

DEBIT CARDS PROTECT ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Labor senators should not side with negative, meddlesome academics

JACINTA NAMPIJINPA PRICE



The left seems to be increasingly more concerned with the rights of the individual when those individuals are alcoholics, addicts and abusers assaulting women and children — the rights of the victims themselves are ignored.

Empty rhetoric and vacuous, overused weasel words are used to bolster the argument against obviously effective tools such as the cashless debit card.

When those in the sheltered towers of academe — such as Melbourne's Elise Klein in a recent article — denounce the CDC, they are in effect attacking voiceless, marginalised Australian women and children, enduring a life alien to those in virtue-signalling metropolitan coffee claque.

To witness Labor now align it-

self with the Greens and backflip on its bipartisan support for the CDC being trialled further afield can be likened to watching it supply dangerous drugs to an addict or weapons to a violent abuser. It seems the rights of the perpetrators come first.

In the Aboriginal tradition of thousands of years, the rights of the collective mob quashed the rights of the individual.

This was a matter of survival in a hunter-gatherer system. But we live in the modern age, in a modern country — informed by the Enlightenment's upholding of the rights of the individual. And the CDC aims to defend those individual rights against the tyranny of the mob.

Yes, traditional society was based on a demand-share econ-

omy. Sharing reinforces kin relationships and boosts the status of the sharer. Men have higher status than women. They are less obliged than women to share. Before money, it was the only way people could expect to survive. Now, in a cash economy, it is an economic disaster easily descending into abusive "humbug".

When applied to food distribution, theoretically everybody got to eat.

Even then, women sometimes missed out on their share if they were married to demanding and uncaring husbands.

Even the highly empathetic anthropologist Diane Austin-Broos in her book, *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past*, admits that children sometimes are undernourished because their carers —

Refusing to share can provoke verbal or physical assault. The acceptance of interpersonal violence in small societies can lead to ferocious attacks on wives and the old to obtain the means to finance addictions

wise and ethically minded elders — are so readily inclined to give money away to kin, especially adult male relatives, leaving less than enough to buy adequate food for dependent children.

The demand-share principle is

deeply ingrained, taught from the beginning of life. Sharing is deeply emotionally satisfying, but it excludes the ability to budget, to plan and invest in the future.

Refusing to share can provoke verbal or physical assault. The acceptance of interpersonal violence in small-scale societies can lead to ferocious attacks on wives and to "granny bashing", the young assaulting the old to obtain the means to finance addictions.

Many Aboriginal families have found ways to cope with being generous to kin, proud of their identity but also budgeting to feed and house their families. Most in the remote communities and town camps are trapped in poverty because of unquestioning loyalty to tradition.

Once, people lived in small

family groups scattered across a vast country. Demand-share worked. Currently there is overcrowding and dangerous addiction. Addicts expect their kin to fund their addictions without question. This is disastrous.

Klein is selective in the research findings she accepts. She cites the rise in crime in the Kimberley under the CDC trial but ignores the rising crime levels in Broome, Derby and Fitzroy Crossing, where the card has not been trialled.

She does not know life in the regions where research has been carried out, or the culture lived there.

However, senators Malarndirri McCarthy and Patrick Dodson do understand this culture. So why, then, do these Labor politicians take advice from inner-city green

academics who likely have never set foot in a town camp or lived in a remote community — where women's and children's lives are in daily danger?

They should both understand that the CDC helps recipients to combat their own addictions and allows them to say no to addicted kin. It helps them feed their children, and learn how to budget, and to pay their bills.

I know this because I live among it. Because I regularly talk to women affected by alcohol abuse and violence — and because they tell me the basics card and the CDC make their lives safer.

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PC MOB KEPT DREAMING OF A CRUEL CHRISTMAS

We could deck the halls with all the problems of this time of year

NICK CATER



The spirit of Christmas has survived another year, much to the annoyance of its critics.

Mindful of the forbearance one should show in this season of goodwill, we should not dwell on their miserabilist, misanthropic intolerance of a festival that ordinary people enjoy. Let us reflect instead on the pain they must feel as the rest of us celebrate almost everything they hold contemptible.

"It's impossible to 'do' Christmas without running into one patriarchal construct after another," writes Latham Hunter, professor of cultural studies and communications at McMaster University in Canada.

She has a point. After all, the festival is named after Him with a capital H, and the Trinity, while virtuous in many ways, is somewhat lacking in gender diversity, even if a question mark remains over the nature of the Holy Ghost.

The exclusion of women doesn't stop there, according to the professor.

"Even the secular Christmas songs are ubiquitous in their praise of male characters," she writes. *Frosty the Snowman*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *The Little Drummer Boy*, "and of course, Santa Claus, a white male who, by the way, gets all the credit for labour overwhelmingly done by women".

The toy store is an abyss of moral uncertainty. "Shall it be the pink princess fairy aisle or the guns n' ammo aisle? Do you dress your child in glitter and tulle or camouflage?"

For those who delight in deconstructing institutions, Christmas presents an irresistible temptation to overindulge. Few of its pre-Christian, Christian and post-Christian themes sit comfortably with their moral sensitivities. Yet the impulse to pull the institution down presents problems of its own.

Once you have abolished religion and consumerism, and made a concerted attempt to kill off the traditional family, what do you celebrate as you sit around the table with your significant other



picking at a vegan feast of lentil and potato roasts with shredded beetroot dressed with dill and horseradish mustard?

Are we to side with Charles Dickens's Scrooge in wishing that "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart"?

Yes, says *The Guardian* columnist Sirena Bergman, who writes that Christmas "is a deeply cruel, elitist, problematic institution that needs to end".

"We become collectively blind to the fact that the vast majority of people aren't able to celebrate it in the way we've been told we should, and that creates a painful sense of loss, inadequacy and failure."

Alas, it has always been so, as a cursory reading of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* reveals. In Dickens's day, however, Christianity imposed a moral duty on individuals to administer charity to the poor, since the giving of alms had not yet been entirely outsourced to the state.

Christianity as a source for good, however, is not something on which godless zealots care to dwell. Bergman boasts she "ab-

hors organised religions and everything they stand for".

"I cannot bring myself to buy into one of the last bastions of church indoctrination that we still blindly indulge," she writes.

Few moral critics are prepared to go so far in demanding the end of the "cult of Christmas". Most instinctively want to be part of it, like Richard Dawkins, the celebrity

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atheist, who recognises that feasts were part of human culture long before the arrival of monotheism. "Eating together, breaking bread while telling stories about ancestors, about hunting, battles, and travels, were part of everyday life for successful tribes throughout human history," he has written.

Yet the holier-than-thou, secular cosmopolitans cannot resist the temptation to meddle with tradition, however long it may have served our tribal needs.

An online store in Britain, for example, was offering two choices of nativity ornaments this year, one with two Josephs cradling baby Jesus, and another with two Marys.

Others strip out any hint of God altogether, producing the unsatisfying taste of a gin and tonic without the gin. Hence *Deck the Halls* is voted best atheist Christmas song of all time by the agitprop online journal *Alter-net.org*, which says the line "Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la" — repeated, incidentally, a dozen times — is one that everyone can join in.

Indeed *Deck the Halls*, with its jolly celebration of nothing in particular, is an exemplar of inclusiveness, unless one is troubled by the implied cisgenderism in its reference to "lads and lasses".

Which should surely make us question if inclusiveness is as meaningful as its advocates claim.

Should the things we once imagined as an indelible part of our Australian heritage, handed down through the lens of the Enlightenment from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, be purged to save others the embarrassment of being left out?

The impulse to tread on nobody's sensitivities — except

those of the clear majority — is most rigidly applied in the universities. An edict from the University of Minnesota this year, "Religious Diversity and Holidays", explains what is and is not appropriate.

Obvious religious iconography — angels, the star of Bethlehem, swaddled infants in mangers etc — are "not appropriate for gatherings and displays at this time of year". Neither, apparently, are Santa Claus, bells, doves or gifts wrapped with bows. Inexplicably in this age of the rainbow, the colours red, green, blue, silver and white also are ruled out. Infringements should be reported through the bias incident website and referred to the office of conflict resolution.

The unholy thoughts this sort of idiocy evokes tempts one to write an angry something on the bias incident website and spread it around on Facebook.

Instead, in the interests of peace and goodwill, let us hope the po-faced muppets in the North Star state's academy got what they dreamt of this year: a grey Christmas with un-glistened treetops.

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PLEASE, PARLIAMENT: SAVE THE KIDS FROM PEDOPHILE PRIESTS

Heed royal commission recommendations and enact the laws that will ensure safety

CHRISSIE FOSTER

A total of 37 per cent of the 15,000 survivors who came forward to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse were sexually assaulted within the Catholic Church. These atrocious crimes against children were not committed by suburban delinquents or biker gangs — but by your local clergy.

Back in March 1996 when my husband, Anthony Foster, and I began our battle against the Catholic Church hierarchy over the sexual assaults of our own child by a priest, it was at a time when a rumour flourished — that supposed victims were liars after money. This lie was taken as the biblical truth by the faithful.

That, together with a priest's status — claiming they became another Christ when ordained — meant we were easily dismissed by priest and parishioner alike. But there was no hint of the black-hearted Father Kevin O'Donnell being another Christ with his child rapist career, which spanned 50 years as a priest.

A secret report dated August 2, 1995, by Melbourne Response's Carelink head Richard Ball on O'Donnell stated "he had some early involvement with young folks but nothing much until shortly after ordination (1942), and from then on until three or four years ago (1991/92)".

Complaints were acted on by the hierarchy — various archbishops took actions to protect O'Donnell. He was left in place or moved to a new parish to continue sexually assaulting children which he did at every primary school he oversaw.

This criminality is what we were fighting, and the arrogance and heartlessness of these ontologically changed holy men — I could neither believe in them nor stomach them. Who could once the truth was known? Who could support such men who sexually assaulted little children, or those who protected the criminal, even abetting further sexual assaults?

Almost 22 years later we have our royal commission findings and recommendations, which are damning of the Catholic hierarchy and its failure to protect children from rapist priests and brothers.

This month saw victims' accounts validated by a royal commission that forensically examined witnesses and more than 12 million documents. It was a

great moment; it was a relief and a stamp of truth on what victims had been saying for decades.

The royal commissioners, because of their five years of listening, researching and analysing, are experts on the issue of child sexual assault. There is no higher authority than them on this crime anywhere in the world.

They know what will make Australian children safe, they know what civil laws need to be enacted to counter this insidious felony against our youngest, most vulnerable, powerless citizens. The commission's recommendations must be implemented by the governments of this country.

Australian taxpayers have stumped up \$450 million for these recommendations, which were handed to the Governor-General on December 15 and must not go to waste by sitting on a shelf col-

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lecting dust in Parliament House.

Reacting to some of the commission's recommendations for child protection, members of the church hierarchy promise they will go to the Vatican bleating because their power and authority have been challenged.

There was no going to the Vatican on behalf of the thousands of children raped by their colleagues; only legal arguments, petty church-restricted payouts and the silencing of children.

Now church leaders go to a Vatican knowing that the men there never lifted a finger to help or protect children, or spoke words to eradicate the child rapists among them; a Vatican that, when asked, refused to hand over church files on Australian pedophile clergy to the royal commission. All roads lead to Rome, including the pedophile road.

But in 2013 a high-ranking Catholic clergyman stated under oath to the Victorian Parliamen-

tary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations: "Well, we are good citizens, so if the government sets regulations for the whole of society, we certainly follow them."

So politicians should feel free to implement the royal commission's recommendations and enact civil laws that will ensure child safety.

By comparison, the Vatican's canon law is nothing more than the rules of the local footy club and, as such, must be ignored by civil law. If the hierarchy wishes to reject civil law and obey canon law then we will watch them go to prison.

The damage done by the Catholic hierarchy for decades by not removing pedophile priests from contact with children, and therefore creating more victims — as confirmed by the royal commission's findings — is a wilful, criminal abuse of power.

Apart from irreparable damage, misery and death to children and adults, the church is responsible for the enormous repair bill from attempts to restore victims' lives. It is a huge bill that the Australian taxpayer has had to pay. Perhaps governments should look to retrieve costs by placing a levy on the Catholics and others in line with their percentage of wilful and neglectful prolonging of child sexual assault.

All that said, my family has had its first Christmas without Anthony. He passed away suddenly in May. He did not live to see the end of the royal commission during which he attended so many sessions and round tables. It is a tragedy that he did not see the victory that awaited all victims and survivors and their families.

Anthony fought a long, hard battle. His insightful analysis and gentle voice on this issue will be forever missed. He tried so hard to make the future safer for children so that what happened to our two daughters at the hands of a trusted priest, in a system of education and at the mercy of a hierarchy that has been shown not to care on any level about any child, would not happen to others.

Anthony was a great counter to the men who claimed to be holy. They had no moral compass — they are hollow men with hollow words. When they die and go to their God they may then realise they got it all wrong in protecting their body of assets and power instead of protecting the bodies of children.

*Chrissie Foster, with Paul Kennedy, is author of *Hell on the Way to Heaven*.*

EVEN ARABS ARE NOW WEARY OF PALESTINIAN FOOT-STOMPING OVER ISRAEL

Negotiation and compromise provide a path to statehood for Mahmoud Abbas

COLIN RUBENSTEIN

On December 6, Donald Trump "opened the gates of hell" and "set the Middle East aflame" by acknowledging Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, or at least that's what various prophets and practitioners of doom predicted.

The reality was somewhat different. While violent demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza, and in various Muslim and European countries, followed Palestinian Authority and Hamas calls for "days of rage", these were hardly of the magnitude expected. Indeed, Jerusalem itself was relatively quiet. The diplomatic storm from the Arab world also was less intense than predicted.

This unexpectedly mild reaction was due to the actual content

of the statement itself and to the changing state of international affairs, particularly priorities in the Arab world.

The US President's announcement was measured and nuanced. While confirming the obvious — that Jerusalem, where Israel's parliament, Supreme Court, government ministries and the residences of its prime minister and president have all been since 1950, is Israel's capital — he made it clear that he wasn't pre-empting its final boundaries or precluding a Palestinian capital in the city's east, or a two-state outcome, and also that he respected the importance of the city to Christianity and Islam.

Riots in the West Bank and Gaza resulted in six demonstrators

being killed, a guard being stabbed in a Jerusalem bus station and about 20 rockets being fired at Israel from Gaza, with Israel targeting Hamas facilities in response. However, it would have been much worse if Hamas and the Palestinian Authority had mobilised their own forces.

Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas is likely concerned that instability caused by widespread violence may ultimately lead to a Hamas takeover in the West Bank, something Israel's security has helped him prevent until now. For Palestinian residents of the West Bank and east Jerusalem, life is sufficiently comfortable to make risking current living conditions by staging another intifada undesirable. They are cynical about their president, now in the 12th year of his four-year term, and may well doubt his discredited claims that Jerusalem is under threat from Trump's symbolic move, which actually changes nothing on the ground.

Abbas's reaction has been disappointing. His initial statement deemed Trump's stance to be the end of negotiations, and white-washed any Jewish connection to Jerusalem, describing it as an "Arab Christian and Arab Muslim city, the capital of the eternal state of Palestine".

At the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation summit on December 13, possibly miffed by the lack of support domestically and internationally, he descended into outright anti-Semitism, accusing Jews of being "really excellent in faking and counterfeiting history and religion". If Abbas can't even bring himself to accept the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and Israel, it casts real doubt over whether he will ever be prepared to negotiate peace.

Internationally, the harshest reactions came from Turkey and Iran — significantly non-Arab countries — which both seek hegemony over the Middle East. Turkish President Recep Tayyip

The Arab world now regards Iran as a far greater worry than Israel, and for some time has been working covertly with Jerusalem

Erdogan sees himself as a successor to the Ottoman emperors, and attacking Israel as a way to attract support from the Arab street.

Iran, which continually calls for Israel's destruction, uses even less subtle means, such as fomenting terror and rebellion, to spread its fundamentalist revolution.

While Erdogan convened the OIC summit to condemn Trump's announcement, notably the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates chose not to attend, with the Saudis sending only a junior minister. Attendance from Muslim countries in Africa and central Asia was

similarly patchy. Significantly, the summit, while recognising east Jerusalem as Palestine's capital, also effectively implied the OIC accepts Israel's capital will be in the city's west.

The muted reaction of the Saudis and their allies demonstrates changing Middle East realities. Still concerned for the Palestinians, other issues such as the aftermath of the so-called Arab Spring, the civil wars in Syria and Yemen, terrorism and domestic issues in their own countries have become higher priorities.

They, together with much of the Islamic world, may be tiring of Palestinian histrionics and on-going rejectionism. The old insistence that the Israeli-Palestinian issue is the core of the Middle East's problems, always dubious, is looking ridiculous in light of events in Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Iraq and elsewhere.

Most important, the Arab world now regards expansionist Iran as a far greater worry than Is-

rael, and for some time has been working covertly with Jerusalem as an effectively ally to contain Iran's threatening activities.

The December 17 resolution at the UN Security Council expressing "deep regret" at "recent decisions" and calling void any actions that alter the status of Jerusalem was defeated by the US veto. The passage of a similar motion through the UN General Assembly on December 21 (on which Australia advised at least abstained) has no legal effect. In fact, demonstrating the farcical nature of the UN, it was this year's 21st motion on Israel, and while immoderate was actually less extreme than others, some of which have implicitly denied the Jewish connection to Jerusalem.

Trump rightly noted that many years of denying Israel's claim to Jerusalem have achieved nothing for peace. The Palestinian leaders rejected generous offers of statehood with east Jerusalem as their capital in 2000, 2001 and 2008.

Since 2014, they have refused to negotiate at all. Now, instead of taking advantage of the favourable possibilities in Trump's announcement and pursuing dialogue, they have turned again to intransigence.

Experience amply demonstrates that the path to Middle East peace does not lie through appeasing Palestinian threats, colluding with or ignoring UN bias against Israel and refusing Israel the rights of any other country, such as choosing its own capital. The international community must stop denying reality just to cater to Palestinian sensitivities, and make clear the Palestinian Authority will achieve its state only if it is genuinely prepared to negotiate and compromise, and accept Israel's existence. Acknowledging Jerusalem's true status, like the US has, would be a good start.

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