacy is that in spite of formidable opposition, your careful research and legendary intervention to an Auckland Council meeting ensured that the whole of Auckland has a sinking lid policy for Pokie machine licences, sparing many vulnerable communities the worst effects of these machines."

The sinking lid policy means no new consents are issued for new venues and prevents the machines from one club being transferred to another if it closes, helping to reduce the overall number of machines. Most poker machines are in venues in high-deprivation areas like South Auckland. A 2017 Ministry of Health study found individual gambling produced the same level of harm as high alcohol consumption, anxiety and depression.

## **Pro-life groups working together to support each other and introduce regulatory safeguards**

The government is still pushing through legislation that undermines human dignity, according to Human Life Committee convenor Catherine Gillies.

"We are concerned about the controversial laws being passed with complete disregard for a number of amendments put forward and completely ignored during the voting process," Gillies said.

The Human Life Committee was liaising closely with other pro-life groups to support each other around these issues. Work was still being done among various organisations to get better safeguards introduced into the regulations.

"While cutting back on normal health services the government has gone to extreme lengths to increase funding to Family Planning to push abortions onto vulnerable women, especially

the abortion pill which they can mail out for women to self-administer," she said.

"Post-abortion counsellors around New Zealand are reporting increasing numbers of distressed women calling for assistance within days of their abortions.

"With little pre-abortion counselling they and their families do not understand the deep grief experienced after the abortion."

Gillies is available to speak to parishes about the issue.

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### **Social Justice Retreat**

The annual retreat led by Fr Merv Duffy SM will take place at St Francis' Retreat Centre on June 18. The topic will be social justice aspects of St Luke's Gospel.

# Update on the Laudato Si' Action Platform



In our special edition of *Whaia Te Tika – Seek Justice* about the Laudato Si' Action platform we described in quite some details the goals for the journey to sustainability. The edition will give you a great introduction to the platform and give some insight into how others have been on this journey for a while now. You can access the edition as well as other previous editions of our newsletter here:

<https://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/care-of-the-poor/justicepeace/>

Caritas New Zealand offers a brief and clear introduction to the platform which we recommend you check out if you are interested in joining the platform. Here is the link to Caritas' information:

<https://www.caritas.org.nz/environmental-care>

It can also be very helpful to have a look at and listen to what is available under the platform's resource tab. You can find other people's and organisations' work, which may inspire your own reflections and actions:

<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/resources>

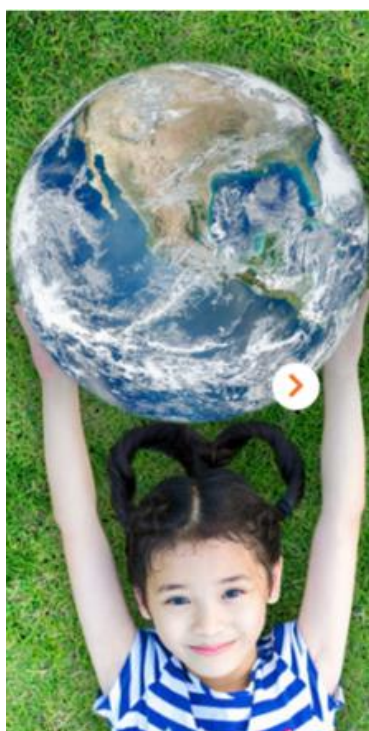
If you have questions about how to use the Laudato Si' Action platform we hope we can help with your questions about how to get started. You are welcome to contact our committee at

[escomjp98@gmail.com](mailto:escomjp98@gmail.com)

**Graphics: Earthcare Australia**



Environment and Sustainability Committee



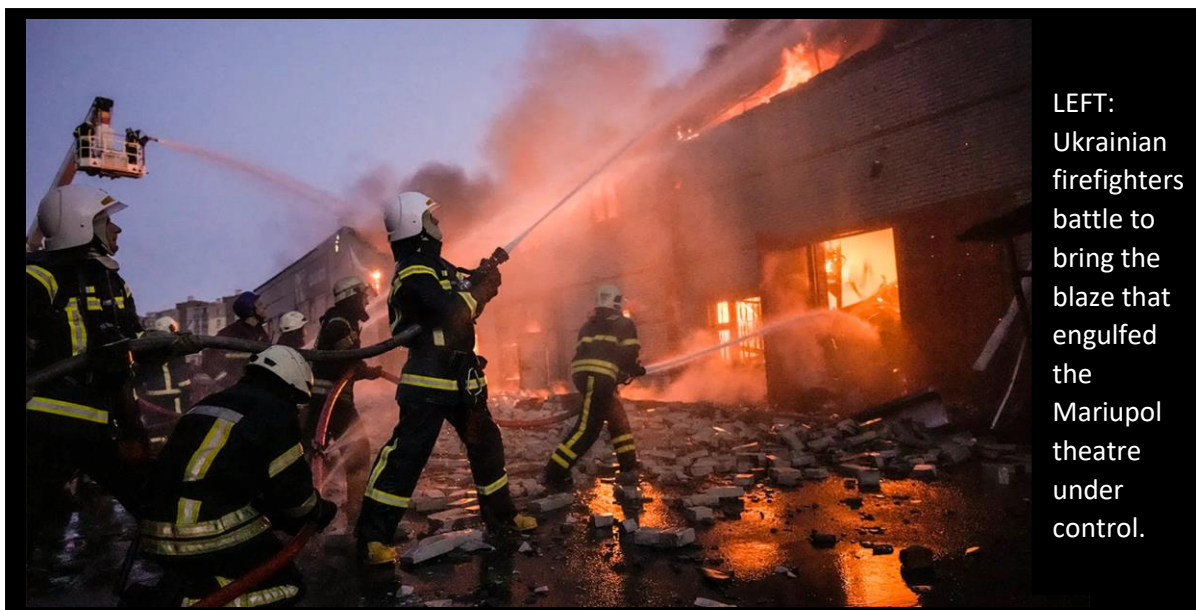
## Just another day in our life?

Why do we celebrate Earth Day and World Environment Day? These special days are there to remind us that caring for Our Common Home is important. This caring may not seem urgent in our personal lives, but it is important to future generations. We need to take care of all living beings through prayer, giving and small actions done well. Earth Day is celebrated each year on April 22. This year the theme is 'Invest in our Planet.' Here are 52 actions you can take to help invest in a better future for our planet:

<https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-tips/>

World Environment Day will be held on June 5 around the theme 'Only One Earth.' Check out our 23 green tips here under the Environment and Sustainability tab:

<https://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/care-of-the-poor/justicepeace/>



LEFT:  
Ukrainian  
firefighters  
battle to  
bring the  
blaze that  
engulfed the  
Mariupol  
theatre  
under  
control.

From Page 1

control again. While most world leaders are appalled at what is happening, they are loath in this nuclear age to engage in the fighting and risk launching World War III. NATO is a defensive pact, vowing to defend its member if they are attacked. It does not go to war. While Russia repeatedly flouts the Geneva Convention (rules covering behavior in war, around humanitarian aid, not attacking known civilian places), the rest of the world offers aid, military hardware, shelter for the four million refugees, diplomacy and prayers.

### Abuse of power

Pope Francis said: **“Once again humanity is threatened by a perverse abuse of power and partisan interests, which condemns defenceless people to suffer all forms of brutal violence.”**

In Mariupol the Russian military cut off all food, electricity, medical supplies and communication networks as it constantly shelled the city, indiscriminately hitting everything from homes to schools to hospitals as residents stayed in bomb shelters for days at a time. The city is now in ruins, but refuses to surrender. As the invasion continues becoming more violent and inhumane every

day, the rest of the world scrambles to find ways of supporting Ukraine and bringing about a ceasefire. It watches in horror as an autocratic dictator flouts all international law to get his own way.

The NZ Bishops called on all Catholics to make Friday, March 25, the day the Pope dedicated both Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a day of prayer for Ukraine. As a show of solidarity we were asked to leave our homes (as Ukrainians have been forced to leave their homes) to visit a church to pray. It was the least we could do.

Lord Jesus, born in the shadows of  
bombs falling on Kyiv,  
**have mercy on us!**

Lord Jesus,  
who died in a mother's arms in a  
bunker in Kharkiv,  
**have mercy on us!**

Lord Jesus, a 20-year-old sent to the  
frontlines,  
**have mercy on us!**

Lord Jesus, who still beholds armed  
hands in the shadow of your Cross,  
**have mercy on us!**

*From a prayer for an end to the war by Pope Francis.*