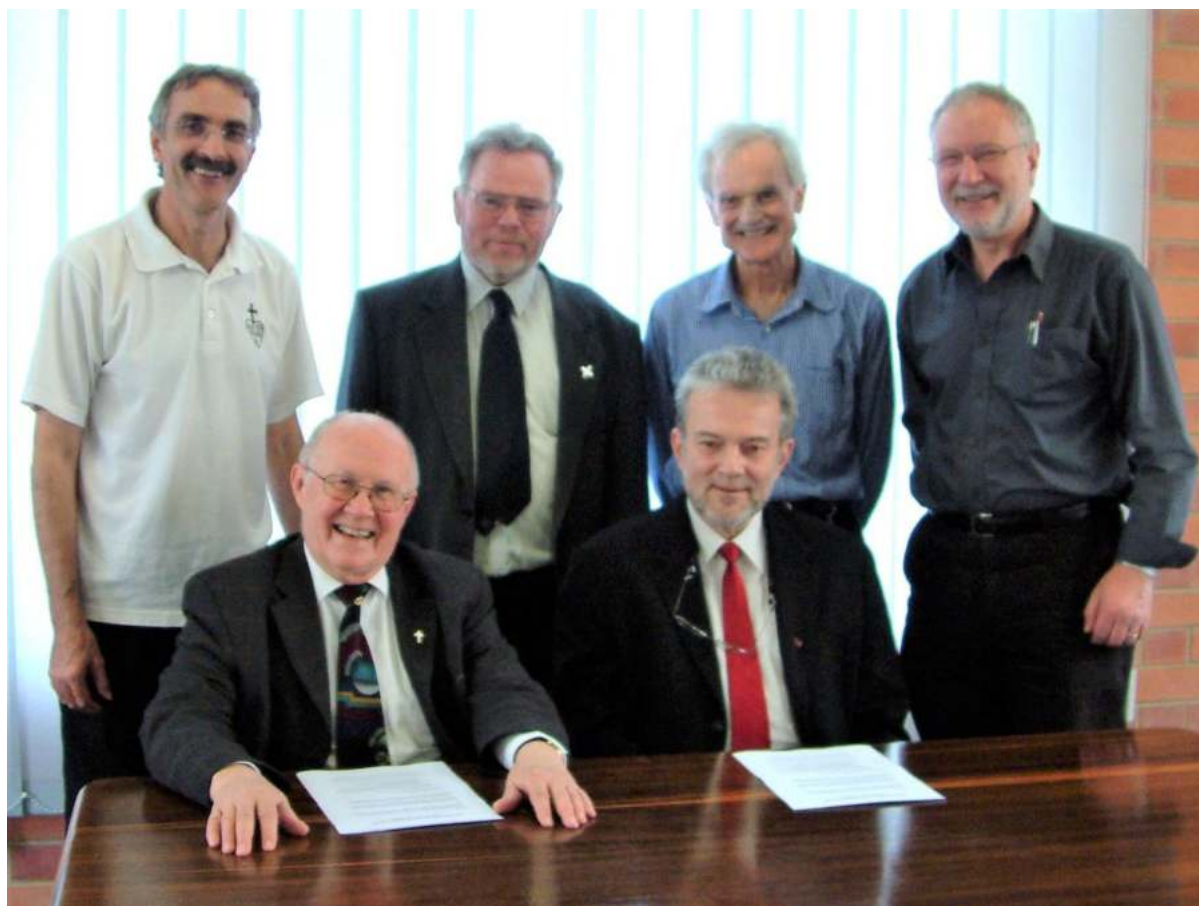




The **Yarra Institute for Religion and Social Policy (YIRSP)** in August 2008 found a home in the recently opened YTU Study Centre at Box Hill, along with the Redemptorist Social Justice Library. The Yarra Institute was formally endorsed by the Council of Yarra Theological Union on 24 October 2008, with the encouragement of **Dr Larry Nemer SVD**, President of YTU, **Dr Catherine Cahill** as Dean, and the former Dean, **Dr Kathleen Williams RSM**, along with **Dr Chris Monaghan CP**, incoming president of YTU. YIRSP was registered as an Incorporated Association on 9 December 2008. Since the Study Centre had not been formally opened, the Yarra Institute was not officially launched by **Professor Brian Howe** until 23 April 2009.



*Signing the MoU between Yarra Theological Union and the Yarra Institute. Left to right front: Dr Larry Nemer SVD, Revd. Dr Stephen Ames. Back row. Dr Chris Monaghan CP, Dr Bruce Duncan CSsR, Dr Rowan Ireland and Revd Dr Wes Campbell. 26 November 2008.*

The Establishment Committee for the Yarra Institute consisted of **Dr Rowan Ireland**, **Professor Therese D'Orsa (Vice-chair)** and **Jim D'Orsa (Secretary)**, **Dr Robyn Reynolds OLSH**, along with former members of the SPC Board, **Dr Stephen Ames (chair)** and **Dr Paul Rule**. **Dr Bruce Duncan** has been appointed Director. The YIRSP Committee was shortly elected as **the Board of Directors**. Also joining the Board of Directors was **Dr Wes**

**Campbell and later Dr Peter Price (Treasurer). Mr Frank Webber** generously acted as book-keeper. **Emmy Silvius** replaced **Jo Rawson** as office manager in March 2008.

In later years further members of the Board included **Mathew Beckman OFM, Dr John Bottomley, Professor John McDowell and Capt. Genevieve Peterson.**



*Prof Brian Howe at the launch of the Yarra Institute, Bruce Duncan, left, and Dr Stephen Ames, right.*

Former Deputy Prime Minister **Professor Brian Howe** on 23 April 2009 launched the ecumenical Yarra Institute in the new Study Centre at Box Hill in Melbourne, with an address ‘Church and Social

Policy: past and future’. As Patron of the Yarra Institute, he welcomed the founding of

the Yarra Institute to increase interaction among the churches on social policy, developing research on making a difference in central concerns. The new Institute was sited at Yarra Theological Union, next to Social Policy Connections.

The Board undertook its first projects, with

- **Mrs Joan Daw** researching the relationship between religious faith and social commitment;
- **Dr Cal Ledsham** working on the morality of torture;
- **Dr Kirsty Sangster** writing on church involvement in refugee resettlement;
- An enquiry with Prof Brian Howe into the churches role in the development of social policy in Victoria;
- the Catholic Church’s role in East Timor; and
- in conjunction with SPC, and the Yarra Institute arranged a public forum on 19 November 2009 on **Pope Benedict’s new social encyclical, Caritas in Veritate**, with **Anglican Archbishop Philip Freier, Dr Rufus Black** Master of Ormond College, and **Ms Julie Edwards** CEO of Jesuit Social Services. An edited version of this event was broadcast on ABC Encounter program on Radio National in March 2010.

None of this would have been possible without the financial support from the **Redemptorist Congregation, the Dominican Fathers, the McLeod Family Foundation, Professor Therese D’Orsa and Dr Jim D’Orsa, Elizabeth Proust, Ms Bernadette Reeders, and the Good Shepherd Foundation Australia New Zealand.**

## **2010**

YIRSP established its interactive website [www.yarrainstitute.org.au](http://www.yarrainstitute.org.au) with help from **Mr Matthew Howard**, the IT person for the Redemptorists, who filmed several events and helped with YouTube clips and podcasts. **Ms Audra Kunciuonas** (EO for SPC) was office manager. **Dr Peter Price** took over as Treasurer from Mr Frank Webber.

Various research projects took shape.

- With support from **Dr Rowan Ireland**, **Dr Joan Daw**'s project on faith and justice continued.
- The research on Refugee Resettlement Projects of Australian churches with **Prof. Sandy Gifford** at the La Trobe Centre for African Studies and by **Dr Kirsty Sangster** was completed and published online, with funding from the **Good Shepherd Foundation** in Melbourne.

## 2011

### Research projects.

- **Dr Joan Daw** prepared a draft which was edited by **Sr Helen Anderson**.
- **Dr Cal Ledsham**'s project on torture was delayed because of other commitments.
- With **Dr Peter Price** as editor, the Yarra Institute began work on the issue of globalisation, with Board members writing various chapters.
- **Drs Jim and Therese D'Orsa** continued working with **Bishop Hilton Deakin** and collecting material on the East Timor story.
- **Mrs Anne Tuohy** began interviewing **Fr Kevin Mogg** about the role of Catholic Social Services and his own life story.

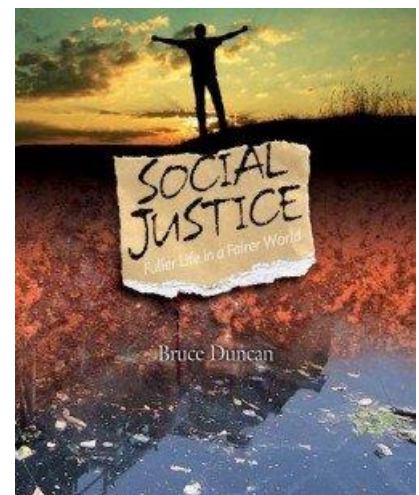
Several research projects were completed during 2011. With funding from **Good Shepherd Australia and New Zealand**, **Dr Tony Ward**, with initial research from **Dr Erin Wilson** (RMIT), completed the report *Long-term health costs of extended mandatory detention of asylum seekers*. Launched on 12 October by **Revd. Alistair Macrae**, President of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church of Australia, at St Brigid's Church, Fitzroy, the report received substantial media coverage in *The Age*, the ABC and religious press. **Ms Caz Coleman**, former director of Hotham Mission Asylum Seeker Project and a member of a government advisory committee, was very effective on radio, and continued to advise the Yarra Institute on continuing research.

**Dr Wes Campbell** retired from the Board for health reasons during the year, but Uniting Church minister, **Dr John Bottomley** joined the Board. We also farewelled **Ms Audra Kunciuonas**, and welcomed **Mrs Susy Herlihy** who replaced her in support roles for YIRSP.

The Yarra Institute published **Geoff Lacey**'s *Sufficient for the Day: towards a Sustainable Culture* which was launched by **Dr Paul Mees** at Dymocks in Collins Street on 15 September 2011, the first publication of the Yarra Institute Press.

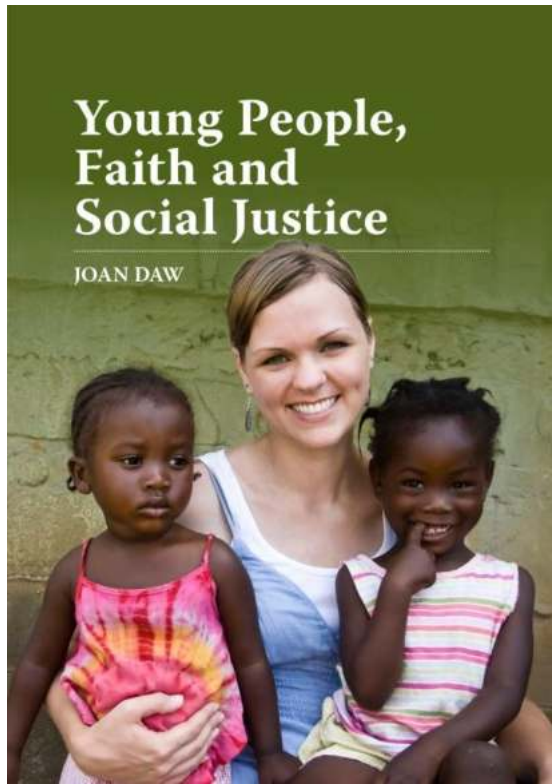
## 2012

Board members published various publications during 2012: **Drs Jim and Therese D'Orsa** *Catholic Curriculum: A Mission to the Heart of Young People*, and also *Explorers, Guides and Meaning-Makers: Mission Theology for Catholic Educators*. **Jim D'Orsa** also co-edited *Religion and Ethics in Pluralist Society*, *VCE Religion and Society*. **Bruce Duncan** published *Social Justice: Fuller Life in a fairer world*. And **Dr Stephen Ames**



published *Finding the Way: a Theology of Ageing*, with Benetas Aged Care.

**Dr Joan Daw's** project *Young People, Faith and Social Justice* was prepared for publication by Ms **Judy Benson** and **Bruce Duncan** with support from **Paul Rule and Rowan Ireland**.



It was launched by **Dr Kath Engebretson** on 17 May 2013 at the Knox Centre in Melbourne.

During the year, the online *Directory of Refugees and Asylum Seeker Support Services of the Australian Churches and Associated Organisations* was extensively revised and updated by **Susy Herlihy**.

Other projects were making solid progress. The book for the ATF journal *Interface* edited by **Dr Peter Price** on globalisation was almost ready for publication. It carried chapters by **Dr Paul Rule, Dr John D'Arcy May, Dr Robyn Reynolds, Dr Rowan Ireland, Dr Stephen Ames, Dr Wes Campbell, Professor Therese D'Orsa and Dr Bruce Duncan**.

**Drs James and Therese D'Orsa** continued with their East Timor project, and **Mrs Anne Tuohey** continued working with the Kevin Mogg interviews.

### **Research collaboration within the Melbourne College of Divinity.**

The Board contacted **Dr Mark Lindsay**, Director of Research at MCD University about establishing a research unit within the University on social justice. To promote ecumenical collaboration, YIRSP began conversations with **Prof Randall Prior** (UFT) and **Dr Ray Cleary** (Trinity College Theological School).

The eminent scholar **Dr John D'Arcy May** joined the Board of Directors in December 2012, bringing his depth of international ecumenical contacts and scholarship.

### **2013-2014**

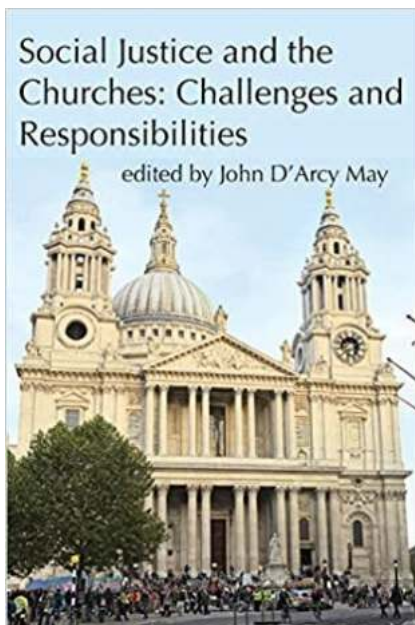
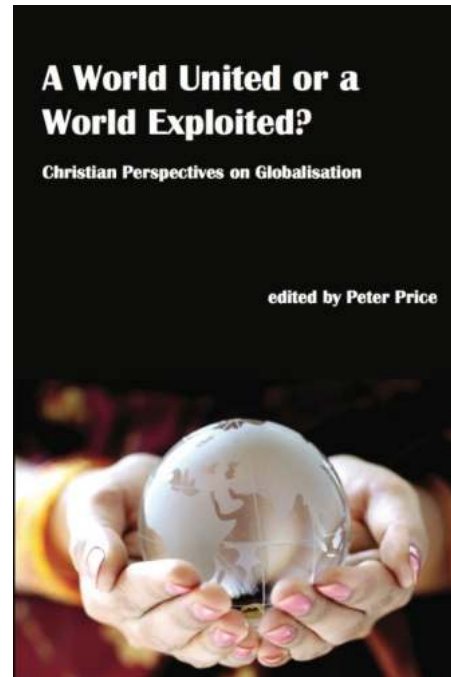
In early 2013 Bruce Duncan and Stephen Ames visited all the heads of theological colleges inviting them into a closer working relationship with the Yarra Institute as a research institute of the University. We proposed a joint conference with the MCD University of Divinity, 'Christian Social Thinking for Australia – Making a Difference?' which was held at Newman College on 9 November 2013. **Presentations followed from Anglicans, Catholics, Baptists, Churches of Christ, Copts, Salvation Army and the Uniting Church. Fr Frank Brennan SJ** opened the conference, and **Margaret Coffey** from the ABC gave a concluding reflection.

On 26 November 2013, **Dr Stephen Ames** reported at the AGM that after thorough negotiations with the MCD University of Divinity, it appeared that our goal of becoming a research institute was to be officially confirmed.

However, unexpectedly in mid-2014 the Vice-Chancellor **Peter Sherlock** informed the Yarra Institute that it would not be authorised as a research unit of the University, as this would require changes to the Constitution of the University.

The Yarra Institute's Board subsequently sought legal advice from **Mr Tony French** about gaining DGR tax status. He advised us to seek approval through the State Parliament, and after talking with her, **Anna Burke**, our local member, agreed to help with this, but a federal election soon after resulted in her loss of her seat.

**Revd Dr John Henley** on 20 June 2014 launched *A World United or a World Exploited: Christian Perspectives on Globalisation*, edited by **Dr Peter Price** on behalf of the Yarra Institute (Adelaide: ATF Press, but dated 2013).



The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Divinity, Professor **Peter Sherlock**, launched *Social Justice and the Churches: Challenges and Responsibilities*, edited by **John D'Arcy May** (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2014) on 5 November. It gathered papers presented at the conference held on 9 November 2013.

Then on 7 November 2014 the Vice-chancellor invited Stephen Ames and Bruce Duncan to meet the Governance Committee of the University at the **Chancellor Graeme Blackman's** residence on Monday 17 November.

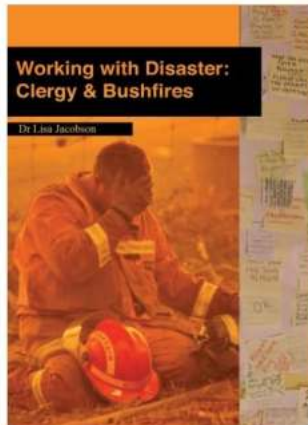
Stephen Ames and Bruce Duncan had earlier invited the heads of colleges or their nominees to a dinner at the Centre for Theology and Ministry on 13 November. **Six Heads of College** and three nominees did attend, helping create a receptive climate for forming closer research partnerships within the University.

The outcome of the meeting with the **Governance Committee of the University** was that discussions would continue towards YIRSP becoming a 'centre' of the University of Divinity, helping engage with the wider community on social or public issues, not speaking in the name of the University but with an independent voice from within the University.

As a result of earlier conversations, the Board in December 2014 welcomed **Major Brad Halse** from the Salvation Army on to the Board of YIRSP. **Dr Anne Elvey** was also elected to the Board in December 2014. The Board also included **Stephen Ames, John Bottomley, Ross Fishburn, Jim D’Orsa, Therese D’Orsa, Rowan Ireland, John D’Arcy May, Paul Rule and Bruce Duncan.**

## 2015

Purposeful detailed discussions continued with the University of Divinity about YIRSP becoming a centre of the University, and the various Colleges were involved in consultations.



*Working with Disaster: Clergy & Bushfires* was launched by **Mr Craig Lapsley**, Victorian Emergency Management Commissioner at the Victorian Council of Churches offices in Melbourne on 16 April 2016. This significant research report was written by **Dr Lisa Jacobson**, and sponsored by the Yarra Institute and Creative Ministries Network.



Prof Therese D'Orsa, Bishop Hilton Deakin and Jim D'Orsa

Founding members of the Yarra Institute, **Professor Therese D’Orsa** and **Dr Jim D’Orsa**, completed their memoir of Bishop Hilton Deakin and submitted it for publication. They had also completed their book, *Leading for Mission: Integrating Life, Culture and Faith in Catholic Education*. Therese also proposed writing a 30,000-word book on the demise of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Sydney 30 years earlier.

**John Bottomley’s** report by Creative Ministries, *Our System isn’t geared for Death*, was launched on 16 April, followed by his book *Hard work never killed anyone*, and his project on widows.

**Anne Elvey** organised a conference on ‘Ecological Aspects of War – Religious Perspective from Australia’ at Trinity College, and prospects emerged for two books along these lines.

Following advice for some readers, **Dr Brian Johnstone CSsR** offered in February 2015 to help fill out a moral theology perspective on **Dr Cal Ledsham’s** draft on torture.

**Major Brad Halse** was transferred to London and had to retire from the Board of Directors. He was replaced by **Captain Genevieve Peterson** as nominee of the Salvation Army. Other Board members were **Stephen Ames, John Bottomley, Jim D’Orsa, Therese D’Orsa, Anne Elvey, Rowan Ireland, Paul Rule and Bruce Duncan.** **John McDowell** joined the Board from September 2015.

## 2016

During 2016, the Yarra Institute prepared to welcome the new **University of Divinity Centre for Research in Religion and Social Policy (RASP)**, with **Dr Gordon Preece** Interim Director. An Anglican minister in the parish of Spotswood, with a long involvement editing and writing for *Zadok Perspectives* and other publications, he was in June confirmed as Research Director. The new Committee for the Centre consisted of **Prof Gabrielle McMullen (chair), Prof John McDowell, Dr Matthew Beckmann OFM, Revd Dr John Bottomley and Dr Timothy Jones** from Latrobe University. Its web address was <https://www.centrerasp.org>.

The Yarra Institute formally celebrated this passing of the baton to the new Centre at an event on 16 November 2016 at the Study Centre at Yarra Theological Union.

## 2017



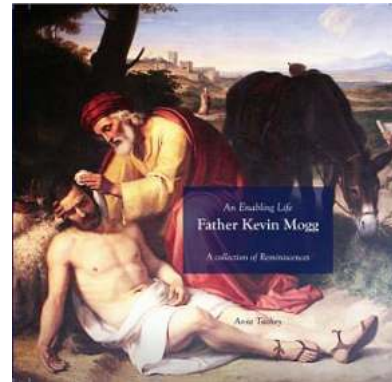
Bishop Vincent Long and Therese D'Orsa

The Yarra Institute still had several research projects to complete. Bishop Vincent Long launched the memoir of **Bishop Hilton Deakin**, written by **Drs Jim and Therese D'Orsa**, *Bonded through Tragedy, United in Hope: the Catholic Church and East Timor's Struggle for Independence* (Garratt Publishing) at the Knox Centre to 200 people, opening with a ceremonial entry by Timor L'Este dancers on 1 June 2017.



The well-known advocate for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, **Russell Broadbent MP**, launched **Tony Ward's *Bridging Troubled Waters: Australia & Asylum Seekers*** on 17 August 2017 at St Kilda Town Hall.

**The memoir of Fr Kevin Mogg AO by Anne Tuohey** was published in September 2018, *An Enabling Life: Fr Kevin Mogg*, but because Fr Mogg was not well, the launch by **Judge Michael McInerney** was delayed till late 2018.



Anne Elvey also published **Ecological Aspects of War: Engaging with Biblical Texts** with Bloomsbury UK, and had prepared ‘Ecological Aspects of War: Religious Perspectives from Australia’.

**The Board consisted of** Other Board members were **Stephen Ames, John Bottomley, Jim D’Orsa, Therese D’Orsa, Anne Elvey, Rowan Ireland, John McDowell, Captain Genevieve Peterson, Paul Rule and Bruce Duncan.**

## **2018**

**Dr Brian Johnstone** withdrew from filing out Cal Ledsham’s draft on torture. **Bruce Duncan** said he would endeavour to bring the draft to print, and honour our obligations to Cal Ledsham and the sponsor, the Catholic Institute of Sydney, s Laurdel Research Foundation.

The Yarra Institute was authorised to cancel the incorporation of YIRSP at the AGM (with **Stephen Ames** and **Bruce Duncan** the sole remaining Board members) on 2 November 2018. Mr Peter Whiting transferred remaining funds to Social Policy Connections, and closed the Yarra Institute NAB accounts, but will still pay out of these funds for outstanding commitments, including for liability insurance and publications, through the SPC account.