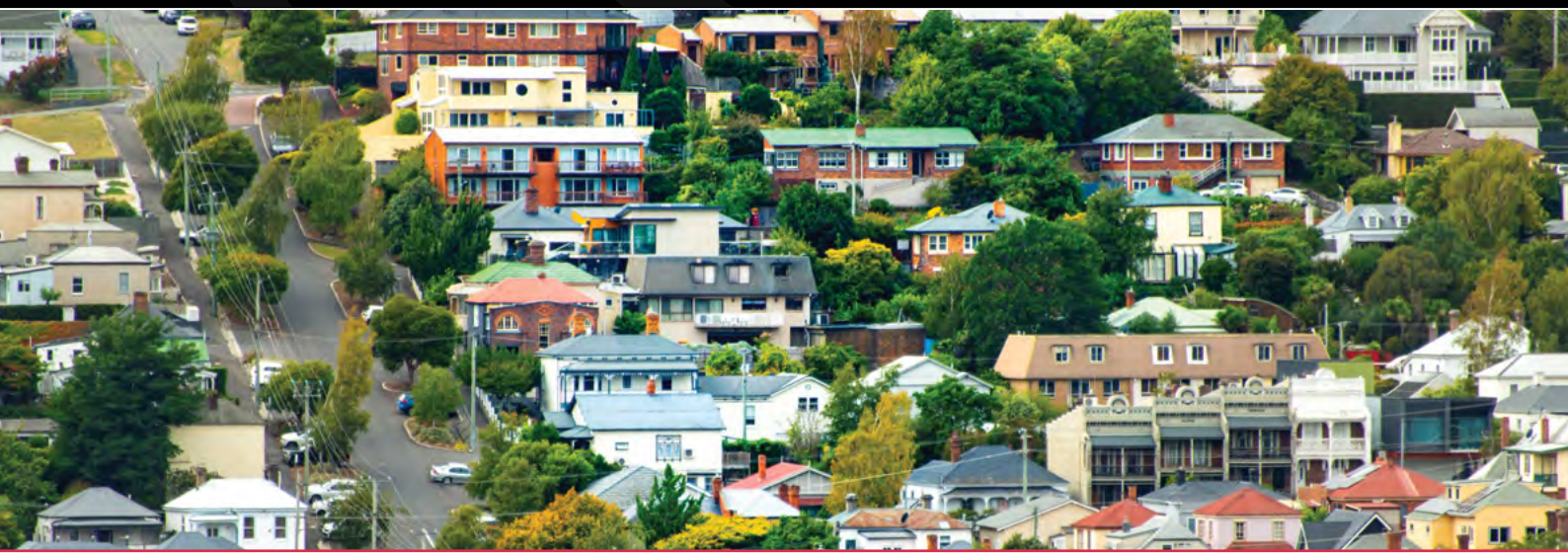
JUSTACT

ACT WITH JUSTICE IN MIND

News & resources from the Justice and International Mission Cluster OCTOBER 2026



POSITIVE NEWS ON HOUSING IN VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

On 4 September, the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments announced $144.4 million to support 237 homes across the state.

The funding will deliver crisis and transitional accommodation and will support up to 6,200 women and children experiencing family and domestic violence and 3,200 young people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

With the redevelopment of the public housing towers in Victoria, at least 5% of the new homes will be fully accessible to people with a disability.

The Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing replied to letters sent to it, saying it is Victoria's largest provider of Specialist Disability Accommodation. They provide homes to more than 2,500 people with disability on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The 2026-2027 Victorian State Budget committed to investing an additional $18.7 million to build 13 new Specialist Disability Accommodation homes. The new homes will allow people with disability to move out of existing group homes.

The Commonwealth Government is providing $308 million to support 448 new homes across Australia to assist 22,000 women and children in need of a home due to family and domestic violence.

On 9 September, the Victorian Government announced $24.8 million to deliver a new plan to address people who are homeless and are sleeping rough.

On 2 September, the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments announced $15.7 million to support 37 new homes across Tasmania for women and children who have been forced from their homes by family and domestic violence.

The JIM Cluster issued actions on the need to provide more housing in Victoria and Tasmania, including for people with disability, children and survivors of family and domestic violence.

Thank you to everyone who has written letters or signed postcards in support of housing reforms.

The JIM Cluster acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are Australia's First Peoples. We specifically acknowledge the Wurundjeri and Bunurong as the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which our office is based. We commit ourselves to continuing the work of reconciliation in this land.



COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT TAKES FURTHER ACTION TO IMPROVE SAFETY IN THE ONLINE WORLD

We have invited you to take actions in support of making the online world safer. Thank you to everyone who has taken action over several years.

On 8 September the Federal Labor Government released draft legislation creating an overarching duty of care for online technology corporations, supported by due diligence obligations, requiring the corporations to prevent foreseeable harms arising from their products and services. The draft law also changes how social media corporations deploy algorithms that feed extreme content to users to keep them hooked. The Government has stated it is clear that these algorithms are contributing to misogyny and sexual violence.

Online games, apps, social media and AI chatbots will be required to protect children aged under 18 from harmful content, including:

- Content that promotes, encourages or accelerates eating disorders;
- Content that promotes hostile ideas about women and gender equality;
- Content that glorifies crime or life-endangering stunts;
- Content that causes serious mental health distress, including abuse and bullying; and,
- Pornography.

The draft law also bans apps and websites that are designed to create fake naked images of real people. Failure to comply with the Duty of Care requirements will be subject to fines of up to $109.2 million. •

FROM THE JUSTICE & INTERNATIONAL MISSION CLUSTER

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

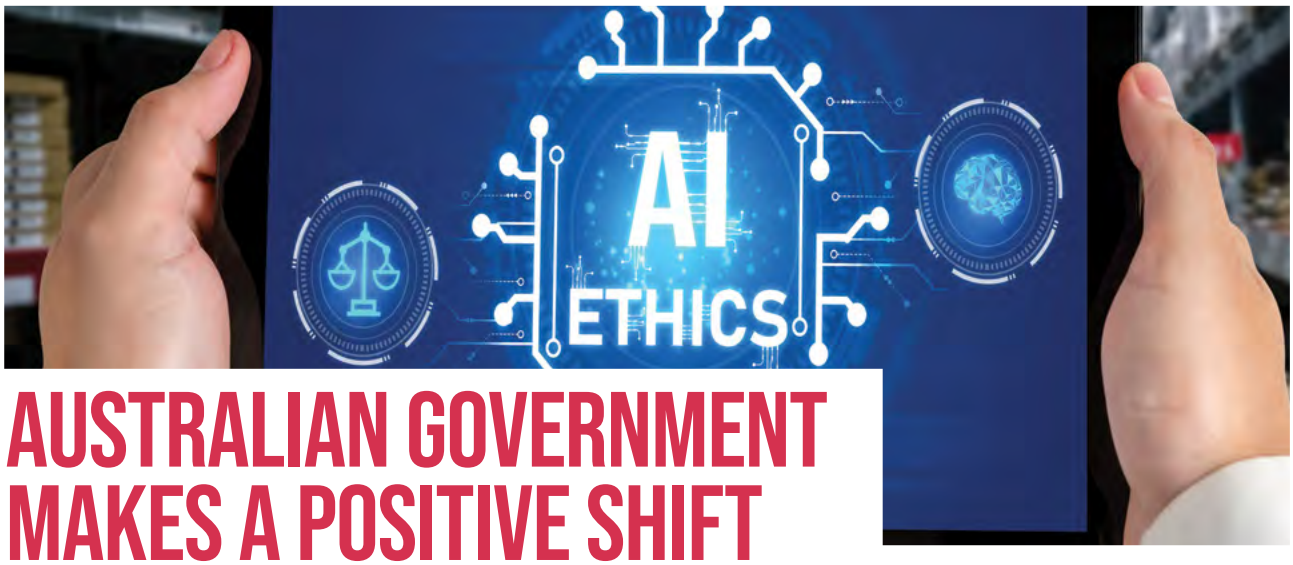
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All of the resources in this mailing can be found on the JIM website.

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



AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT MAKES A POSITIVE SHIFT IN ADDRESSING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

We asked you to write letters to the Commonwealth Government and send postcards calling for stronger regulation of artificial intelligence (AI). In the August JustAct, we also included a letter-writing action on regulating data centres. Thank you to everyone who has taken action.

The Commonwealth Government made a positive announcement on 15 July 2026. The Government shifted from largely asking AI corporations to meet certain expectations voluntarily to promising some regulation.

The Prime Minister promised to work with State and Territory Governments to ensure large data centres are built in the most appropriate locations, and with input from local communities. The new standards will require large data centres to underwrite their own new power supply, pay their full share of connection costs so energy bills are not impacted, and be as water efficient as possible. The required standards will be put into law by early 2027.

The Prime Minister also promised "the strongest possible protection for Australian artists and media" from AI corporations. He stated that "Australian writers, artists and journalists will retain ownership over their work, meaning no corporation should use Australian creative works to train AI without the artist's control".

An assessment of AI risks from 272 international AI experts, published by MIT FutureTech in June 2026, rated 24 risks on harm probability and severity, sector and actor vulnerability, actor responsibility, and overall concern. Experts estimated the five most severe harms in the next five years were likely to come from dangerous capabilities, competitive dynamics, weapons and cyberattacks, power centralisation and false information. In a business-as-usual scenario, experts judged 18 of the 24 risks as having a more than 10% probability of catastrophic outcomes in the next five years. Catastrophic outcomes were defined as more than one million deaths or more than US$100 billion in financial loss. Even with pragmatic mitigations in place, experts still judged five risks as having more than a 10% probability of catastrophic outcomes. Those risks were:

- Dangerous capabilities;
- Weapons and cyberattacks;
- Environmental harm;
- Inequality and unemployment; and,
- Power centralisation.

In early September, AI corporation Anthropic released a report outlining how criminals, state-sponsored groups, spyware vendors, scientists and those seeking to promote propaganda have attempted to use Anthropic's AI models to design missiles and bombs, create deadly pathogens and surveil dissidents. Anthropic detailed five case studies of scientists using its AI models in biological research, where the researchers circumvented the safeguards Anthropic put in place to prevent users from accessing "unsupported regions". The researchers also worked to hide the purpose of their work. Anthropic responded by banning the researchers' accounts. ●



PACIFIC ISLAND WORKERS CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM THE PALM SCHEME

As of April 2026, 33,160 workers were on the PALM Scheme, working for 550 approved employers.

The main industries the workers were employed in were:

- 57% in agriculture;
- 35% in meat processing;
- 4% in health care and social assistance, including aged care; and,
- 2% in accommodation.

The JIM Cluster has issued many actions, both letter-writing and postcards, in support of reforms to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme. The scheme brings people from Pacific Islands and Timor-Leste to work in Australia for up to four years in areas where there is a shortage of Australians to do the work. Our collective actions have greatly improved the safeguards and supports for workers on the scheme. Thank you to everyone who has taken action to improve the scheme.

Most negative media reports about the scheme date back to mistreatment of workers before the recent reforms were implemented.

Recent research found that workers on the PALM Scheme sent over $2 billion home to their families and communities in the Pacific Islands and Timor-Leste between April 2022 and December 2025. The average worker on the scheme is able to send home $1,460 per month to their families and communities.

The Australian Institute was criticised in June by a researcher at the Australian National University for misquoting his work. The researcher's work had found that PALM Scheme workers spend an average of 42% of their post-tax income in Australia. The Australia Institute misquoted the work, claiming the figure was 65% to 78%. The argument is important as it goes to the extent that the scheme benefits families and communities in the Pacific Islands.

The JIM Cluster is part of current consultations with Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on further reforms to the PALM Scheme that aim to:

- Improve compliance with housing standards for workers;
- Ensure that workers who are required to do driving as part of their employment obligations are paid for the time spent driving;
- Include measures to prevent gender-based violence as employer obligations;
- Train those involved in the PALM Scheme to recognise, respond and refer to support services workers experiencing gender-based violence.

On 17 September, the Minister for Home Affairs, Tony Burke, announced the government would cap the number of backpackers who can stay in Australia for a second and third year. The announcement will impact the number of backpackers working on farms. The government expects

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additional people on the PALM Scheme to replace backpackers. The outcome would be good news, as the PALM Scheme has much stronger protections against exploitation than those available to backpackers.

The protections in the PALM Scheme do not mean worker exploitation does not occur. In early September 2026, the Victorian Labour Hire Authority reported that an employer in the Mildura area was found to have confiscated PALM Scheme workers' passports to stop them from leaving the scheme. The employer was told to return the passports, and the matter was referred to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Australian Federal Police.

Outside the PALM Scheme, in early August the Victorian Labour Hire Authority launched action in the Victorian Supreme Court against two men who confined a third man for more than three years and seized his passport. The third man's identity was used, without his knowledge, to open a bank account and register a labour hire business. Four farms in Swan Hill engaged the illegal labour hire business and paid almost $750,000 between them for workers to pick and pack vegetables and fruit over 11 months. Each farm faces fines of up to $660,000 for engaging an illegal labour hire business. People working for some labour hire businesses were allegedly subjected to wage theft and were paid cash-in-hand.

Since being established in 2019, the Victorian Labour Hire Authority has taken more compliance and enforcement action against labour hire businesses in horticulture than in any other industry. The authority has refused more than 248 labour hire licence applications and cancelled over 301 labour hire licences in Victoria's horticulture industry. Close to a quarter of all licence refusals and cancellations for horticulture were linked to businesses in the Sunraysia region.



VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT ALLOWS VOTERS TO DECIDE WHERE THEIR PREFERENCES WILL BE ALLOCATED

In February 2023 and October 2024 we issued letter-writing actions calling on the Victorian Government to scrap the Group Voting Tickets system used to elect members of the Legislative Council (upper house) in the Victorian Parliament.

We followed up with a postcard action in August 2025. Under the current system, political parties have been able to make preference deals so that a person's vote may help elect a Member of Parliament they would not support.

Good news came on 29 July 2026 when the Victorian Parliament passed a law to abolish the group voting ticket. Voters can now indicate their preference when voting above the line in the Legislative Council. Voters will control their preferences, making Victorian elections fairer and more transparent.

Recently, far-right political activists registered parties with progressive-sounding names like "Refugees are Welcome Here" and "Save the Environment" to redirect votes to One Nation.

Thank you to everyone who took action to ask people to decide where their preferences go when voting for the Victorian Legislative Council.



INVESTIGATION ANNOUNCED INTO THE MASSACRE OF PALESTINIAN PARAMEDICS IN GAZA

The JIM Cluster issued a letter-writing action in response to the massacre of 15 Palestinian paramedics and a UN worker in Gaza by members of the Israeli Defence Forces in March 2025.

Thank you to everyone who wrote letters in response, calling for an investigation into the murders and holding those responsible to account.

On 19 August, the Israeli Defence Forces announced it would investigate the massacre along with the murders of five-year-old Hind Rajah and eight other Palestinian civilians in January 2024.

A wounded Hind Rajah had a lengthy call with Palestinian Red Crescent staff and her mother, while trapped in a car with the dead bodies of her relatives. An ambulance with two medics was sent to rescue her. Hind and the medics appear to have been subsequently murdered by members of the Israeli Defence Forces. The car Hind was in had been sprayed with 335 bullets. The incident has been made into a movie, "The Voice of Hind Rajah".

In the case of the massacre of Palestinian paramedics, one officer responsible was reprimanded, and another was removed from his command. The Israeli newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, published on 10 September 2026 an account of an Israeli Defence Force drone operator who witnessed the massacre. His testimony contradicted the Israeli Defence Force official version, which argued the massacre was the result of an identification mistake. He stated that the vehicles that were ambushed were clearly identifiable as emergency vehicles. He stated that the Israeli soldiers "shot at the first vehicle, the medical staff exited, hid behind the ambulances and pleaded for their lives, and the soldiers shot them, one after another."

The drone operator stated, "After this incident, I realised that anyone can kill whoever they want, as much as they want, and they won't be held accountable for it."

He saw that after the massacre, the bodies were buried, and the ambulances were run over by a Caterpillar armoured bulldozer and buried. "For me, something broke there. I felt that I wasn't just witnessing a challenging operational event, but an entire system capable of containing it and moving on as if nothing had happened," he said.

As a result of witnessing the massacre and his participation in the war, he started using drugs, had anxiety attacks, psychosis and developed post-traumatic stress disorder. He resigned from the army a year after witnessing the massacre.

While the announcement of the investigations indicates the Israeli Government is feeling some international pressure to be seen to be acting on the worst war crimes committed by its troops, based on past experience, the JIM Cluster is very doubtful that any members of the Israeli Defence Forces will be subjected to penalties proportionate to the crimes they committed. ●



LATEST POLLING FROM PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

Many people in Australia have formed strong views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without being concerned with the views of the people on the ground from both sides.

Actual polling data paints a more complex picture of the diversity of views of Palestinians and Israeli Jews.

The latest polling data from the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research comes from a poll of 1,270 Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank between 5 and 8 August. Key findings were:

- Support for Hamas continues to decline, falling to 24% compared to 35% ten months earlier;
- Confidence that Hamas can represent all Palestinians has declined from 41% to 28%;
- Only 20% of Palestinians believe that Hamas has won the war in Gaza, while 15% believe Israel won and 60% believe it is a stalemate;
- 72% of Palestinians believe that if Hamas disarms before Israeli forces withdraw from Gaza, it will lead to a renewal of the war;
- Support for the Palestinian party Fatah is at 24%;
- 76% of Palestinians feel unsafe;
- 44% of Palestinians support a two-state solution, and 50% oppose it;
- Support for a single confederated state with Israel is only 14%, and support for a single democratic state with equal rights for Palestinians and Jews has only 10% support;
- 58% of Palestinians believe that a two-state solution is not possible due to illegal Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank;
- 64% of Palestinians see little or no chance of there being an independent Palestinian state emerging in the next five years; and,
- In terms of achieving a Palestinian state, 44% of Palestinians believe the most effective approach is negotiations (up from 36% ten months ago), 27% believe in armed conflict (down from 41%) and 19% support non-violent civil resistance (up from 14%).

In terms of the top priorities for Palestinians:

- 43% want a two-state solution based on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state;
- 28% want a right of return to lands taken by Israel in the Nakba in 1947-1948;
- 15% want to build a religious society based on Islamic teachings; and,
- 11% want a democratic government that respects human rights.

Polling in June 2026 by the Alliance for Middle East Peace (AllMEP), a peace movement made up of over 200 Palestinian and Israeli Jewish peace-building organisations, found that 53% of Israeli Jews would accept a Palestinian state under the right conditions, while 40% opposed a Palestinian state under all conditions. 88% of Israeli Jews who would accept a Palestinian state would be open to doing so if Palestinian armed groups were to disarm, and 82% would want Palestinians to accept the existence of the state of Israel.

The AllMEP polling found that 76% of Israeli Jews want Israeli law used to stop the criminal activities of Jewish settlers in the West Bank and 70% believe that settlers engaged in criminal activities against Palestinians should be subject to long prison sentences. Further on the issue, polling at the end of July by the Israel Democracy Institute found that 80% of Israeli Jews

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believe the violent activities of settlers in the West Bank will lead to a Palestinian uprising in the near future. Their polling found 46% of Israeli Jews believed that violent settlers were being treated too leniently by Israeli law enforcement agencies. Within the polling, there is strong polarisation amongst Israeli Jews. For example, in the AIIMEP polling, 94% of left-wing Jews believe violent settlers should be subject to long prison sentences, compared to only 48% of right-wing Jews.

Polling by the Pew Research Centre released at the start of September painted a picture of how much work needs to be done by those committed to non-violent pathways to persuade Israeli Jews and Palestinians that a peaceful outcome is possible. They found only 17% of Israeli Jews and 21% of Palestinians believe Israel and a Palestinian state could exist together in peace. By contrast, 56% of Israelis and 68% of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem don't think a two-state solution is possible. The figure is worse than for the polling conducted by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research at roughly the same time.



COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT PASSES SOME FURTHER RESTRICTIONS ON GAMBLING ADVERTISING

The JIM Cluster has issued several letter-writing actions and an ongoing postcard campaign calling for a ban on advertising and marketing by online gambling corporations.

The Federal Government resisted the call for a ban on gambling advertising, instead reaching an agreement with the Federal Liberal Party to pass more limited restrictions in August 2026.

As of 1 January 2027, the new law will:

- Restrict gambling advertising on broadcast television and online services to no more than three ads each hour between 5am and 8.30pm, with a complete ban during live sport broadcasts within those hours.
- Ban gambling ads on the radio during school drop-off and pick-up times (8am to 9am and 3pm to 4pm), and restrict advertising during children's programming.
- Ban gambling ads through online platforms, unless people have a logged-in account, are over 18 and have a prominent option to opt out of gambling advertising on the platform and via a Wagering Advertising Opt-out Register. However, research shows that only a minority of people use an opt-out system.

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- Ban the use of celebrities and sports players in gambling ads, along with odds-style ads targeting sports fans and gambling ads in sports venues and on players' and officials' uniforms.
- Extend the blackout period for live sports restrictions to 15 minutes before the game

These wagering advertising reforms are complemented by additional measures to address harmful and risky gambling by:

- Cracking down on harmful and emerging online lottery products, as well as banning online keno "pocket pokies".
- Making match-fixing criminal offences consistent across Australia, improving the integrity of Australian sport and lessening its appeal as a target for criminal infiltration.
- Ban the direct marketing of inducements for 14 days after signing up with a wagering company, if identified as at risk of gambling-related harm.
- Ban commissions to staff or affiliates based on the level of gambling a person carries out.
- Boost enforcement against illegal offshore gambling providers.
- Continue work to strengthen BetStop - the National Self-Exclusion Register.
- Expand financial counselling support for gambling and work to increase public awareness of online gambling harms.

During hearings on the above laws by a Senate Committee, the Committee heard evidence that people being harmed by excessive gambling were offered illegal drugs, sex workers, travel, hotels and thousands of dollars a week in inducements by the gambling corporations to keep them gambling.

Betstop is the government-run program that allows people to self-exclude from all legal online gambling businesses for between three months and a lifetime. In the three years it has been running, 67,000 people have signed up. Of these, 38% have excluded themselves for life. Currently, more than 41,000 have active exclusions through Betstop. The Government has banned direct marketing and inducements from gambling corporations to people who were excluded through Betstop for three months after their exclusion ends.

Thank you to everyone who continues to take action in support of banning gambling advertising. ●



REFORMS TO PENALTIES FOR DODGY TAX ADVISERS PASS THE PARLIAMENT

In August 2025 and August 2026, we asked you to write letters calling for reforms to address dodgy tax advisers, especially in the wake of scandals involving PwC and KPMG

Good news came in early September, with the *Treasury Laws Amendment (Strengthening Accountability for Tax Adviser Misconduct and Other Measures) Bill 2026* passing the Federal Parliament. The new law provides stronger penalties for people who provide tax advice without being registered with the Tax Practitioners Board.

The Tax Practitioners Board can now ban someone from being a tax adviser for up to ten years for misconduct. Previously, the Tax Practitioners Board could only issue a five-year ban.

Mark Zirnsak is a member of the Tax Practitioners Board's stakeholder forum, the regulator that oversees the conduct of tax advisers.

Thank you to everyone who wrote letters supporting reforms to regulate tax advisers. ●



COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES CRACKDOWN ON DODGY MIGRATION AGENTS

In June 2024, we issued a letter-writing action requesting that you write to the Commonwealth Government seeking reforms to regulate migration agents, to stop them exploiting vulnerable people seeking to navigate Australia's visa system.

We followed up with a postcard campaign, issued in August 2026. We have also issued actions on seeking better support for people on temporary visas in Australia who are impacted by family and domestic violence.

The Commonwealth Government made a positive announcement on 17 September that it will crack down on rogue migration agents who knowingly lodge visa applications they know have no merit, and taking fees from people when they know there is no hope of a positive visa outcome. Such migration agents will face penalties, including being deregistered. The Minister pointed out that 80% of asylum applications come from countries where the failure rate is over 85%. By using all available appeal mechanisms, meritless asylum claims allow a person to work in Australia for up to nine years while the appeals are successively rejected. The meritless asylum claims clog up the system for people who have legitimate refugee claims, leaving them in limbo.

Australia has 5,581 registered migration agents.

The Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority placed penalties on 17 migration agents and former migration agents between January and June 2026. Six migration agents had their registration cancelled, seven had their registration suspended, three were issued warnings, and one former agent was barred from applying for registration. The migration agents had submitted misleading visa applications, misused client money and lodged meritless visa applications.

The Minister for Home Affairs, Tony Burke, also promised better protection for survivors of family and domestic violence on temporary visas.

Thank you to everyone who has taken action to call for reforms to regulate migration agents properly. ●



ST STEPHEN'S UNITING CHURCH WODONGA DISCUSSES THE TREATY WITH VICTORIA'S FIRST PEOPLES

The Social Justice Group at St Stephen's Wodonga organised a forum on Sunday 27 September about the Treaty in Victoria.

Jarvis Atkinson, a member of the Yorta Yorta people and an active voice in the Shepparton region, presented on the Victorian Treaty, covering the history of the pathway to Treaty, which officially began in 2016 when First Nations People formally called on the Victorian Government for a Treaty. Since then, the First Peoples' Assembly was elected, followed by a second and now third assembly. In 2025, Australia's first Treaty was passed in the Victorian Parliament and was signed. In 2026, Gellung Warl was established through the Treaty. The Victorian Government now must speak with Gellung Warl when making laws or policies about First Nations people. •

CALL FOR MORE ACTION ON AUTONOMOUS WEAPON SYSTEMS

In the resource for the International Day of Peace, we included a letter-writing action calling on the Australian Government to support international efforts to prohibit the development and use of weapon systems controlled by artificial intelligence.

The UN Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross renewed their call for governments to urgently adopt new international rules on autonomous weapons systems. They expressed that the race to develop autonomous weapon systems was well underway, with scientists and engineers involved in the race raising the alarm.

The documentary "NAZA" features interviews with Israeli soldiers who say AI facilitated the mass murder of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. NAZA is a Hebrew acronym for "collateral damage", meaning the estimated number of civilian deaths that a strike on a military target will cause. One of the documentary's contentions is that the Israeli Defence Force leadership loosened its standards around the acceptable level of civilian deaths in Gaza after 7 October, making it easier to rely on the imperfect targeting data generated by AI systems that contributed to the large number of Palestinian civilian murders.

On 10 September 2026, AI corporation Anthropic released a report finding that its AI models could perform military tasks that only a set of highly trained human experts could otherwise do.

At the same time, experts in the rules of war, known as International Humanitarian Law, have raised concerns that military forces are increasingly adopting a broad interpretation of legal targeting rules that allows them to kill an increasing number of civilians. AI is likely to make the problem worse.

Thank you to everyone who has already written letters calling for a ban on autonomous weapons. If you haven't had a chance, it is not too late to do so. •



TIM MOLINEUX

SOCIAL JUSTICE OFFICER

So that our readers can get to know you, could you please tell us a bit about yourself and your story?

I'm originally from Port Augusta, a town in regional South Australia at the very tip of Spencer Gulf. That's where you'll find the crossroads of Australia, where the desert and the sea meet the Flinders Ranges. One of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had was co-designing and delivering a narrative therapy and community art project for my hometown: Barngarla *Stories of Resilience*[1]. I originally moved to Adelaide for university, and I've been in Melbourne since 2019. What many people might not know is that I also have a background in community radio.

What personal and formative experiences have shaped your sense of social justice?

I've worked for the Uniting Church for over 11 years across two Synods, but I didn't grow up within the Uniting Church. I first butted heads with it after accepting an invitation from the South Australian Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) Resourcing Officer, Ian Dempster, to go on a weeklong Easter trip to Oodnadatta at the edge of the APY lands. The trip's purpose was to support and be in fellowship with the UAICC faith community there, being cared for by Pastor Julia Lennon[2]. On the journey up, at a roadhouse in Coober Pedy, the Synod of South Australia Moderator at the time, Deirdre Palmer, pulled out her phone and showed me the 'Revised Preamble to the Uniting Church Constitution'. It spoke to me in a way that made a lot of things click. In that document, I saw a tangible expression of truth, justice and reconciliation that was intentionally discerned by a Christian community. From that moment on, my curiosity was piqued in the hope of finding belonging within the community that created it.

What social justice issue do you think about most, and why?

Probably because of where I grew up, and being hugely influenced by the UAICC, I think about the relationship between First and Second Peoples a lot. Growing up in and around First Nations communities gave me a challenging perspective of Australia that I've never been able to reconcile. There are worlds out there that exist so far away from each other that they never seem to touch, despite existing exactly at the same place and exactly at the same time. When you have a foot in both worlds, you get caught between the spaces in the middle, and you can meet some pretty interesting people there who are just as frustrated as you, trying to understand how a structurally unjust world is allowed to continue operating exactly the way it was designed to. I know it's possible for things to be different if we choose to stop accepting the world as it is and be brave enough to imagine something different. There's a quote by a Canadian lawyer, Bruce McIvar, that I came across last year that I can't seem to get out of my head: "The past is more than a memory. It can oppress. It can light the way. The choice is ours".

What social justice activities are you and your communities involved in?

A few things occupying my time are ANTaR Victoria, a grassroots NGO that focuses on educating Second Peoples on how to do the work of being supportive allies to First Peoples. *Friends of Standing Together* (FoST Melbourne); another grassroots group supporting Israeli and Palestinian citizens wanting peace and taking a stand against occupation. I'm also doing my small part in supporting the re-establishment and growth of the UAICC in Victoria.

What Christian perspectives do you bring to bear in your own service to social justice?

As a kid living in the country, denominational distinctions meant diddly squat to me growing up; in some ways, it still doesn't. I had a very 'churchy' childhood. My parents were heavily evangelical Pentecostal, and while one side of the family was staunchly Catholic, the other was a lapsed Anglican.

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1 vimeo.com/137214749?fl=pl&fe=sh

2 uniting.church/planting-hope-vision-volunteers-and-a-community-revitalised/

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Church meant home style gathering during the week and going between towns over 100km away on alternate weekend. Youth groups were interdenominational out of necessity; there simply weren't enough kids for more than one group in town. For me, the Christian community always had a chaotic ebb and flow to it that intentionally transgressed boundaries. Beyond the church, this informs how I work with social justice coalitions: seeking out allies to work together for a more just and equitable world. When the Uniting Church formed in 1977, it did much the same thing by joining three denominations. Collaboration, unity, and having the grace to put down what divided us for the sake of something much bigger is part something I've always admired. When I see the same thing happen with people mobilising from all walks of life to reconcile the world, I have the same exact feeling of admiration, knowing there's something bigger than ourselves at work. Hope, faith, and a little bravery gets us to where we need to go.●

BOOK REVIEW

SARAH O'CONNOR "WE ARE NOT MACHINES: THE FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK" (2026)

Sarah O'Connor is a columnist, reporter, and associate editor at the *UK Financial Times*. Her book, *We Are Not Machines*, explores the existing impact of artificial intelligence on people's work through interviews with those impacted.

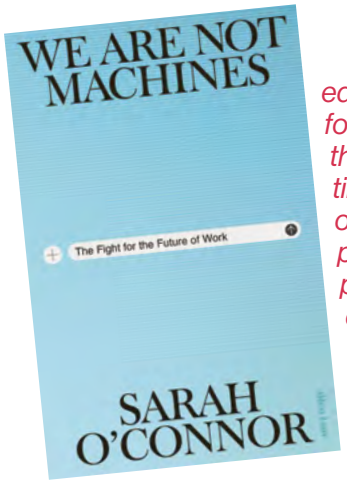
She gained worldwide recognition in 2015 when she tweeted about a worker killed by a robot at a VW plant. The tweet went viral as her name is close to that of the character Sarah Connor in the *Terminator* movie series, who fights AI killer robots.

Through her interviews with people whose jobs have been impacted by AI, O'Connor found:

> *These people were not being liberated by machines. Instead, they were being crunched into systems run by machines and paced by machines, in which important concepts such as fairness, intelligence, even human-ness itself, were starting to be redefined by machines.*

O'Connor considers people holistically, not just in economic terms. Her view aligns with a Christian concern for the whole person:

> *When economists try to map out the potential negative impacts of automation on workers, they tend to focus on metrics they can easily measure, such as job losses or declines in real wages. But those numbers don't account for many other aspects of work that also matter to people: creative satisfaction; companionship; pride; autonomy; judgement; dignity.*



O'Connor gives the example of warehouse workers. She references a 2022 report by Partnership on AI which interviewed front-line workers in the warehouse sector in the US and found that:

> *In automated warehouses, workers who had been around prior to the introduction of new AI and robotics systems, or who switched from warehouses with less automation to cutting-edge robotics locations, found that the variety of their tasks shrank over time, with AI, robotics, and other automated systems picking up tasks that they previously completed or coordinated with other workers to complete. Multiple workers mentioned feeling like they themselves were also robots in the more automated warehouses.*
>
> *Along with workers' increasingly parochial view of the work being done throughout the warehouse, came a decrease in their positioning and ability to identify and suggest improvements at a systemic level. Their universe of problem-solving potential has shrunk from warehouses sometimes the size of seven New York City blocks to a small set of tasks at a workstation no greater than 10 feet by 10 feet.*

We Are Not Machines finds that AI's impact on employment isn't just about job losses; it includes cases of exploitation, AI-enhanced job satisfaction in roles where AI does the tedious work, and even some bizarre situations.

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One of the most absurd cases in the book is that of a copywriter in the country of Georgia working for a biotech company, writing articles for their website. Google's AI writing detector started classifying her writing as entirely AI-generated. She needed to speak with a senior manager concerned about the AI detector's finding. As they speak, she has the AI detector on, and it assesses that 70% of what the senior manager says is AI-generated.

The solution the copywriter was offered was to run her writing through an AI program that would "humanise" her writing so the Google AI writing detector would no longer classify it as AI-generated. The AI humaniser got around the AI detector by inserting grammatical errors, punctuation mistakes and errors of meaning in the copywriter's work. O'Connor wrote about the situation:

> *Part of me thought it was darkly funny, this idea that something written by a human would have to be rewritten by an AI to meet another AI's definition of 'human'. But as a writer myself, another part of me found it deeply offensive that technology companies should presume to define what 'human' writing looks like – damaging and deforming it in the process.*

O'Connor points to where human workers get to direct the use of AI, the introduction of AI can increase their job satisfaction, capability and safety, while when the humans are in the service of the AI system their jobs become worse.

We Are Not Machines is at times humorous, tragic and occasionally hopeful about human resistance. It is a great read for anyone interested in grasping the diversity of impacts we can expect AI to have on people's working lives. ●

BOOK REVIEW

ANNIE JACOBSEN "BIOLOGICAL WAR: A SCENARIO" (2026)

The advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has raised the threat of developing highly effective biological weapons, as AI may make breakthroughs humans would not think of.

AI corporation Anthropic, at the start of September 2026, detailed five case studies of scientists using its AI models in biological research in which the researchers circumvented safeguards Anthropic had put in place to prevent users from accessing "unsupported regions". The researchers also worked to hide the purpose of their work. Anthropic was concerned some of these cases may have related to biological weapon development.

One of the greatest risks identified is that a superintelligent AI model could develop a novel biological weapon with no or limited countermeasures, and that such a pathogen could be accidentally or deliberately released.[1]

Annie Jacobsen's *Biological War* explores the risks of biological weapons even without AI increasing the risk. The book uses a scenario of a fictional accidental biological weapon release from a Russian laboratory, from which there has previously been a leak in real life. She uses the scenario to outline the history of biological weapons and efforts to eliminate them.



Jacobsen outlines how the Soviet biological weapons program aimed to create pathogens that caused the release of endorphins to give people a high to make them socialise in the early stage of infection, to help spread the pathogen. The Soviets also worked on pathogens having more than one attack vector, such as a lethal virus embedded in a lethal bacterium. Such weapons would be more virulent, more transmissible, and more resistant to antibiotics than natural pathogens.

Jacobsen points out that even advanced economies

1 Eliezer Yudkowsky and Nate Soares, "If Anyone Builds It, Everyone Dies: The Case Against Superintelligent AI" (London: The Bodley Head, 2025).

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lack the specialist care facilities that would be needed to treat a significant outbreak of a highly contagious, lethal, airborne biological weapon. For example, the US could safely treat only 100 infected people. In 2014, the American missionary Nancy Writebol and the American physician Kent Brantly contracted Ebola during an epidemic in West Africa. Both were evacuated from Africa by air, inside specialised biocontainment isolation pods aboard chartered Gulfstream jets, and flown to a Special Pathogen treatment centre. After both were declared Ebola-free and discharged, each suite took two weeks to decontaminate.

Jacobsen provides the depressing news that an airborne plague, pneumonic plague, is highly contagious and kills 100% of those infected if left untreated in the first 24 hours.

The cover for a massive expansion in biological weapons development occurred as a result of the anthrax bacteria attack in the US in 2001. In response, under the guise of developing vaccines and other medical countermeasures, governments massively increased the number of Biosafety Level 4 (BSL-4) laboratories globally. BSL-4 laboratories are maximum-containment facilities that house dangerous and exotic pathogens for which there are no known treatments or vaccines. Before 2001, only two BSL-4 laboratories existed in the US. By 2007, that had increased to 15. Other governments followed suit, with 110 known BSL-4 laboratories globally by 2025. More BSL-4 laboratories increase the risk of a leak of a biological weapon for which there is no cure.

Further, such laboratories engage in "gain-of-function" research. Gain-of-function research is where scientists seek to give pathogens new functions, such as making them spread faster, infect humans more easily, evade immunity and survive longer. The argument is that by making more dangerous pathogens, scientists can discover new countermeasures and cures. On the other hand, such gain-of-function experiments increase the risk of catastrophic outcomes if the pathogen escapes the laboratory. Gain-of-function experiments provide cover for illegal biological weapon development.

Jacobsen provides real-world examples of pathogens escaping BSL-4 laboratories.

Biological War is a useful read for anyone who wants to understand why we should end biological weapon development, regulate AI, and persuade others of the need for these actions. ●

KPMG CONTINUES TO USE LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE TO FRUSTRATE INVESTIGATION INTO WRONG-DOING

In the August 2026 JustAct, we asked you to write to the Commonwealth Government to request reforms that better protect whistleblowers and curb the misuse of legal professional privilege to frustrate law enforcement investigations.

The action followed the mistreatment of a whistleblower by giant accountancy firm KPMG and alleged unethical conduct by KPMG to win audit contracts.

In late September, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) revealed that KPMG was claiming legal professional privilege over 74 documents ASIC had requested as part of its investigation into whether KPMG had previously made false and misleading statements to ASIC.

In mid-September, a report prepared by the Andrews Group, which investigated allegations made by the KPMG whistleblower, found that the firm had adopted an overly legalistic approach to complaints and failed to uphold its own core values. KPMG has admitted it "failed to appropriately manage conflicts of interest, initially placed too much emphasis on workplace grievances rather than the ethical issues being raised and failed to provide the whistleblower with appropriate safeguards or support".

Thank you to everyone who has already written letters calling for improvements to whistleblower protections and curbing the misuse of legal professional privilege. If you haven't had a chance, it is not too late to do so. ●

PROGRESS ON TAXING MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS

The JIM Cluster has invited you to join the campaign to ensure multinational corporations pay the taxes they are legally required to pay for the benefit of the wider community, including countries in the Global South.

Thank you to everyone who has written letters or signed postcards over the years in support of the campaign.

There was positive news on 1 October 2026, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) released its latest assessment of corporate tax payments for the 4,299 corporations that operate in Australia and have revenues greater than $100 million. In the 2024-2025 financial year, these corporations paid $87.5 billion in tax. The share of corporations that paid no tax in the 2024–2025 financial year fell to 27%, the lowest since public corporate tax transparency was introduced in the 2013–2014 financial year, when the share of corporations paying no tax was 36%.

The ATO also reported that since 2016, its Tax Avoidance Taskforce has secured more than $36 billion in additional tax revenue from multinational corporations and Australian corporations.

There was also good news with Tax Inspectors Without Borders releasing their annual report. The OECD and the UN Development Programme set up Tax Inspectors Without Borders to provide tax experts to support developing countries' tax administrations in tackling tax evasion and tax avoidance by multinational corporations. In 2025, Tax Inspectors Without Borders helped 71 developing countries raise $3.92 billion in additional taxes from multinational corporations, demand an additional $11 billion in avoided taxes, and deny $3.65 billion in tax deductions. Tax Inspectors Without Borders has raised $125 million in additional taxes for developing countries for every dollar spent on the program.

In addition, Tax Inspectors Without Borders has contributed to organisational reforms in tax authorities, strengthened their technical skills, and fostered greater voluntary compliance by multinational corporations to pay the taxes they should.•

GOOD NEWS FOR GIG FOOD DELIVERY RIDERS

The JIM Cluster invited you to join a campaign to seek fair treatment for on-demand gig economy workers, including food delivery riders and rideshare drivers. Thank you to everyone who wrote letters supporting the campaign.

Such workers have been treated as independent contractors and thus have been denied the protections of the Fair Work Act.

The campaign helped the current government pass a law that allows the Fair Work Commission to set standards for these workers.

The Fair Work Commission has set minimum standards for on-demand delivery workers, including a minimum rate of pay of $31.30 per hour, which came into effect on 17 August 2026. The hourly rate is higher than the national minimum hourly rate of $26.44 because delivery riders do not get paid extra for working nights, weekends, and public holidays, and they must cover their own petrol or charging costs for their bikes or cars.

The minimum hourly rate covers only the time a worker has been assigned or accepted a delivery job and is either on the way to collect the food, waiting for cooking preparation, or dropping off a delivery. Downtime between jobs is not covered.

The gig economy corporations will be responsible for providing personal accident insurance for drivers and riders. Workers will be responsible for taking out third-party insurance to cover damage to other vehicles in case of an accident.

It is hoped the improved conditions for food delivery riders will reduce the pressure on them and increase their safety on the road as they will not need to rush as much. Since 2017, at least 23 on-demand food delivery riders have been killed on Australian roads. •