

MEDIA RELEASE

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**Reflections on a Just Society:
Dr Pedro Walpole SJ, Environmental Science for Social Change**

In marking 35 years since Jesuit Social Services began, the organisation held the third event in its 'Reflections on a Just Society' series this morning with Dr Pedro Walpole SJ, Research Director of the Institute of Environmental Science for Social Change, Philippines, as guest speaker. The series of talks on social and public policy matters have previously featured Prof Tony Vinson AM and Dr John Boffa.

Dr Pedro Walpole SJ, a hydrologist and one of the foremost practitioners in sustainable environment and community land management in Southeast Asia, spoke at the breakfast event on his deep knowledge about ecology including poverty reduction in forest lands, human security in protected areas, partnerships for local development, social concerns in forest law enforcement and governance, climate justice and indigenous peoples' rights.

"Most of the mineral exploration in Asia, which is the one of the main sources, is 70-80% on indigenous lands and it's the biggest culturally diverse region in the world. Indigenous people are beginning to get land recognition but when you're after the stuff that's under the land it becomes a whole other policy world," said Dr Walpole.

Dr Walpole spoke of the great stressors and tensions in today's society and how living in urban communities' leads to a loss of connection to the land that sustains us, which is a growing problem for younger generations.

"There is a traffic jam of problems and this is what is catching young people today. The opportunities are not there in so many respects across the world and the burdens are greater. We're not learning adaptation, we're not teaching adaptation. We're still teaching a trajectory – we're not teaching living."

"We've got to encourage a positive response from our young people. The Rio+20 Conference was opened by a young woman – the youth addressing the government assembly and very humbly but very truthfully saying 'your decisions are what we have to work with'. That transition is already occurring... the young people have to come into a response to the environment."

In everything we do, Dr Walpole reminds us to begin with a sense of gratitude, "There is a great need to be able to begin with gratitude. If we're already starting [the day] with a brief in our hand and a whole range of meetings and activities to do during the day it gets exhaustive. And if somehow there is not an energy that we can draw on, that we can be cared by, that we can be healed by - we are not going to be able to sustain it."

For a video recording of today's talk, go to www.jss.org.au

Jesuit Social Services is a not-for-profit organisation which works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged young people, families and communities.

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