



ACSJC

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MEDIA RELEASE

'Into the Deep': a cry for freedom

In the latest publication from the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC), Peter Arndt tells of the thousands of Papuans who have been beaten, jailed, raped and murdered by Indonesian police and military. After more than 50 years of repression, they still believe that one day they can reclaim their country.

Peter Arndt is Executive Officer of the Brisbane Archdiocese Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. In *Into the Deep: Seeking justice for the people of West Papua*, he describes meeting West Papuan people, hearing their stories, and asking how he should respond as a Christian to their pain.

The ACSJC is the justice and peace agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops. Its Chairman, Bishop Vincent Long, says:

'We cannot read Peter Arndt's account of the sufferings of the indigenous people of West Papua without being deeply moved. He shows how he has come to understand their indomitable desire for self-determination and to recognise how the Gospel calls him to walk beside his friends on their journey.

'Peter places his friends' experiences in the context of the Scriptures and looks deeply into the Church's teachings on justice, asking what he must do. He discerns the answer with clarity and courage.'

Peter Arndt says: 'The vast majority of Papuans are Christians and their faith sustains them in their resistance to Indonesian occupation.' Many public acts of resistance take the form of prayer gatherings, and their faith is often mocked and denigrated by the authorities.

Arndt's commitment to justice for West Papuan people is founded on the idea of Christian solidarity. 'Until I started to walk with Papuans, I didn't really understand the meaning of solidarity.

'Solidarity, in the way Jesus exemplified it, is a radical commitment to others that even entails the possibility of losing one's life,' he says.

Bishop Long says: 'I commend this paper to everybody who wishes to know more about the needs of our neighbours in this region, and to everybody who hears the cry of the poor.'

Into the Deep: Seeking justice for the people of West Papua (Social Justice Series Paper No. 82) is available for \$7.50 from the ACSJC.

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