



a chorus of women

## Lest We Forget

### **Response to criticism of Yassmin Abdel-Magied's tweet**

We have been deeply shocked by the outpouring of criticism and hatred towards Yassmin because of her tweet of 'Lest We Forget (Manus Nauru Syria Palestine), which we believe was a legitimate expression of humanity towards all people who are harmed by war.

**We have attached here our response, recorded at lunchtime today using the tune and slightly adapted words of the song, Lest We Forget, that A Chorus of Women has been singing in various iterations since 2004.**

We have provided further details about this song below. Interestingly, despite all the audiences that we have performed to, we have never encountered the sort of criticism that has been meted out to Yassmin because of her tweet. People in our audiences have always appreciated the emotional truth of 'lest we forget' as a reminder of our common humanity one to another – a meaning that has of course been made more poignant since World War I by its use in relation to the heartfelt remembrance of service personnel who have lost their lives in war.

Janet Salisbury

Johanna McBride

Glenda Cloughley

Meg Rigby

Sarah Stitt

Alanna Mclean

**A Chorus of Women, Canberra**

Contact: [chorusofwomen@incanberra.com.au](mailto:chorusofwomen@incanberra.com.au)

M: 0416 167 280

[www.chorusofwomen.org](http://www.chorusofwomen.org)

## Lest We Forget song — background

Not long after A Chorus of Women was formed after singing a Lament for the people of Iraq in the foyer of Parliament House in March 2003, Glenda Cloughley composed a simple song with the refrain 'Lest we forget, lest we forget, lest we forget, lest we forget'. She left the verse tune open for others to write verses for different events or issues in the news.

Over the past 12 years or so, A Chorus of Women has sung this song at dozens of events with verses composed around personal stories and news items relating to:

Family members who are returned soldiers and who have suffered the pain of war

Mothers of young men who died at war

Loss of homeland and language by a refugee from the Hungarian uprising of 1956

First Australians grieving their losses in the Frontier Wars

Victims of domestic violence

The roles of women as carers and community builders

The lives of refugees today, including the loss of life while trying to flee war and persecution, and the plight of those who are stranded in refugee camps and detention camps.

The following are examples of the occasions when we have performed this song:

11 November 2006 – Songs for Remembrance and Renewal; concert in St Paul's Anglican Church Manuka.

24 October 2006 – 30 years on – How Safe Are We? Launch of exhibitions marking 30 years of Reclaim the Night and addressing issues of domestic violence and sexual violence towards women and children.

11 December 2006 – 'Giving Voice', the first CD of A Chorus of Women, which includes the song 'Lest We Forget'; the CD was launched by then ACT Senator Kate Lundy at the ACT Legislative Assembly.

8 March 2007 – 'Celebrating Women' a program of songs presented at the ACT International Women's Day Awards.

6 March 2008 – UN Women, International Women's Day Lunch, Canberra.

24 April 2011 – Inaugural Anzac Eve Lantern-lit Peace Vigil (and at this event on several subsequent years).

8 July 2012 – 'Songs for Lament and Longing', Poets for Peace poetry reading, Manning Clarke House.

19 March 2013 - 'Open the Doors of the Chambers': Chorus 10th Anniversary Concert at Parliament House foyer.

15 August 2013 – Service of Lament for Asylum Seekers, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.

6 March 2014 – International Women's Day lunch with ACT branch of the Australian Education Union

13 April 2014 – 'Break the Silence', Rally for Refugees, Garema Place, Canberra.

15 April 2014 – 'Remembering War - Seeking Peace', A Canberra Conversation at Manning Clark House, attended by a diverse range of people including members of the RSL, a military historian and an indigenous elder, to explore questions about how we can best respect the memory of those killed or traumatised by war, including Aboriginal people during Australian settlement.

7 October 2015 – Book Launch for 'We Are Better Than This', edited by Robyn Codwallader with essays about refugees policy in Australia; launched by Jon Stanhope, former ACT Chief Minister, at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. We wrote the following new lyrics for Lest We Forget especially for this occasion:

Let's go down to the beach today  
The sun is shining in the bay  
But on the sand a child lies drowned  
Washed up like flotsam from the storm

Lest we forget

It's a little child's birthday in the camp  
No happy song No fancy cake  
It's four sad years since they locked him up  
Behind the wire it's just another day

Lest we forget

On Nauru a teenage girl is crying  
So far from home Her spirit dying  
All alone with the terror every day  
No mum or dad to kiss her tears away

Lest we forget

Here are gum leaves green and blue  
for remembrance of love and hope  
Songs of peace and harmony

Together lest we forget

WORDS Glenda Cloughley (chorus and final verse) and Janet Salisbury (verses 1-3)

[v1: in memory of Aylan Kurdi, a refugee from Syria drowned at sea and washed up in Turkey in Aug 2015. v2: for all pre-and primary school children in long-term detention. v3: for unaccompanied teenage girls in detention.]