

# JUSTACT

ACT WITH JUSTICE IN MIND

News & resources from the Justice and International Mission Cluster

JUNE 2021

## THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT BUDGET

# THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY



This issue of JustAct is a bumper edition. There is a lot to report regarding progress that has recently been made on many of the issues we have been campaigning on together. Your efforts are having an impact. Thank you. However, there are also several areas where there have also been setbacks in the last few months.

The Commonwealth budget had some positives as well as some significant disappointments. The following piece identifies aspects of the budget that connect with issues you have been advocating on through the resources we have provided to you.

### The Good

The positive announcements in the Commonwealth budget in areas you have been campaigning on were:

#### *Curbing Family Violence*

- \$1.1 billion over four years to support women and children experiencing family violence, which included \$85 million in enhanced social supports for survivors of family violence. There was also \$129 million for increased legal assistance for survivors of family violence;
- \$10.3 million to support women on temporary visas who experience family violence;
- \$29.3 million to improve the safety, social inclusion and economic participation of migrant and refugee women;
- \$164.8 million to provide women escaping family violence a payment of \$1,500 immediately and a further \$3,500 for goods or direct payment of accommodation bonds and school fees;
- \$4.7 million to strengthen criminal justice responses to sexual assault, sexual harassment and coercive control;

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- \$6.3 million to ensure that alleged perpetrators of family violence are not able to cross-examine their victims in any legal process;
- \$17.1 million for additional mental health support for women who have experienced family violence;

### *Support for People with Disabilities or Mental Health Issues*

- \$60 million for legal services for people with mental health issues;
- \$2.3 billion for expanded mental health services;

### *Protecting People with Disabilities from Abuse*

- \$9.3 million over three years to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women with a disability;

### *Curbing Online Child Sexual Abuse*

- \$146 million to implement a National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse, including an extra \$59.9 million for the Australian Federal Police to deal with these crimes. There is also \$13.9 million for AUSTRAC, the Australian Institute of Criminology, Australian Border Force, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and the Department of Home Affairs to target the cash flow of those selling child sexual abuse and prevent child sex abuse perpetrators from being able to travel overseas to carry out such abuse. There is \$4.1 million for the Department of Home Affairs to assist countries in our region to strengthen their laws against child sexual abuse. There is also \$3 million for the eSafety Commissioner to deliver online education programs to

- prevent harms to children;
- \$16.8 million for legal assistance services for children experiencing, and survivors of, sexual abuse;
- \$26.2 million to improve online safety for women and children, including an expansion of the investigation team at the eSafety Commissioner and a new National Online Safety Awareness Campaign;
- \$24.1 million for the Attorney General's Department and the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions to manage increased prosecutions related to child sexual abuse;
- \$51.8 million to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission to enhance its capabilities to deal with serious and organised cross-border crime, including online child sexual abuse;

### *Justice for First Peoples*

- The Government will scrap the discriminatory Community Development Program (CDP) that has resulted in First People being cut off from income support when unemployed. The CDP has also forced First People to work in jobs for wage rates less than the legal minimum for the job in question. The CDP will be shut down by 2023. The Government has committed \$13.1 million to pilot a new remote jobs program co-designed with First People representatives. These outcomes are things we have directly advocated for;

### *Addressing Climate Change*

- \$59.6 million for a National Soil Carbon Innovation Challenge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through capturing them as soil carbon and to trial new agricultural feed technologies that

- reduce emissions from livestock;
- \$316.7 million to assist businesses to reduce energy use and emissions. However, it needs to be targeted to get companies to take actions they would not already be willing to take for this spending to be truly good. The impact of the expenditure in reducing emissions will remain to be seen;
- \$30 million for a big battery in the Northern Territory, which will store renewable energy;

### *Supporting People Seeking Asylum and Refugees*

- An extra \$102.4 million for refugee resettlement in Australia, bringing the total budget for refugee resettlement for the 2021-2022 financial year to \$573.7 million;
- \$54.8 million to clear the backlog of appeal cases by people claiming humanitarian protection before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. There are currently 31,689 people who have made protection claims that have appealed to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and are waiting for their case to be heard. The Commonwealth Government will also add two judges in the Federal Circuit Court to deal with appeals after people have their applications rejected at the Tribunal;

### *Curbing Exploitation of People on Temporary Visas*

- People on student visas will be allowed to work more than 40 hours a fortnight if they work in tourism, hospitality, agriculture, health care, childcare, and aged care. Some employers used the cap on the number of hours that can be worked to exploit people

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## FROM THE JUSTICE & INTERNATIONAL MISSION CLUSTER

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All of the resources in this mailing can be found on the JIM website.

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on student visas. The employer would get the person on the student visa to work more than 40 hours in a fortnight in breach of their visa restrictions. They would then threaten to report them to Australian Border Force unless they accepted illegally low rates of pay;

- \$3.6 million to support the farming industry Fair Farm certification program to address the exploitation of people working on farms. However, the program is feeble, mainly relying on the self-assessment of farms; and,

#### *Income Support for People who are Unemployed*

- A permanent increase in Job Seeker payments of \$25 a week. It is the largest increase in support payments for people who are unemployed since 1986. While the rise needed to be more, any increase should be welcomed.

### The Bad

There were also negative aspects to the budget. In the areas you have been involved in campaigning on, these include:

- \$464.7 million for immigration detention facilities, including extending the life of the Christmas Island detention centre. However, it needs to be acknowledged that overcrowding in detention facilities would be highly undesirable;
- Introduction of a patent box tax break for profits derived from patents linked to medical and biotechnology corporations. There are currently 26 other governments around the world that offer patent box tax breaks for multinational corporations. They have been found to do little



to encourage research and development, which governments can encourage more directly. However, they have been beneficial in assisting multinational corporations with cross-border tax avoidance. How bad the Australian model will remain to be seen; and

- \$2.5 million for a hotline for employers to do in people seeking employment who the employer believes is not making enough effort. In the past, such initiatives have attracted misuse by unethical employers to make malicious reports after unfairly or unlawfully sacking an employee.

### The Ugly

The greatest disappointments in the Commonwealth Government budget were:

- A focus on expanding and propping up the use of fossil fuels. There was \$263.7 million for Carbon Capture and Storage projects to keep fossil fuel-powered facilities running longer. There was \$58.6 million for the “gas-fired recovery” and \$173.6 million for roads to support developing new gas fields to in-

crease fossil fuel production. There is also \$8 billion a year for ongoing fossil fuel tax credits. The fossil fuel tax credits will grow to cost the budget \$9.86 billion by the 2024-2025 financial year. The government further committed \$55 million to subsidise gas power plants, as they are not able to compete economically with renewable power generation;

- The Commonwealth Government has reduced spending to support people seeking protection in Australia by \$911.3 million by capping the number of people to be able to be granted protection visas at 13,750 places a year; and,
- New migrants will be forced to wait four years to access most government social security payments.

Thank you for the many issues that you have contributed time and effort to make a difference to. Some things can certainly be celebrated out of the Commonwealth budget. At the same time, there are other areas, especially climate justice, which will require our ongoing efforts to support reform. •



# INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY CALLS FOR AN END TO NEW FOSSIL FUEL PRODUCTION

**On 18 May 2021, the International Energy Agency (IEA) released its roadmap that the world would need to follow to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.**

The IEA has traditionally been conservative, downplaying the role of renewable energy. Thus, it was a surprise when the IEA roadmap stated there should be no investment in new fossil fuel supply projects and no investment in coal-fired power plants that result in greenhouse gas emissions. The IEA recommends that all coal-fired power stations that produce greenhouse gas emissions be phased out by 2030 in wealthy countries like Australia.

The IEA also called for an end to the sale of fossil fuel-powered vehicles by 2035.

The IEA has called for adding 630 GW of solar power and 390 GW of wind power globally annually, which would be four times the amount added in 2020. The roadmap would see 90% of electricity generation being from renewable sources by 2050, with wind and solar making up 70% of electricity generation.

They also called for energy efficiency improvements to reach 4% per year by 2030. That would be about three times the average rate of energy efficiency improvements over the last two decades.

The IEA pointed out that most of the global reductions in greenhouse gas emissions needed between now and 2030 can be achieved with existing technology. However, they promoted the further development of advanced batteries to store energy from renewable sources and the production of hydrogen as a new fuel source that does not gen-

erate greenhouse gas emissions when consumed.

The IEA also called for financial and technological support for developing countries to ensure they can reduce emissions while meeting the people's energy needs in those countries. The IEA roadmap would aim to provide electricity to the 785 million people globally that do not currently have access to it. It also calls for action to provide clean cooking solutions for the 2.6 billion people globally who lack them. These last initiatives would reduce indoor air pollution, cutting premature deaths by an estimated 2.5 million a year.

The IEA roadmap shows the current Commonwealth Government has taken a wrong turn with its ongoing support for fossil fuels and their expansion. •

# LARGE SCALE RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGET REACHED

**Many of you were part of our joint advocacy to see the Commonwealth Government increase the electricity generated by renewable sources.**

There was good news with confirmation that in January 2021, Australia passed its target of reaching 33,000 GWh of large scale renewable energy generation. The Clean Energy Regulator has stated that it is expected that the amount of large scale renewable energy generation will reach somewhere between 37,000 and 40,000 GWh by the end of 2021.

Large scale renewable generation does not include rooftop solar panels.

Thank you to everyone who wrote letters and visited their MPs over several years to maintain the large-scale renewable energy target. •



## VIC GOV'T RELEASES ITS PLAN TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

**On 2 May 2021, there was positive news as the Victorian Government released its strategy to address climate change.**

The Victorian Government remains committed to reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, which is also the aim of all other States and Territories in Australia. The strategy now commits Victoria to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the state by 28-33% by 2025 and 45-50% by 2030.

Victoria has already cut its emissions by 24.8% based on 2005 levels.

The strategy included providing \$3,000 to Victorians who purchase zero-emissions vehicles, with a target that half of all vehicles purchased in the state will be zero-emissions vehicles by 2030.

The Victorian Government announced \$20 million to reduce emissions from the agriculture industry.

Government-controlled facilities, including schools, hospitals, police

stations and metro trains, will all be powered by 100% renewable energy by 2025 under the strategy.

Following the release of the Victorian Government plan to respond to climate change, Victoria's largest electricity distributor, Powercor, announced it would be installing up to 20 big batteries across the state to allow more large scale wind and solar power into the electricity grid. The batteries would collectively be able to hold up to 1,100 MW of power. •



# COMMONWEALTH GOV'T TAKES AN ESSENTIAL STEP IN THE STRUGGLE TO END ILLEGAL LOGGING

**In 2008 we joined environmental groups and anti-corruption organisations in the struggle to end the global problem of illegal logging.**

Illegal logging results in unsustainable destruction of vital forest resources, contributing to climate change and deprives local communities of the benefits of forest resources. Illegal logging is usually associated with tax evasion and

corruption. Those involved in illegal logging in several developing countries have murdered those who seek to expose their criminal operations.

Our joint efforts resulted in the passage of the *Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012*. Together we have been able to successfully lobby for reforms that strengthened the implementation of the Act.

On 27 April 2021, the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management, David Littleproud, made a

very positive announcement that the Commonwealth Government has allocated \$60,000 to build up a DNA database of timber to help prevent illegal logging. DNA testing can determine the timber species and the location it was harvested from, making it easier to determine if the timber or wood product has been illegally harvested.

Thanks to everyone who has taken action in support of ending illegal logging. •

## VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT BUDGET

**The following are highlights from the Victorian Government budget handed down on 19 May in the areas you have advocated for over several years.**

Relevant announcements included:

- \$3.8 billion for mental health reforms;
- \$1.2 billion for measures to protect children and help keep vulnerable families together;
- New funding to build 1,100 homes in Brighton, Flemington and Prahran. The homes will include 619 for low-income people, 126 affordable homes, 365 market rental homes and 52 homes for people with disabilities. The homes will replace 445 outdated dwellings for low-income people. The houses are expected to be completed by early 2024;
- \$193 million for programs to prevent homelessness;
- \$78 million for courts that specialise in dealing with cases of family violence;
- \$33.1 million for initiatives to prevent First People deaths in custody;
- \$44.1 million to support children affected by family violence and sexual assault;
- \$33.3 million to improve screening checks of people who work with people with disabilities to reduce the risks of abuse and mistreatment; and
- \$10 million for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. •

# VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT IMPROVES REGULATION OF DISABILITY SERVICE WORKERS

**In response to the horrific testimony of many people with disabilities of cases of abuse and neglect, we requested that you write letters to the Victorian Government in August 2018 and April 2019 asking for better safeguards.**

On 11 May 2021, new *Disability Service Safeguards Amendment Regulations* came into force. The regulations give the Victorian Disability Worker Commission greater powers to investigate a person's suitability to work with people who have disabilities. The Commission can issue orders to prohibit a person from working with people with

disabilities if the person is found to have committed a serious criminal offence.

The JIM Cluster provided a submission to the Victorian Government consultation into the regulations.

Thank you to everyone who has taken part in the efforts to end cases of abuse and neglect of people with disabilities. •

# PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE APPROVES REFORMS TO ADDRESS ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

**In June 2020, we requested that you write letters to the Labor Opposition in the Federal Parliament to support the passage of the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (International Production Orders) Bill 2020.**

The Bill will allow Australian police to obtain a timely warrant that can be issued directly to technology corporations to gain access to data stored on servers located overseas. Currently, getting such information can take six to 12 months. The long delay impacts police ability to prevent online child sexual abuse and rescue children from situations of ongoing abuse.

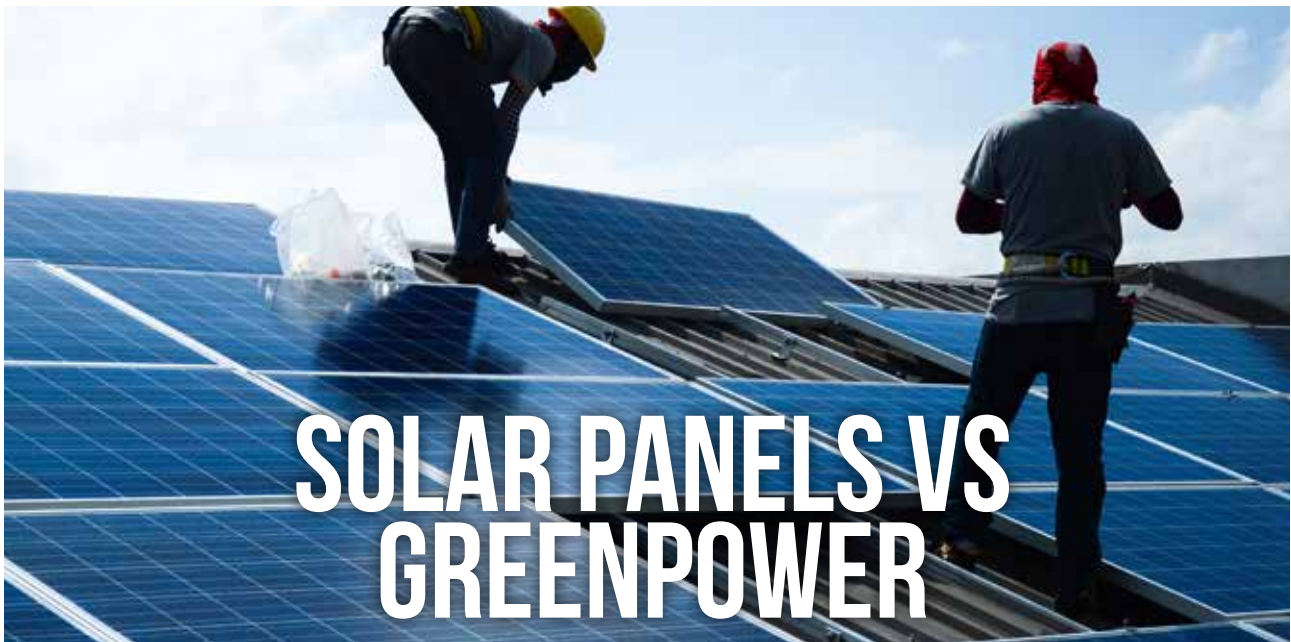
On 12 May 2021, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security issued its report on the Bill. The Committee included members of the Labor Party. The Com-



mittee has recommended the Bill be passed by the Parliament subject to amendments to provide assurances that “the provisions in the Bill are necessary, proportionate and subject to appropriate oversight.” The amendments would ensure that any information provided to foreign police forces from data stored in Australia cannot be used in death penalty cases.

The Committee approved the need to allow police to have a process to urgently obtain the information where “an imminent risk of serious harm to a person or substantial damage to property exists.”

Thanks to everyone who wrote to Labor in support of the Bill's role in addressing online child sexual abuse. •



# SOLAR PANELS VS GREENPOWER

**For those people wishing to reduce their contributions to greenhouse gas emissions related to their use of electricity, there are several options.**

The following article compares the pros and cons of installing rooftop solar panels or purchasing GreenPower. Of course, you can also reduce your emissions by using more energy-efficient appliances and other energy efficiency measures.

There is also the option of purchasing offsets. Offsetting emissions is a simple concept; you compensate for the greenhouse gas emissions you have produced by paying for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions somewhere else. Powershop is one worthwhile organisation that helps households and business offset carbon dioxide emissions.

The national power grid is the largest contributor to Australia's domestic greenhouse gas emissions. Households use a sizable chunk of it.

Living in this sun-drenched land we call home, most people are familiar with how solar panels work. Solar photovoltaic cells, also known as solar PV, converts sunlight into electricity for direct use in the home, saving money over time. Currently, the economics of installing solar

panels can be impacted by the feed-in tariff paid on any electricity fed back into the grid from the solar panels. Some homes are not allowed to feed electricity into the grid at this time. Therefore, it is important to check if electricity will be allowed to be fed into the grid before installing solar panels.

There are 140,000 households currently purchasing GreenPower accredited Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs). GreenPower is a lesser-known option for households with the potential for a much greater collective impact on Australia's net energy emissions. Because of these potential large scale benefits, this article will be focusing on the GreenPower scheme and comparing it to the typically individualistic benefits of installing solar panels on the family home.

## WHAT IS GREENPOWER

GreenPower is a national, government-certified way to support the uptake of up to 100% RECs in Australian households and business through energy retailers. GreenPower is delivered as an additional charge on a household's electricity bill. GreenPower has been around since 1997 and has offset 16.5 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions through electricity generated by renewable sources since 2005.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW DOES IT WORK

GreenPower is a government scheme that independently audits electricity providers to ensure the amount of renewable energy they are guaranteeing is fed into the national power grid on the customers' behalf. The GreenPower includes all renewable energies fed into the grid, including solar, wind and hydro.

## DO I NEED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GREENPOWER AND SOLAR?

No. If you can afford it, you could do both. Solar is here to stay. However, while solar and GreenPower are equally viable, as shown in the table (over page), it's through government RECs schemes like GreenPower where there's greater potential to make system-wide reform. This is achieved by increasing the demand for renewable energy to be fed directly into the national power grid for the benefit of everyone.

RECs also create additional value in the energy market. While Australia does not have a carbon trading scheme, RECs are a tradable commodity representing energy generated from clean sources. GreenPower creates two revenue streams in the power grid, RECs and electricity from non-renewable sources. When you purchase clean energy

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.greenpower.gov.au/our-impact>



GREENPOWER	VERSUS <sup>1</sup>	SOLAR
Supports the generation of renewable energy through a certificate market, displacing fossil fuel generation for up to 100% of your energy consumption.	<b>Environmental benefits</b>	Depending on the size of the system, it can generate enough energy to offset fossil fuel generation, whether you consume it yourself or send it into the grid. It also helps to displace fossil fuel generation from the grid.
Indirect renewable energy source - Certificates used as renewable energy 'currency'; You are not purchasing green energy directly from a renewable source since electricity is coming from the national grid pools, both renewable and non-renewable together.	<b>Direct source of renewable energy</b>	Direct renewable energy source - Solar energy generates power in real-time on your rooftop when the sun is shining. Efficiency is increased using batteries to store additional power generated during the day. However, installing batteries to store the energy generated by the solar panels adds to the cost of the system.
You pay what you can afford and don't need to be a homeowner. Net cost – paying a premium on your electricity bill to meet a portion of your energy needs with renewables. However, some people will not be able to afford the additional cost of GreenPower.	<b>Cost and affordability</b>	The initial investment required, but net savings over the medium to long-term (with usual payback periods under five years). The time it takes for the system to pay for itself is dependent on the size of the system, how much energy it generates compared to usage and the feed-in tariff paid for feeding electricity into the grid. Installing solar panels may not be a wise financial decision for people who are renting.
GreenPower commitment can usually be cancelled, increased or reduced at any time. However, the electricity retailers may not remind people they can cancel the GreenPower arrangement if they have trouble paying their bills.	<b>Ongoing commitment</b>	A solar system will continue to function for 25+ years. The system owner is usually responsible for occasional and routine maintenance (and associated costs)
The main advantage of GreenPower is that it results in an expansion of renewable energy sources that benefit the whole of the community.	<b>Community benefits</b>	Rooftop solar does help reduce fossil fuel generation in the grid. However, the financial benefits of installing solar panels largely flow to the households that do so. That said, a June 2020 research paper by the Victorian Energy Policy Centre and Victoria University found that rooftop solar installed in Victoria had driven down the wholesale price of electricity for everyone. They found that collectively Victorian households paid \$217 million less for electricity in 2019 due to the installation of rooftop solar panels.

through GreenPower's RECs, you increase the amount of that type of electricity needed in the grid, creating demand and adding value in the market for renewable electricity.

Choosing between GreenPower or solar will ultimately come down to the personal circumstances of the energy user. For someone who doesn't own their own home but is

still energy conscious and can afford to pay a little more on their electricity bill, GreenPower might be the only option. If you want to guarantee 100% of your energy use is directly from a renewable source, a large enough rooftop solar system with battery backup is the way to go.

Also, people in remote rural locations often are wiser to install solar

panels, as it is more energy efficient to generate the electricity on-site than taking electricity from the grid with significant transmission losses.

When considering the larger picture, GreenPower allows for more large scale renewable power to be added to the national power grid for the benefit of everyone. •

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.solarchoice.net.au/blog/greenpower-or-rooftop-solar>

# 'IN DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY'

## BY ROSLYN FULLER

REVIEW BY MARK ZIRNSAK

**Roslyn Fuller is a Canadian-Irish author, columnist and Director of the Solonian Democracy Institute. Her 2019 book, *In Defence of Democracy*, is a passionate defence of all people being able to have a say in government.**

She argues that democracy is under attack by both those on the political left and right. Both sides are unhappy that the general population are not voting to obtain the outcomes they want. Those on the political right are frustrated that people in Western democracies do not fully embrace free trade, privatisation, eradication of trade unions and the marketisation of everything. Those on the political left argue democracy is failing due to the election of populists like Donald Trump and for outcomes like Brexit. However, as Fuller points out, Donald Trump only got elected because the US electoral system does not equally count each person's vote. If it did, Hilary Clinton would have won the US Presidential election as she received more votes than Mr Trump by a large margin.

Fuller examines the proposals being put forward to replace democracy. There is the billionaire who argues that only people with a certain level of education should be allowed to vote. He has also argued that people should have to pay US\$2,000 to be allowed to vote.

Other right-wing lobbyists have argued that only people who pass a test to demonstrate their knowl-

edge of economics should be allowed to vote.

Another right-wing argument has been to shrink the size and authority of democratically elected governments so that the will of the 'masses' is unable to interfere in the free market.

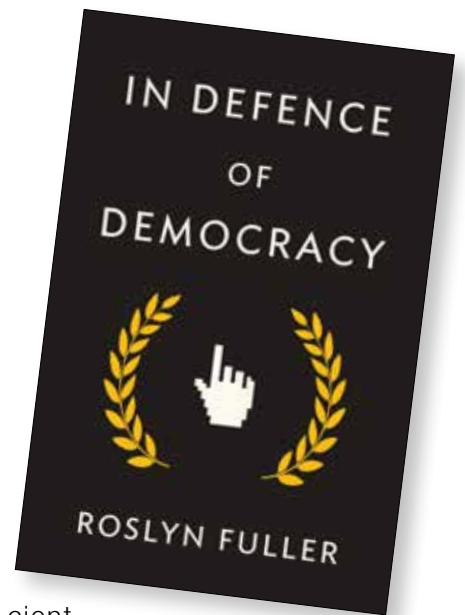
Other right-wing columnists published in mainstream media argue that millionaires buying politicians through political donations creates accountability, as otherwise, the politician would act as they see fit.

Professor Daniel Bell argues that political power should be distributed according to ability and virtue.

While many of these ideas do not currently have much traction in our political system, we should be concerned about when wealthy vested interests get their way through government processes that have excluded the majority from a meaningful say.

On the political left are those that believe in sortition, who wish to abolish elections altogether and select MPs by random lottery. As Fuller points out, this means the vast majority of people would get no say in government at all. It would also invite corruption on a massive scale. Those selected by the lottery would not have to worry about having to stand for election and would have a solid incentive to enrich themselves for the fixed period they were in office.

People who advocate for sortition use ancient Athens as their source. Fuller explores the political system in ancient Athens in detail. She points out that the population of an-



cient

Athens was only in the tens of thousands, and their system pretty much allowed any men who were not slaves to participate. So at any time, 15-45% of the eligible male population would participate in the Athenian governing bodies. What modern supporters of sortition propose would see much less than 1% of the people participating in the political structures.

However, Fuller argues that the current systems of representative democracy do need to be reformed. Her solutions are to allow people more participation in government, not less. She particularly argues that online platforms would allow much larger numbers of people to have their say in making government decisions.

She also argues that people should be paid to cast their vote in countries where voting is voluntary. Her argument is that marginalised and economically struggling people find it hard to make the time to vote. If a small amount of money would allow them to pay for child care or pay travel costs so they could participate in democratic processes, that is a desirable outcome.

She argues that in a system where more people can participate in their democracy meaningfully and more often, political parties are no longer necessary.

I found Fuller's critique of the people she disagreed with at times very

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disrespectful. If a reader can look past that tone, the book is worth reading to think about democracy and how it could be improved.

A failing in the book is that Fuller appears to exhibit an almost absolute faith in the will of the people. She never grapples with the question of what happens when the majority of people support terrible human rights abuses or environmental destruction.

People in our society often think that the rise to power of the Nazis

in Germany illustrates the problem. That is untrue, as the Nazis only obtained a maximum vote of 37% of the population in the July 1932 election. In the November 1932 national election, their vote fell to 33%, and subsequent local elections showed a further decline. Hitler was forced to manipulate the seizure of power and the imposition of dictatorship.

However, the current rule of President Duterte in the Philippines illustrates the problem of when the popular will can support terrible human rights abuses. He has made public revelations of having extra-judicially

executed people himself. He has actively and publicly encouraged a campaign of mass extrajudicial executions by police, soldiers and their agents. Despite that, his approval ratings amongst Filipinos have remained as high as 80%.

The JIM Cluster will continue to offer you resources and material to explore how our Christian faith should interact with our thinking about systems of government. This year's Convention towards the end of the year will pick up the theme of our trust in each other and democracy from a faith perspective. •

## JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL MISSION CLUSTER PRIORITIES

**With the reduction in staff in the Justice and International Mission (JIM) Cluster from three to two, the Cluster has reviewed its work.**

It has decided to prioritise its work by considering three key factors:

- What work is of most interest to yourselves as our supporters in being active to act for change;
- What are the issues where there is the greatest likelihood that our efforts will lead to meaningful change; and
- Where do congregations have direct lived experience of issues.

Based on these considerations, the highest priority issues for the

Cluster will be:

- climate justice;
- people seeking asylum and refugees;
- justice for First Peoples;
- ending human trafficking and modern slavery; and
- ending the extrajudicial killings in the Philippines.

Issues of secondary priority will be:

- curbing family violence;
- faith in democracy and levels of trust in society;
- reducing poverty overseas;
- gambling reform;
- alcohol reform; and
- tax reform.

There will be minimal work in the areas of:

- Fair Trade;
- Just Peace between Israel and Palestine; and
- protecting children in employment.

Work on racism and poverty in Australia will be embedded in the work in other areas.

We will not pick up work on equity in education funding. We will not do further work on the privatisation of public services.

We have closed down the End Christian Persecution Network, a dedicated network of letter-writers who wrote letters on cases of Christian social justice activists facing persecution overseas. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this Network. •



# HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT IN THE PHILIPPINES

**Through the JIM Cluster, the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania provides \$15,000 a year to the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) to fund human rights activities.**

Members of the UCCP involved in human rights advocacy and social justice mission work continue to be targeted for murder and harassment by police, the army and those

associated with them.

So far, 35 church representatives from across the UCCP were provided with human rights training through the project. A further 55 were part of a forum to address the new Philippines Anti-Terror Act that is being misused to target those involved in social justice or human rights work. A forum on sowing a just peace was attended by 92 church people.

The project has also provided a

haven for seven farmers who have been targeted for human rights abuses by Filipino security forces. It has also provided legal assistance to UCCP ministers targeted for harassment by the security forces because of their involvement in the church's social justice mission.

Any congregation or individual interested in providing additional support to the project can contact the JIM Cluster at [JIM@victas.uca.org.au](mailto:JIM@victas.uca.org.au).

## FEDERAL PARLIAMENT PASSED LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING LAWS

**In March 2016, July 2017 and October 2019, we requested you write letters to the Commonwealth Government seeking reforms to address Australia being used as a haven for funds stolen from developing countries.**

When large amounts of stolen funds are transferred out of developing countries, it often impacts the services people in those countries will get, such as hospitals and schools.

Earlier this year, there was good

news when the Federal Parliament passed legislation to reform Australia's anti-money laundering laws. The *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Economic Disruption) Act 2021* will:

- Make it harder for people laundering significant proceeds of crime to escape penalties that are proportionate to the offence;
- Make it easier to prosecute the people at the top of the money-laundering operation;
- Improve the ability for police to use undercover operations to address money laundering;
- Allow Australian courts to freeze proceeds of crime located over-

seas; and

- Improve the ability of police to gather information about the proceeds of crime.

The JIM Cluster made a submission to the Parliamentary Committee that conducted an inquiry into the Bill. The submission was referenced in the final report of the Committee.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of the campaign to ensure that Australia is not a haven for funds stolen from developing countries. There is more to be done, but we can celebrate the above reforms as a step forward.