

JUST ACT

ACT WITH JUSTICE IN MIND

News & resources from the Justice and International Mission Cluster

APRIL 2025



AUSTRALIAN EMISSIONS DECLINE AS RENEWABLES INCREASE

We have invited you to take actions urging Australian Governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Thank you to everyone who has written letters, signed and sent postcards and visited their MP on this issue.

At the start of March 2025, there was good news with the release of the Quarterly Update of Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory and the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting data. The reports showed that in 2024, Australia produced more renewable

electricity than ever, with 92,700 GWh of renewable energy going into grids nationwide. The increase in renewable electricity was more than 30% since 2021, with 46% of electricity in the grid renewable in the last quarter of 2024.

Renewable electricity generation capacity across Australia increased from 5.3 GW to 7.5 GW in 2024. A further 4.3 GW of new large-scale renewable electricity capacity has been committed.

Australian greenhouse gas emissions were 0.5% (2.2 million tonnes) lower in September 2024 than in September 2023. Australia's greenhouse gas emissions are

now 29% below 2005 levels, the base year for the Paris Agreement targets. The Australian Government believes we are currently on track for emissions to be 42.6% below 2005 levels by 2030.

The independent Climate Change Authority has released analysis that predicted the Coalition Opposition plan to move away from renewable energy to extend the life of coal-fired power stations, while building nuclear power stations, would lead to Australia being responsible for an additional two billion tonnes of greenhouse gas pollution by 2050. ●



VICTORIAN CORONER CALLS FOR RESTRICTIONS ON ALCOHOL HOME DELIVERIES

In the February 2025 JustAct, we included a postcard action calling on the Victorian Government to end alcohol home deliveries after 10 pm.

Thank you to everyone who has signed and sent the postcard in.

On 11 February 2025, the Victorian Coroner Ingrid Giles called for the prohibition of alcohol home deliveries between 10 am and 10 pm. She also called for the introduction of a two-hour delay in the home delivery of alcohol from the time

the order is placed.

The Coroner's position came following her investigation into the death of Kathleen Arnold, who died on 15 or 16 September 2023. Kathleen died from chronic alcohol consumption. Just before her death she had consumed at least one bottle of wine and half a bottle of vodka. Her mother found her body on the morning of 16 September 2023.

Kathleen had a complex history of

mental health issues and substance misuse from the time she was an early teenager.

On 25 August 2023, Kathleen's mum had found her unconscious on the floor at home and took her to the Austin Hospital Emergency Department. Kathleen had a blood alcohol concentration of 0.474 g/100ml. Kathleen indicated her intention to cease her alcohol consumption and attend Alcohol Anonymous meetings.

During the investigation by the Coroner, Kathleen's mum indicated her daughter's efforts to maintain sobriety had been impacted by easy access to alcohol through alcohol home delivery businesses. Kathleen had been illegally supplied with alcohol by food delivery services outside of the delivery times defined by law. Alcohol was delivered as late as 4 am, when the law restricts such deliveries to 11 pm at the latest.

FROM THE JUSTICE & INTERNATIONAL MISSION CLUSTER

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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.

The amount of alcohol delivered also exceeded the limits set by law. The alcohol regulator, Liquor Control Victoria, found that two restaurants had illegally supplied Kathleen with alcohol in quantities exceeding what they were restricted to, and at times outside of their licensed hours.

In the six months before her death, Kathleen had purchased 98 orders for 319 alcohol products including wine, vodka and cider using home delivery businesses.

Coroner Giles stated that there

was a need for further restrictions on alcohol home delivery businesses, "I believe this is an area where relatively straightforward reform has the potential to significantly reduce the burden of harms associated with alcohol accessed via delivery provider platforms."

Each year, more than 150 deaths involving the acute toxic effects of alcohol are reported to the Coroners Court of Victoria. At least another 100 deaths reported to the Court each year are caused by the chronic effects

of alcohol use. However, these deaths represent only a proportion of all alcohol-related deaths, as most deaths resulting from chronic alcohol use are not reportable to the coroner as they are considered to be due to 'natural causes'.

If you would like more postcards for friends, family or faith community members to sign, please e-mail jim@victas.uca.org.au with the number of cards you would like and what address to send them to. ●



LATEST RESEARCH INTO ONLINE SEXUAL EXTORTION OF AUSTRALIAN TEENAGERS

In October 2024, we invited you to write letters to the Australian Government regarding generative artificial intelligence (AI) and online child sexual abuse.

Generative AI has assisted in driving up cases of sexual extortion of children online.

In February 2025, the Australian Institute of Criminology released a paper on their latest research into the topic. They surveyed 1,953 adolescents

residing in Australia. They found:

- More than one in ten had experienced being sexually extorted;
- One in three of those who had been sexually extorted had been subject to the extortion more than once;
- More than half of those who had been subjected to sexual extortion were aged under 16 at the time;
- Around 40% of those subjected to sexual extortion were targeted using digitally manipulated material,

which could have included AI-generated material;

- Two-thirds of those who were subject to sexual extortion only interacted with the perpetrator online; and,
- Over half the demands from perpetrators were for money and over 40% were demands for sexual images of the adolescent.

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



PROGRESS ON CURBING MULTINATIONAL CORPORATE TAX EVASION AND AVOIDANCE

Thank you to everyone who took action in support of our campaign to see the adoption of measures to curb tax evasion and tax avoidance carried out by multinational corporations.

In February 2025, the OECD released its latest analysis of global implementation of such measures. As of January 2025, 55 governments have enacted or introduced legislation to establish an international minimum tax rate of 15% for large multinational corporations.

In the last decade, 120 governments have introduced laws that require large multinational corporations to provide reports to tax authorities that break down their revenue, profits and taxes paid by country, known as country-by-country reporting. The reports allow for the detection of when business is

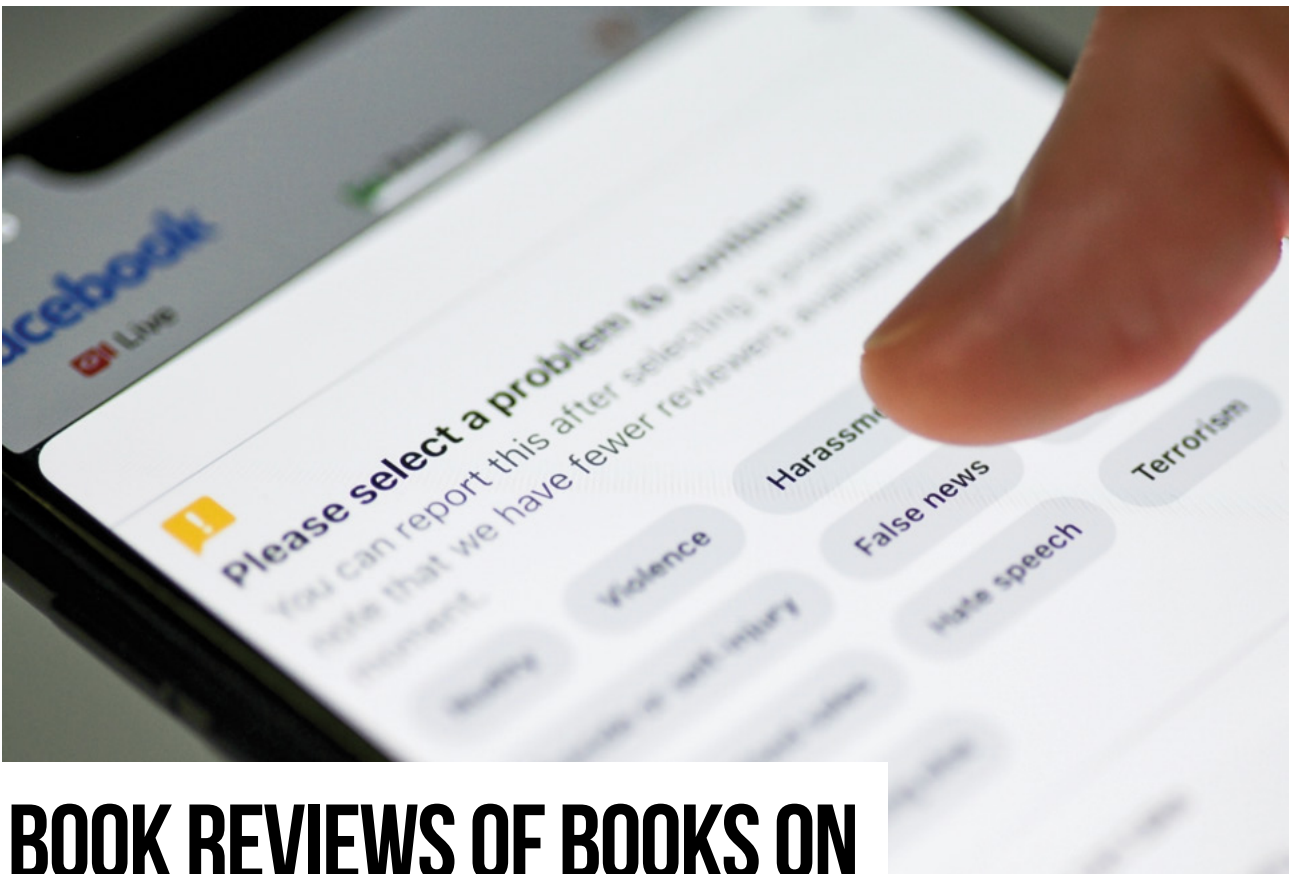
conducted in one country, but the profits are shifted to another country with a lower tax rate to avoid paying tax where it should be paid. The current Australian Government is a world leader, having just passed the most comprehensive law to make country-by-country reporting public.

However, only 11 Global South governments currently receive country-by-country reports, meaning the primary beneficiaries of the country-by-country reporting system remain financially wealthy countries. The tax collection of governments in 36 African governments averages 16% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), compared to 19.3% of GDP for Asian and Pacific countries and 21.5% for Latin American and Caribbean countries. By contrast, wealthy OECD countries collect much higher tax rates at 34% of GDP, allowing them to provide

better services to their people.

The Tax Inspectors Without Borders initiative, run by the UN Development Programme and the OECD, has assisted Global South governments collect an extra \$3.7 billion in taxes, mainly by curbing multinational corporations' tax evasion and avoidance. It has also raised an additional \$9.6 billion in demands for unpaid tax across 88 governments.

In the last ten years, 332 possibly harmful tax laws from 130 countries have been reviewed, with 40% having been abolished or are in the process of being abolished. A harmful tax law is defined as one that allows multinational corporations or wealthy individuals to use the harmful law to avoid paying tax on profits earned in another country where the business is being conducted. ●



BOOK REVIEWS OF BOOKS ON DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION

NAOMI KLEIN “DOPPELGÄNGER – A TRIP INTO THE MIRROR WORLD” AND DAN ARIELY “MISBELIEF – WHAT MAKES RATIONAL PEOPLE BELIEVE IRRATIONAL THINGS”

There is increasing discussion in our community about the impact of disinformation and misinformation on social cohesion and the functioning of our democracy.

‘Disinformation’ is where the sender of the information knows it to be false. Disinformation is often associated with achieving an outcome for the sender, such as skewing an election, financial benefit or social benefit. ‘Misinformation’ is also false information, but the sender believes it to be true.

While many civil society organisations focus on how to regulate the flow of disinformation and misinformation, the

focus of Naomi Klein’s “Doppelgänger” and Dan Ariely’s “Misbelief” is on how we might work towards rebuilding communities that are resistant to disinformation and misinformation.

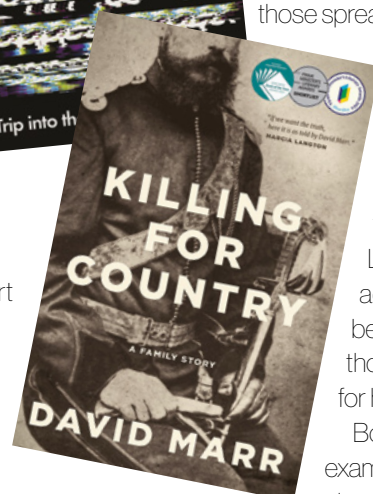
Klein’s book stems from being regularly confused with Naomi Wolf. Wolf started public life as a centrist feminist, her most famous work being “The Beauty Myth”. However, recently she has been part of spreading right-wing conspiracy theories in the US.

Ariely’s book stems from him being targeted online as a member of a COVID-19 conspiracy. He was accused

of being a leader in the Agenda 21 plot with the Illuminati and Bill Gates, to use the vaccines to make women infertile as a way of reducing the world population. Further, vaccine passports were being used by Gates, Ariely and the Illuminati to track the movement of all people. There were calls online for Ariely to be tried and publicly executed. He attempted to engage with those spreading the conspiracy

theories about him to clear his name, which backfired, providing them with more fuel for their theories. Later, he listens to his accusers and even befriends some of those that had called for his execution.

Both Klein and Ariely examine social media’s role on society and our behaviour. Klein argues in



her book that social media encourages people to become their own brand online, making it:

Harder for anyone to know what is real and what and who can be trusted. Which of our opinions are genuine, and which are for show? Which friendships are rooted in love, and which are co-branding collabs?

Ariely argues that as social media platforms promote information that causes outrage:

You don't find large numbers of people on encrypted social media platforms talking about the secret plot to improve the world, fight poverty and illness, and save millions of lives. No, the plots people focus on always involve things like taking away human rights, child abuse, corruption, controlling actions and thoughts, and the enrichment of villains.

Klein argues that misinformation and disinformation have assisted in eroding our trust in each other and our elected governments:

We are now reaping the rotted harvest of decades of deliberately sown mistrust – mistrust of the very idea we are members of communities and societies, mistrust of any expectation that governments can and should do anything positive for us.

Klein urges calm, to resist polarising voices sowing outrage. She argues that while we must remain committed to overcoming social injustices, being calm gives us the space to think and plan clearly and thoughtfully.

Being a behavioural economist, Ariely explores the psychological elements that can make all people susceptible to disinformation and misinformation. For example, being subjected to situations of unpredictable stress can make us more willing to accept false information:

Stressful conditions tax our cognitive bandwidth, reducing our ability to think clearly and exercise executive control. Stress also hurts our ability to make rational long-term decisions that require delayed gratification. Living in a community in which we feel a sense of trust and support acts as a buffer against the detrimental impact of scarcity. However, a higher level of income inequality in our community can fray our sense of social trust.

Ariely argues that religious faith oriented to belief in a benevolent God acts as a safeguarding factor against harmful conspiracies and improves well-being:

It makes clear psychological sense to believe that the world is generally governed by positive forces. Waking up in the morning and believing that

the world is governed by forces that have our best interests in mind is a comforting and helpful thought. When something goes awry, those who believe in God/karma/a loving universe have less of a reason to become stressed, because after all, a positive power is taking care of the larger picture. Indeed, a lot of research has linked higher religiosity with greater well-being.

Both Klein and Ariely argue that we should seek to treat people we know who buy into disinformation and misinformation with respect. That does not mean affirming their mistaken beliefs, rather we should listen respectfully to them and not shun them. Both point out that when people are shunned, they do not vanish. Instead, they end up somewhere else and that other place is likely to be with people who share their conspiracy theories, where those views will be welcomed and affirmed. There is a significant risk they will end up going even further into the beliefs based on misinformation and disinformation.

The JIM Cluster will continue to resource you with actions you can take to support changes to our democratic system that will help rebuild trust in the system and each other. This year, the JIM Convention will focus on rebuilding the common good. ●

BOOK REVIEWS ON BOOKS ABOUT JUSTICE FOR FIRST PEOPLES

THOMAS MAYO "ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE" AND DAVID MARR "KILLING FOR COUNTRY. A FAMILY STORY"

We have continued to resource you to take action in support of the Victorian Treaty process¹ and for justice for First Peoples.

Two recent books on the issue worth reading are Thomas Mayo's "Always

Was, Always Will Be" and David Marr's "Killing for Country".

Thomas Mayo, a First Person, who was publicly active in support of the referendum on the Voice to Parliament, was the target of a vitriolic campaign against him. Far right-wing organisation Advance Australia released a propaganda video claiming that Mayo was a communist agent and the Voice to Parliament was a communist plot. The video was shared with constituents by some MPs opposed to the Voice.

The Australian newspaper also targeted him.

Mayo's book therefore shows a fantastic gracefulness. His book is about hope for justice for First Peoples in the wake of the referendum defeat. He looks at the opportunities to keep building allies and provides advice on the path forward. The book also includes a list of valuable resources. Mayo argues for flooding Australia with truth and hope, building bridges with as many Australians as possible towards

justice for First Peoples.

The book provides a brief history of acts by Australian First People to resist colonial conquest and later seek justice after the conquest was complete.

Mayo refers to WEH Stanner, a non-Indigenous anthropologist, who argued that Australia's sense of its past, its collective memory, had been built on a state of selective forgetfulness that couldn't be "explained by absent-mindedness". Ignorance of First Peoples' existence, humanity and rights had been forgotten by design. He argues that non-Indigenous Australians need to be exposed more to the lives, history and culture of First Peoples.

David Marr's "Killing for Country" is a powerful, but hard read. It covers the colonial conquest of NSW and Queensland. While many of us have read about the massacres of First Peoples during the conquest, they are often little more than statistics. Marr brings the brutal history to life. However, he also documents opposition to the brutality of the conquest from the ranks of the European colonisers.

WARNING: What follows includes a disturbing description of a massacre of First Peoples in 1860.

Marr documents how a small group of men seized land for themselves in pursuit of wealth, often against instructions from London and against the wishes of the Governors of the time. The result was that First Peoples had their food sources disrupted, so they would take sheep or cattle as compensation. Armed conflict would result, with First Peoples being gunned down or poisoned and shepherds being speared. When a shepherd or stockman was murdered, the response would be to send out death squads to carry out massacres of any First People in the area, regardless of if they had anything to do with the murder.

There were strong public objections to the massacres from some of the European colonisers. Except one trial after the massacre at Myall Creek in NSW in 1838, mostly the colonial courts failed to uphold the law and protect First Peoples from being murdered for the

financial benefit of wealthy squatters.

For example, in 1835, Governor Bourke attempted to have shepherd, William Bean, tried for the murder of First Person, Six Toed Jackey. The colonial jury took only a few minutes to acquit the shepherd who worked for a wealthy squatter.

Marr documents the history of the Native Police in Queensland. The force was set up to effectively function as death squads to eradicate First Peoples. Its officers were made up of British colonists and the troopers who carried out most of the mass murder were First Peoples recruited from tribes different to those of the victims. The force operated beyond the law and was never given official instructions in law. A total of 442 white officers and 927 First People troopers made up the ranks of the Native Police in the half century it operated.

As an example of their murderous activities, in February 1860, white officer Lieutenant John O'Connell Bligh led his troopers into the Queensland town of Maryborough to massacre all the First People they could find. Bligh murdered at least two people himself in front of the colonist children, women and men of the town. When an inquest was conducted into the massacre, the colonist population of the town were divided. The publican, George Howard, organised a gathering of 400 colonists in support of Lieutenant Bligh and those present took up a collection to purchase the officer a ceremonial sword. When the sword was presented it drew public criticism from some colonists, with one writing to a local newspaper "I should say a butcher's knife would be a fitter gift." Bligh was never penalised for the murders and in

July 1861 was made the commander of the Native Police.

Marr's history also demonstrates the minimal influence Christianity played in the first hundred years of conquest of Australia. The pursuit of vast profits was the dominant motivating factor for the conquest, with First Peoples exterminated for getting in the way of the profit-making enterprise for the few men that benefited most from the conquest. Marr largely seems to miss this conclusion in his book.

Quaker missionary, James Backhouse (b.1794 – d.1869), makes it clear that the brutality of the colonial conquest was well understood at the time:

It is scarcely to be supposed that in the present day any persons of reflection will be found who will attempt to justify the measures adopted by the British, in taking possession of the territory of this people [the First Peoples], who had committed no offence against our nation; but who, being without strength to repel invaders, had their lands usurped, without any offer of reasonable compensation, and a class of people introduced into their country, amongst which were many, both free and bond, who, regardless of law, and in great

measure exempt from its operation by the remoteness of their situation, practiced appalling cruelties upon this helpless race.

And when any of the latter have retaliated, they have brought upon themselves the vengeance of British strength, by which beyond a doubt, many of the unoffending have been destroyed, along with those who had ventured to return a small measure of these wrongs upon their white oppressors. ●





SUPPORTER PROFILE ALEX ADAM

Editor's Note: This edition's supporter profile is being published posthumously. Alex was able to write this piece in January, before passing in March. The JIM Cluster celebrates his lifelong contribution to Social Justice with its publication.

In 1944, I left the Northcote District High School after completing year 10, and worked in the Bank of Australasia for 10 years. I became assistant to the Deputy Manager, when I felt the call to ministry.

Community has been an important part of my life in church, work and being part of groups that help people work better together. Basically, it is a trust that Jesus through his life and ministry has revealed to the world the nature of God's love and forgiveness for all humanity.

Doveton Experience

Concern about social justice as part of the Christian ministry emerged for me when a combined working together of the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian congregations joined together at Doveton 1965, led by Revs Len Blair, Neil Wilkinson, Deaconess Mary Morgan and myself. The Victorian Housing Commission built houses in Doveton and rented them to the residents.

To assist the community in working together, we produced a monthly newspaper called the Doveton Voice,

delivered free to all the homes. Articles included reports on the monthly Council meetings, and news of local events.

A free, weekly counseling service was available from the Cairn Millar Institute. Vouchers were provided for people in need of food. The all-purpose building of the Methodist Church was turned into a Youth Centre, and the Presbyterian building into a public library. Worship was held at the Anglican Centre. We prayed that this co-operation provided a way of helping people develop a greater sense of community.

'Concerned Australians'

At Nunawading Uniting Church, I belonged to a monthly Combined Churches

Social Justice Group. At one meeting, Michele Harris spoke about justice. She quoted Benjamin Franklin saying, "Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as they who are". Michele spoke of the intervention in First People communities in the Northern Territory of the Howard Government in 2007. She invited people to join her in supporting the First Peoples in the Northern Territory and against the legislation that had a disempowering effect on First Peoples.

Michele Harris produced four books featuring photos of First People and their comments. The first in 2010, "This is What We Said", expressed opposition against the Intervention. The "NT Consultation Report 2011" followed with denial that the Federal Government had consulted with First People communities about the Intervention. The next book in 2012, "A Decision to Discriminate", contained criticisms of the Federal Government setting aside the Racial Discrimination Act to pass the Intervention legislation. The fourth book, "In the Absence of Treaty", showed the significant disadvantage First Peoples suffered without a treaty. We distributed and sold up to 1,000 copies of each book across Australia.

The Group organised for First Peoples to go to the UN. Various forums were

arranged to allow First Peoples to speak, as well as supporters like Justice Alastair Nicholson and former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser.

Michele Harris originally came from England, travelled widely, working with First Peoples, and was awarded an Order of Australia for work among refugees. Unfortunately, she caught a kidney infection while in Bougainville and died in 2015. The concerned Australians group has continued to meet on Zoom since then, and Georgina Gartland and Pia Pagotto ably lead it.

As Michele has written, "Truth and justice are inseparably bound together and essential components leading to possible reconciliation". Australia has a massive problem in understanding and acknowledging the appalling realities of settlement that stripped away from First Peoples all of their rights as human beings. Until this is recognised, how can we as Australians express our genuine remorse or sorrow?

Letter Writing

After moving to Mount Pleasant Uniting Church in 2002, I joined the congregation's Social Justice group. We took up the task of writing letters to politicians, organisations and individuals as suggested by the JustAct bulletin. Congregation members were invited to sign these letters, and when we received any replies, they were sent to the JIM Unit [which became the JIM Cluster in 2019]. This method enabled people to learn about what social justice issues were being discussed. Members would also attend the annual social justice conference run by the JIM Unit.

Love and Justice

Love and justice must be held together, because we can be selective about whom we love or treat unjustly. I believe that the very basis of this is what God is calling us to do through Jesus Christ: to live out our lives as Jesus did in love, forgiveness, compassion, justice, and hospitality, relying on the Spirit to guide and sustain us.

In 2022, I celebrated my sixtieth year of ordination after serving as minister in the parishes of Poowong, Doveton, Lemonville (Canada), Nunawading, Benteleigh and Tullamarine. ●