

JUST ACT

ACT WITH JUSTICE IN MIND

News & resources from the Justice and International Mission Cluster

APRIL 2023



PATHWAY TO PERMANENCY

There was good news on 13 February 2023, with the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Andrew Giles, announcing that refugees on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs) would be given a pathway to a permanent visa.

We had requested in June 2021 and October 2022 that you write letters to the Commonwealth Government asking for the outcome. Thank you to everyone who wrote letters in response to the requests.

People who are refugees have been stuck on TPVs and SHEVs for up to ten years, leaving them uncertain about their future. Without a permanent visa, these people have been separated from family overseas and unable to get loans to buy a home, build a business or pursue further education.

The temporary protection policy was introduced by the Tony Abbott Government in 2014. It applied to anyone who had arrived by boat to seek protection in Australia before 19

July 2013 and had not been given refugee status before the change in government in September 2013.

The Commonwealth Government has committed \$9.4 million over two years to assist people on TPVs and SHVs to apply for a permanent visa. Once they have a permanent visa, they can finally apply to bring their families out to Australia.

As of December 2022, there were 19,693 people on TPVs or SHEVs.

The announcement does not provide a pathway for approximately 12,000 people who had their claims for protection rejected under the 'fast-track' processing system set up by the Abbott Government. It is likely that some of these people would have legitimate claims for protection but were rejected due to the unfair nature of the 'fast-track' process. In February 2023, we requested that you write letters to the Commonwealth Government seeking the abolition of the 'fast-track' system and allowing those to which it had applied to be allowed to reapply for protection. Please use that action to write letters if you did not get a chance to do so: visit <https://justact.org.au/people-seeking-asylum/letter-writing/> •

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT LIFTS THE STANDARDS OF HOUSING FOR SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

We have invited you to be part of efforts to get governments to improve the standards for overseas workers who work on Australian farms.

There was good news on 15 February 2023, with new standards coming into force for the accommodation used by labour-hire companies. Under the new requirements, labour-hire businesses in Victoria must register

any accommodation they arrange for workers with the local council. Further, the accommodation must have a toilet, bath or shower and wash basin for every ten workers. There are limits on the number of people that can be placed in a bedroom, and the labour-hire business must keep a register of the occupants in the accommodation.

Poor quality accommodation and overcrowding in accommodation organised by labour-hire businesses

have been significant issues. The changes were in response to recommendations in the *Final Report of the Victorian Inquiry into Labour Hire and Insecure Work 2016*, which found substandard and exploitative accommodation arrangements organised by labour-hire businesses.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the campaign for better treatment and conditions for people coming from overseas to work on Australian farms. •

SUPPORT FOR THE CAMPAIGN TO ADDRESS GIG ECONOMY EXPLOITATION IS STILL NEEDED

In August 2022, we requested you write letters to the Commonwealth Government urging that they introduce reforms to address exploitation by on-demand gig economy corporations like Uber.

In October 2022, we issued a postcard action. If you have not had a chance to write letters or send off a postcard, please do so. Efforts calling for the reforms are still needed. Visit: <https://justact.org.au/flourishing-communities/letter-writing/>

There has been some progress in other countries. In January 2023, French unions and professional associations representing drivers reached a collective bargain with Uber to see a 27% increase in the minimum pay a ride-share driver will get. Drivers are now guaranteed \$12 per trip they undertake.

Further, a court in the French city of Lyon ordered Uber to pay \$31.2 million in compensation to drivers working for them in the city. The contracts of 139 drivers were required to be amended to identify them as employees of Uber rather than independent contractors. Uber

stated that it planned to appeal the court ruling.

On 10 January 2023, approximately 500 Uber and Bolt drivers went on strike for a day in Sweden. The strike was organised by a newly formed taxi union. The union is seeking an increase in the pay for drivers and for Uber and Bolt to reduce their cut per trip from 25% of what the driver gets paid to 15%. The union has stated that to earn enough to support a family, Uber and Bolt drivers need to work 10 to 13 hours a day, six to seven days a week. •

FROM THE JUSTICE & INTERNATIONAL MISSION CLUSTER

Mark Zimsak – Senior Social Justice Advocate
Tim Molineux – Social Justice Officer

Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
Centre for Theology and Ministry
29 College Crescent
Parkville, Victoria 3052

Phone - (03) 9340 8807

jim@victas.uca.org.au
<http://www.justact.org.au>

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

If you would like to subscribe (or unsubscribe) to either this hardcopy mailing (bi-monthly) or email update (weekly), contact the JIM Cluster.

ONGOING IMPROVEMENT IN ACCESS TO HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

In October 2022, we requested you write letters to the Commonwealth Government urging them to speed up the time taken to find suitable accommodation for people with disability when they are ready to be discharged from hospital.

On average, it took five months (160 days) for such accommodation

to be found, meaning people with disabilities were forced to take up hospital beds when they did not need to. However, there has been good news with the latest data showing the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is now placing people with disability into accommodation within a month (36 days) on average of the person being ready to be discharged from hospital.

The faster processing of people

with disability being discharged from hospitals to suitable accommodation is estimated to have saved the health system between \$205 million and \$548.8 million to be spent on patients that need medical care. A person occupying a hospital bed when they are well costs between \$1,100 and \$3,000 daily.

Thank you to everyone who wrote letters to the Commonwealth Government in response to the action we sent you. •

ENFORCING ILLEGAL LOGGING LAWS

In August 2022, we requested that you write to the Commonwealth Government to urge the strengthening of the *Illegal Logging Prohibition Act* and its regulation.

The law forbids the importation and processing of timber and wood products that have been sourced illegally. It also requires timber and wood product importers and processors to have systems in place to detect illegally sourced products.

Illegal logging is usually built on corruption and contributes to climate change and the destruction of habitats for wildlife. It is often associated with tax evasion and money laundering. People who oppose illegal logging, including law enforcement agents, have been murdered.

There has been good news since you wrote, with the Commonwealth Government announcing \$4.4 million to be spent over two years on testing timber and wood products coming into Australia to ensure they

have been legally sourced.

There was further positive news on 3 March 2023, with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry announcing it had fined 14 furniture importers over \$186,000 for failing to make reasonable efforts to ensure they are not importing illegally sourced products.

Thank you to everyone who has taken action to support strengthening Australia's laws to curb illegal logging. •

INCREASED FUNDING TO ADDRESS FAMILY, DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

In April 2021, we requested that you write letters to the Commonwealth Government urging they implement reforms to address family, domestic and sexual violence.

Thank you to everyone who wrote

letters.

There was good news on 3 March 2023, with the Commonwealth Government announcing an additional \$16 million to address family, domestic and sexual violence. More than \$10 million will be spent over four years on the National Perpetrator Intervention and Referral Services program. The

program provides counselling and training to help perpetrators change their abusive and violent behaviour.

There will also be \$6.4 million to train medical professionals and frontline workers to better recognise and respond to survivors of sexual violence. •

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT EXPANDS SANCTIONS AGAINST THE MILITARY JUNTA IN MYANMAR



In the October 2022 JustAct, we requested that you write letters to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Penny Wong, seeking that the Australian Government expand sanctions against the military junta in Myanmar.

On 25 January 2023, Minister Wong added 16 members of the Myanmar military regime's State Administration Council (SAC) to

those on the Australian sanctions list. The sanctions restrict those listed from travelling to Australia or having business dealings with people in Australia.

Two military-controlled entities, Myanmar Economic Public Holdings Ltd and Myanmar Economic Corporations, have also been added to the Australian sanctions list. These two corporate entities generate billions of dollars in tax-free revenue for the military through hundreds of businesses they control.

On 1 February 2023, the Canadian Government announced a ban on jet fuel sales to Myanmar. The UK Government also placed sanctions on Asia Sun Trading Company and Cargo Link, which broker jet fuel supply to the junta. Jet fuel has been used by the Myanmar military to mount jet attacks on civilian targets in areas of Myanmar not under their control.

Thank you to everyone who wrote letters in response to the action. •

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT CONTINUES TO INVESTIGATE MASS MURDER IN THE PHILIPPINES

We have invited you to join the campaign we have been running in solidarity with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines to end extrajudicial murders and other human rights abuses in the country. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the campaign.

There was good news at the end of January 2023 when the International Criminal Court (ICC)

announced it had approved the request by the Prosecutor to resume the investigation into the Philippines. The Philippines Administration had tried to have the case dropped by arguing it was now taking steps to address the large number of murders committed by security forces under the previous Administration. However, the ICC stated, "following a careful analysis of the materials provided by the Philippines, the Chamber is not satisfied that the Philippines is undertaking relevant investigations

that would warrant a deferral of the Court's investigations."

The ICC investigation covers the thousands of murders allegedly carried out by police and soldiers in the Philippines between November 2011 and 16 March 2019. The Philippines withdrew from the authority of the ICC starting on 17 March 2019, so murders conducted by the security forces after that date cannot be investigated by the ICC.

The Philippines Administration appealed the decision of the ICC on 3 February 2023. •

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT PRESSURING ONLINE CORPORATIONS TO DO MORE TO PROTECT CHILDREN



We have run a long campaign in support of measures to make the online world safer.

Thank you to all of you that have taken part in the campaign with letters, postcards and visits to your local MP.

In February 2023, we issued a postcard to the Commonwealth Government asking for further reforms to protect children in the online world.

There was good news on 23 February, with the Commonwealth Government eSafety Commissioner issuing notices to Google (which owns YouTube), Twitter, TikTok, Twitch and Discord for them to demonstrate they are complying with the Government's Basic Online Safety Expectations concerning protection against online child sexual exploitation and abuse. The corporations had 35 days to reply or face fines of up to \$687,500 for every day they are late in replying.

The eSafety Commissioner also asked questions about the following:

- the resources they were allocating to safety on their platforms; and,
- the role their algorithms might play in amplifying harmful content.

The eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant, said:

The creation, dissemination and viewing of online child sexual abuse inflicts incalculable trauma and ruins lives. It is also illegal. It is vital that tech companies take all the steps they reasonably can to remove this material from their platforms and services.

What we discovered from our first round of notices sent last August to companies, including Apple and Microsoft, is that many are not taking relatively simple steps to protect children and are failing to use widely available technology, like PhotoDNA, to detect and remove this material.

Back in November, Twitter boss Elon Musk tweeted that addressing child exploitation was 'Priority #1'; but we have not seen detail on how Twitter is delivering on that commitment.

We've also seen extensive job cuts to key trust and safety personnel across the company – the very people whose job it is to protect children – and we want to

know how Twitter will tackle this problem going forward.

The eSafety Commissioner has conducted more than 76,000 investigations into online child sexual abuse material since 2017.

Twitter has no staff in Australia who can respond to reports of child sexual abuse material on their platform after they sacked the last of their Australian employees in early 2023.

Apple does not scan iCloud for child sexual abuse material stored by its users.

In addition, Communications Minister Michelle Rowland has written to Twitter asking how it would deal with "hateful content" on its service in the lead-up to the referendum on a First Nations Voice to Parliament. The Minister noted that "First Nations Australians already experience disproportionately high levels of abuse online."

Thank you to everyone who sent off postcards from the February 2023 mailing. If you have not yet done so, it is not too late. Contact the JIM Cluster at JIM@victas.uca.org.au if you need more cards to be sent to you for your faith community, family or friends to sign. •



Photo: Shutterstock

COMPLAINTS OF VICTORIA POLICE MISCONDUCT ON THE RISE

In April 2019, we issued a postcard action calling for establishing an independent Ombudsman to investigate allegations of misconduct by Victoria Police officers.

In April 2022, we followed that up with a letter-writing action requesting you write to the Victorian Government asking them to model the Ombudsman on the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, there continues to be complaints of police misconduct towards First Nations people in Victoria. Where police misconduct is not correctly addressed, it undermines community confidence in the police generally and even in the law.

In March 2023, there was disturbing news that complaints of police misconduct were increasing.

The Victorian Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) reported that 68% of all complaints received in 2022 related to alleged police misconduct. There had been a 14% increase in complaints against the police. Complaints against police are being made at approximately four a day. However, IBAC only has the resources to investigate around 2% of complaints brought against the police. The rest of the complaints are referred back to Victoria Police for them to investigate themselves.

The former head of IBAC, Robert Redlich, told the media that to properly investigate allegations of misconduct by police IBAC would need hundreds of investigators.

IBAC has made 90 recommendations regarding strengthening police policies and procedures in how they conduct investigations.

Victoria Police has been required to pay \$42 million in civil settlements and legal costs over the last five years in cases of alleged police misconduct. The payments include a 2021-2022 financial year settlement for \$11.75 million to a man paralysed from the neck down after officers allegedly handcuffed him, put him in a headlock and forced him onto the ground. The settlements include cases of unlawful searches, illegal arrests, false imprisonment, assault and harassment.

If you did not get the chance to write a letter back in April 2022, it is not too late to do so. The action can be downloaded from <https://justaction.org.au/flourishing-communities/letter-writing/>. Please note that the Hon Anthony Carabine MP is now the Victorian Minister for Police. •

SUPPORTER PROFILE

CLAIRE HARVEY

COPOWER SYNOD REPRESENTATIVE

My engagement with the issue of climate change all started in Year 8 geography class, when I learned about ‘global warming’, as it was known back in the late 1980s.

Concern regarding our planet's future, and therefore our own future as interdependent human beings, fuelled a degree of existential angst that would, in time, catalyse greater interest in the Christian faith and the need to somehow find both meaning in life and deep hope. After growing frustration at the general inaction on climate change, within evangelical church circles, in 2014, I co-authored *A Climate of Hope: Church and Mission in a Warming World* with Anglican meteorologist Dr Mick Pope. A few years later, I ended up back in the Uniting Church, largely due to the obvious commitment toward creation care as central to discipleship.

In the past decade, I've worked hard to establish a sustainable cohousing community and have also found myself on the local Council in Frankston. I've completed the



Company Directors course with the Australian Institute of Company Directors and am also now the Vice-Chair of the South East Councils Climate Change Alliance. Having studied Commerce, I've always been curious about alternatives to neoliberal capitalist forms of economic organising, especially those that provide more equitable and just outcomes. I believe that Cooperatives have an increasingly important role to play within society as we grapple with how best to respond to some rather wicked environmental and social problems.

Being able to represent the Uniting Church Vic/Tas on the CoPower board as the Synod representative presents a unique opportunity for me to draw together my interest and experience in faith-based

organisations, environmental action, cooperatives and social enterprise, as well as good governance. I'm hoping that we'll see a much greater take-up of CoPower by congregants in the years ahead and that, in doing so, we can also continue to demonstrate the relevance of a faith lens to some of the most pressing issues of our day. Recently, a community organiser with a well-known environmental action group asked me more about my involvement with CoPower, saying, "So, how did the Uniting Church get so cool?" He expressed that despite not having a religious faith himself, it was evident to him that church communities provide a rare and wonderful opportunity for ongoing learning and deep engagement. I wholeheartedly agree! •

Visit <https://www.cooperativepower.org.au/> to learn more about Co-Power, or contact us at the JIM Cluster (JIM@victas.uca.org.au) if you would like to know more about the Synod's involvement

THE MODERATOR BY CHRIS GRAY

Chris Gray was a content moderator who worked for a Meta contractor in Ireland. His book gives a fascinating and disturbing insight into the world of those that need to deal with harmful and illegal content on social media platforms.

Chris outlines how the experiences of content managers were ignored by the management of the company they worked for and by Facebook (which became Meta). Chris states of content managers:

They get a few weeks training before being thrown into the work. They're very poorly paid and on temporary contracts. The working environment is all about game plans, average handling times and quality scores. Pleasing the auditors and team leaders takes precedence over solving problems and helping people. Too many mistakes, and you're out. Ask too many questions, and you're out. Have

your own opinions, or argue about anything, and you're out.

Worst of all, the work takes a toll. Many moderators are either traumatised or at least partially brainwashed by the toxic rubbish they see all day, every day. Sometimes they're traumatised and brainwashed....

We're not superheroes there to protect the innocent; we're just corporate drones focused on making the numbers.

We were being relentlessly bombarded with images of death and destruction, reading hateful and spiteful comments, adjudicating petty squabbles between small-minded people, seeing cheerful kids with disabilities being electrocuted in the genitals by some maniac with a mosquito zapper, 100 tickets [cases to be assessed] an hour, all day every day. We never had time to process and compartmentalise what we were seeing; we just had to make decisions and move on.

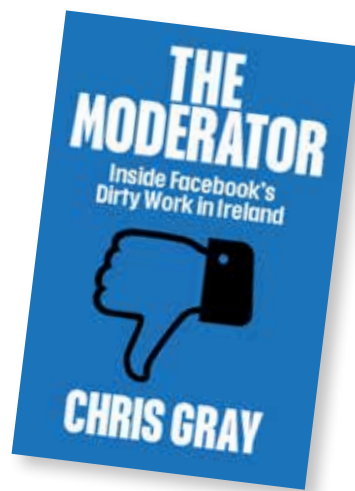
Deleting harmful content needed to be done for the correct reason,

and the level of harm was ranked by Meta. For example, a woman exposing her nipples

was classified as worse than a threat to rape someone.

As a result of the content management work, Chris developed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He was fired from the job due to the effect the PTSD had on his behaviour and has mounted legal action against Meta. Chris states that Meta has publicly lied about providing adequate psychological support to people working as content managers, at least from his experience.

The book highlights why the Uniting Church needs to continue campaigning for reforms to make the online world a safer place. •



UNITING WORLD SUNDAY A CELEBRATION OF OUR GLOBAL NEIGHBOURS



Learn more about how God is working through our overseas church partners and how your church can be a part of it.

SUNDAY, 7 MAY 2023

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