



JUST focus :: august10

Commission for Mission



JUSTICE & INTERNATIONAL MISSION

news and resources from the Justice and International Mission Unit

IN THIS EDITION

EVENTS

Walk Against Warming Flier
17 April

Festival of Refugees
5 September

Stand Up Against Poverty Flier
17 19 September

Anti-Poverty Week poster
17 23 October

JIM Convention Registration Form
2 October

JIM Convention Poster

10-10-10 Micah Challenge
Postcards

BUMPER EDITION

LETTER WRITING ACTIONS

Curbing Alcohol Supply to Children

Murder Most Foul in the Philippines

Defending the Human Rights of
Asylum Seekers

Education and Prisons

GET INVOLVED

Federal Election Materials

Prayer Sheet

Greening the Church Flier

Seasons of Creation Flier

Blocking child sexual abuse on the
internet petition

Appeal to combat people trafficking in
India

International Mission Facilitation Grants
Flier

Fairwear Brochure

Government response to recommendations to address alcohol misuse

Previously we requested you write letters and send off postcards to the Federal Government asking that they implement the recommendations of the National Preventative Health Taskforce especially those to address alcohol misuse in Australia. On the day of the Federal budget (11 May) the Federal Government released its response to the Taskforce's recommendations. It is adopted a phased implementation of some of the recommendations the Taskforce made.

The Taskforce put forward 35 key action areas and 136 sub-recommendations. The Commonwealth Government supports or has taken action in 28 key action areas, with 63 sub-recommendations addressed. An additional five sub-recommendations are also being addressed, using approaches that are slightly different from the Taskforce's proposals. A further 49 are under consideration, 15 have been referred to the State and

Territory Governments and four are not consistent with Government policy.

The Government announced an additional \$50 million over four years through the 2010-2011 Budget to extend the National Binge Drinking Strategy, which includes the establishment of a \$25 million community sponsorship fund as an alternative to alcohol sponsorship for community sporting and cultural organisations. To be eligible to receive the funds the organisation will need to agree not to accept sponsorship from the alcohol industry. A further \$20 million will go for community level initiatives to tackle binge drinking and \$5 million to enhance alcohol helplines and for the possible extension of the National Binge Drinking Strategy social marketing campaign.

The Government rejected the recommendation to introduce laws and regulations to limit alcohol advertising.



The Government rejected the recommendation to amend taxation on alcohol to discourage harmful consumption, arguing it would not do so in the middle of an Australian wine glut.

Thanks to everyone who sent postcards to the Federal Minister for Health on this issue.

Increase in Fed Gov't funding for Indigenous Health

In the Federal Budget in May there was an increase of \$168.7 million in annual funding to improve Indigenous health outcomes. This brings the total investment across the Health and Ageing portfolio to \$1.16 billion in the 2010-2011 budget. The funding represents an 87% increase since the 2007-2008 financial year.

The extra \$168.7 million includes:

- \$38.5 million over four years to enhance supply and uptake of Opal Fuel to help reduce the incidence and impact of petrol sniffing in 11 regional and remote communities in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.
- \$10.3 million over four years through the Community Development Employment Projects Program Reform to give Torres Strait Islander people access to employment in aged care and sport and recreation positions in their own communities.

The Close the Gap campaign welcomed this funding increase but expressed disappointment that the Budget

was silent in relation to Indigenous-specific health initiatives that would benefit the majority of Indigenous Australians, particularly in relation to a national planning process for Indigenous health equality .



Tasmanian participants in the Make Poverty History roadtrip to Canberra for young people to express their support for action on overseas poverty and climate change.

RECONCILIATION VICTORIA RECEIVES VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDING

In July 2009 we requested that you write to the Victorian Government regarding the cutting of government funding to Reconciliation Victoria. Reconciliation Victoria has been granted \$50,000 in funding from the Victorian Government to undertake a six-month pilot project on reconciliation

in local government. The funding is to help Victorian local councils develop reconciliation plans.

Thanks to everyone that wrote to the Victorian Government in support of Victorian Government funding for Reconciliation Victoria.

From the Justice and International Mission Unit

Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
130 Little Collins Street,
Melbourne, Victoria 3000

(03) 9251 5271
(03) 9251 5241 [fax]

jim@victas.uca.org.au

<http://jim.victas.uca.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 JIM on details above.

SEWERAGE PROBLEMS IN REMOTE NT INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY FIXED

In December 2009 we requested that you write to the Federal Government about Indigenous housing problems. One of the cases we highlighted were the sewerage treatment problems in the remote Northern Territory Indigenous community of Ampilatwatja. The Minister for Families, Housing,

Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, The Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, has written back to a number of you to say that the sewerage problems in the community were fixed by the end of 2009. Thanks to everyone who wrote letters for this action.

NT Chief Justice says jail is not the answer for Indigenous violence

On resigning as the Northern Territory Chief Justice, Brian Martin, said on 27 May that he had become tired of seeing Indigenous repeat offenders appearing before him for violent crimes against women.

These need to be addressed at a level before it gets to the court because there is a limit to what we can do. We can put people in jail, but that in itself has proved to be an ineffective way of rehabilitating people, the retiring Chief Justice said. We see many offenders who come from homes in which they were the victims. They end up becoming the offenders. We have to break that cycle somehow.

Victorian Government funding boost for Aboriginal Health

On 14 May the Victorian Government announced a \$3.2 million boost to health services in Gippsland to help close the life expectancy gap for Aboriginal people living in that area. The new initiatives will run in Orbost, Lake Tyres Aboriginal Trust, Lakes Entrance, Bairnsdale, Sale, Latrobe Valley, Drouin and Warragul. Among the programs being funded are:

- \$380,000 to establish tobacco action workers at seven sites. These workers will provide smoking cessation training for all Aboriginal health workers in the region and provide community-based smoking cessation projects;
- \$1.54 million to support primary health care services to deliver healthy living programs, provide training for Aboriginal workers, and to build the capacity of the local Koori health workforce;
- \$413,000 to support Aboriginal patients at local hospitals through improved clinical referral systems and transport assistance payments at the point of care

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS YOUTH COMBAT BINGE DRINKING

On 3 June, the Minister for Indigenous Health, Warren Snowdon, launched a campaign 'Your Life, Your Culture, YOU CHOOSE!' which had been designed to bring Indigenous youth together at events with their local communities and

health professionals to promote alternatives to binge drinking. The campaign includes the distribution of information kits at events (consisting of posters, fact sheets and case studies) and radio and print advertising.

NT AUDITOR GENERAL REPORTS ON INDIGENOUS HOUSING PROGRAM

On 8 June, the Northern Territory Auditor General, Frank McGuinness tabled a report into the \$672 million Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP). The report noted that 11 houses had been built so far and a further 81 were under construction. A total of 186 refurbishments or rebuilds had been completed while a further 111 had commenced.

The Auditor-General concluded that SIHIP was largely on track to deliver what had been promised, but several factors placed those promises at risk including financial constraints within the program and a lack of performance measurement. He stated that 'Without an increase in financial commitments by both Governments, funds provided under the National Partnerships Agreement will need to be diverted

from other purposes to meet the costs of essential infrastructure. Equally, the lack of indexation of funds committed for SIHIP may mean that the ability of the program to deliver all that is expected of it may be compromised. The Auditor General was confident that early shortcomings have largely been overcome and the ability of the program to deliver what was expected at the outset has been improved. He also noted that the program was providing jobs for 200 Indigenous individuals, representing approximately 40% of the total on-site employment.

However, it was also revealed by the Northern Territory Government that at least a couple of hundred houses in Indigenous communities would need to be demolished as they are beyond repair.

ABS ASSESSES HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has assessed that 79% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 14 years or under were reported as being in excellent or very good health in 2008.

Over half of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (aged 1–14 years) ate fruit (59%) and vegetables (53%) daily, with younger children most likely to meet or exceed the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables.

Fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children lived with regular indoor smokers, 21% of children aged 14 years or under in 2008, down from 29% in 2004-2005.

Between 2002 and 2008, smoking rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged 15 years and older fell from 49% to 45%, representing the first significant decline since 1994. However, Indigenous adults remain twice as likely as non-Indigenous adults to be smokers.

Overall, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults were twice as likely as non-Indigenous adults to rate their health as fair to poor. However, Indigenous adults who had completed Year 12 were less likely to rate their health as fair to poor than those who had left school at Year 9 or below (14% compared with 35%).

Nearly one-third (32%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults had experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress, more than twice the rate for non-Indigenous adults.

Between 2005–2007, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy was 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females.

Alcohol labels needed to help prevent harm to babies

Research released at the start of June by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation showed that one in three Australian women are drinking alcohol while pregnant or breastfeeding. The consumption of alcohol during pregnancy can contribute to:

- miscarriage;
- prematurity;
- small babies who are more prone to illness, slow growth and development; or
- still-birth.

Health groups, such as the Australian Drug Foundation and VicHealth, have called for health advisory labels on all alcohol products to better inform consumers and help prevent harms, such as fetal alcohol syndrome. Fetal alcohol syndrome is incurable and is the leading cause of preventable, non-genetic, intellectual disability. They point out that at the moment there is more health related information on a carton of milk than on a bottle of alcohol.

Points to make in your letter:

- Express concern that one in three Australian women are drinking alcohol while pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Urge that they support the introduction of health advisory labels on alcohol products to remind consumers of the health impacts and risks of alcohol misuse and the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy.
- Point out that a recent survey of over 1,000 people by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation found that 49% of Australians admit to only having a vague knowledge of the 2009 Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol and a further 24% had no knowledge at all.

Consumption of alcopops takes a dive

On 27 May the Australian Bureau of Statistics released data on the consumption of alcohol in Australia in the 2008-2009 financial year. The figures showed that the consumption of alcopops decreased by 30%, reversing an upward trend of the previous four years. This represented a drop of 5.6 million litres of alcohol. At the same time, the consumption of other spirits increased by 2.7 million litres, a 13.4% increase. Consumption of beer increased by 1.7% and wine by 2.2%. Despite the increase in the total amount of beer consumed, due to population growth this was the lowest per capita consumption of beer since the 1950s.

In total there was a 0.14%

decrease in the consumption of alcohol in Australia between the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 financial years.

Overall, consumption appeared to be 10.1 litres of pure alcohol per person aged 15 and over in the 2008-2009 financial year, or two standard drinks per person per day every day.

At the same time the number of liquor outlet licences in Victoria continue to grow, increasing from 19,297 at 1 January 2009 to 19,496 by 10 May 2010. Bottle shops sell 76% of all alcohol in Victoria.

Thanks to everyone who wrote to the Government in support of the increase on the tax on alcopops.

At least 43 countries already have some form of on-product labelling, with 14 of these having mandatory health labels primarily around alcohol use and pregnancy.

What you can do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon. Nicola Roxon

Minister for Health and Ageing
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Email: Nciola.Roxon.MP@aph.gov.au

Salutation: Dear Minister

The Hon. Peter Dutton

Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Email: Peter.Dutton.MP@aph.gov.au

Salutation: Dear Mr Dutton





Three big Australian ISPs move on filtering out child sexual abuse material

On 9 July Telstra, Optus and Primus voluntarily agreed to block access by their clients to child sexual abuses sites from a list provided by the Australian Communication and Media Authority. Between them the three internet service providers (ISPs) account for around 70% of internet users in Australia. Other ISPs in Australia continue to argue for their right not to prevent their customers from accessing any site the customer chooses.

A petition with over 19,000 signatures has been presented in the Australian Senate by Greens Senator Scott Ludlam arguing against any measures being required of ISPs to not provide services to clients seeking to access sexual abuse material on the internet.

The Minister for Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy, Senator The Hon. Stephen Conroy, stated, on 9 July, there will be a review of the Refused Classification (RC) category to ensure that it continues to reflect community standards.

The Minister also announced further safeguards around the list of websites containing RC material that ISPs would be required to block access to, being:

- An annual review of the RC Content list by an independent expert who will be appointed in consultation with the industry;
- Clear avenues of appeal of classification decisions;
- That all content identified on the basis of a public complaint be classified by the Classification Board under the National Classification Scheme; and
- The affected parties have the ability to have decisions reviewed by the Classification Review Board.

Another key measure will be the use of a standardised block page notification, which will allow ISPs to notify users that the content they have requested has been blocked because it is deemed RC, and how to seek a review of that decision if they believe the decision to be incorrect.

Fed Gov't rejects call to open up internet gambling

On 23 June the Commonwealth Government released the final report of the Productivity Commission into gambling in Australia and what action the Government plans to take in response to the report. The Commission recommended that Australia should open up gambling on the internet, which both the Labor Government and the Federal Coalition have rejected.

This was a positive outcome, with both the major parties at a national level committing to try and make the existing prohibition on casinos and pokies on the internet more effective. This is in line with postcards that church members across denominations were sending to the Prime Minister before the release of the report.

The existing Interactive Gambling Act bans on-line casinos and pokies in Australia and makes it illegal for off-shore internet casinos to market to Australians. However, many off-shore casinos on the internet overseas ignore the Australian law. The US has enforced a ban on off-shore casinos on the internet by requiring banks to refuse credit transactions between the off-shore internet casinos and their clients.

The Productivity Commission reported that between 80,000 and 160,000 Australian adults have severe gambling problems and estimated the negative social costs of gambling to be at least \$4.7 billion.

The Federal Government agreed to another call of both the Productivity

Commission and the postcard that church people have been sending, to move towards a pre-commitment system on pokies nationally to allow people to set time and money limits on their gambling.

The other recommendations of the Commission for reducing the harm gambling causes in the community have been placed on hold and will be considered in discussion with state and territory governments.

Thanks to everyone that signed a postcard and sent it to the Prime Minister on the need to provide further protections against the harms gambling causes in the community.



Refugees are Welcome march in Melbourne on 20 June, which was supported by the JIM Unit

Blockade on civilian items in Gaza ends and Israeli investigation into aid flotilla shootings

In late June Israel was compelled by international pressure to lift its blockade of civilian supplies into Gaza, which included such items as medical supplies, toilet paper, toys, coriander and construction materials. However, at this stage construction materials have not started to flow into Gaza.

The easing of the blockade followed the shooting deaths of nine activists on a flotilla carrying humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza. Media reports suggested that the easing of the blockade was in exchange for Britain, the US and France supporting Israel conducting its own investigation into the shootings on the flotilla.

On 13 June, Israel announced the establishment of its own investigation into the shooting deaths on the flotilla, appointing retired Supreme Court Judge Jacob Turkel to chair the investigating Commission. Other members of the Commission will be Professor Shabtai Rosenne and former Technion President Major-General (retired) Amos Horez. There will be two international observers, Lord William David Trimble from Northern Ireland and General Ken Watkin, former Judge Advocate General of the Canadian Armed Forces. The Commission will investigate if the actions taken

by Israel to enforce the naval blockade of Gaza conformed with the principles of international law. The Commission will also take into consideration the actions taken by those who organised — and participated in — the flotilla, and their identities.

The Commission will have limited access to Israeli military personnel involved in the shootings. It will receive for study the documents that it requires and will be able to request from the head of the investigating team of experts authorised by the IDF Chief-of-Staff, Maj.-Gen. Giora Eiland, to transfer to it summaries of the operational investigations carried out in the wake of the event. Should the Commission believe, following its study of the aforesaid summaries, that there is a need for deeper or expanded investigations, it will be able to request Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Eiland to direct that this be done.

The Commission is not permitted to hold any hearings in public that would endanger the security of the state or its foreign relations.

The Commission will submit its report to the cabinet, via the Prime Minister, after which it will be made public.

ANZ responds to concerns over cluster munition manufacturers

The ANZ Bank has written to all those people, including Uniting Church members, who sent in postcards to the bank urging it to stop funding companies that manufacture cluster munitions. The bank states that it understands the views of some stakeholder groups and individuals that ANZ's financial involvement with these companies means that ANZ is indirectly supporting the production of these weapons. However, the bank remains committed to its policy of not directly financing the manufacture of cluster munitions and landmines, while being willing to provide finance to the small number of companies that continue to be involved in the manufacture of these weapon systems.

International experts on the arms trade say that a company

manufacturing cluster munitions would never approach any bank to finance such activities directly, making the current ANZ policy fairly meaningless in practice.

On a more positive note, the ANZ has facilitated communication between the Synod JIM Unit and US cluster munition manufacturer Lockheed Martin, to which the ANZ has provided finance. Lockheed Martin has stated that they will no longer manufacture cluster munitions banned by the international Convention on Cluster Munitions when their existing manufacturing contracts come to an end in 2013.

Reform of Victoria's Mental Health Legislation

The Victorian Mental Health Act 1986 has been undergoing review. A Bill is expected to be introduced into Parliament later this year.

The JIM Unit has contributed to the consultations on the Mental Health Act and has questioned, in particular, the effectiveness of reviews of involuntary treatment orders and complaint handling systems. The JIM Unit called for the establishment of an independent Mental Health Commissioner and for there to be greater resourcing of the Mental Health Review Board (MHRB).

The MHRB is responsible for reviewing the situation of people placed on involuntary treatment orders or community treatment orders - either in a psychiatric ward, or living in the community and attending a community mental health service. The period between the making of an order and the review of an order by the MHRB is 8 weeks or more. The JIM Unit considers this length of time to be highly unsatisfactory. The JIM Unit understands that the Government intends to better resource the MHRB and review times will be halved. The only disappointment is that there is currently no proposal by the Government to fund representation for consumers appearing before the MHRB. People who attend MHRB meetings are usually very ill; those with representation of some kind are much more likely to be discharged from the involuntary order.

Currently, the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist (OCP) handles complaints against mental health services. There has been concern that the OCP currently acts with two hats, in both complaint and oversight capacities. JIM understands that the complaint handling function will be handed over to a yet to be established Mental Health Commissioner. The OCP will continue to provide clinical oversight (and issue directives). This is further good news.

Despite the lack of funding for representation, the policy direction is sound.

Thanks to everyone who wrote to the Victorian Government in response to the action issued by the JIM Unit.

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT INCREASED FOR VICTORIA

On 16 May, the Victorian Government announced a \$415,000 education program aimed to boost breastfeeding rates across the state. The Breastfeeding Education Program will provide on-line breastfeeding education for 800 maternal and child health nurse across Victoria. Currently in Victoria 85.8% of mothers are either fully or partially breastfeeding when discharged from hospital after giving birth. This rate drops to 60.5% at three months and further reduces to 45.6% by six months.

MARS AND NESTLÉ PROMISE 'TRAFFICKING' FREE PRODUCT IN AUSTRALIA

MARS and Nestlé have been responding to those of you who have sent them a postcard urging them to deliver on their promises to provide chocolate products that contain only cocoa that is free of trafficked or slave labour. MARS have promised to introduce their first brand using Rainforest Alliance certified cocoa by 2011 "based on the forecasted availability of certified cocoa". Nestlé has promised to introduce four finger Kit Kat bars with UTZ certified cocoa (guaranteeing no trafficked or slave labour) in Australia later this year.

Thanks to everyone who has sent a postcard to MARS and Nestlé. More cards to get friends to sign can be obtained from the JIM Unit.



Church representatives in the Hampton Park area held a 5th Birthday Party to celebrate the progress that has been made to reduce child mortality in impoverished countries. Signed birthday cards urging the Federal Government to increase the proportion of the aid budget spent on child and maternal health needs were presented to a representative of local MP Anthony Byrne.





Renewable Energy Target fixed!

The JIM unit has in the past expressed concerns that households installing solar panels (photovoltaics) and cashing in their renewable energy certificates (RECs) would effectively not be doing anything for the environment despite believing the contrary. Because the Renewable Energy Target mandates that a certain number of RECs have to be purchased by energy retailers, households putting on solar simply allowed energy retailers to buy these easy RECs instead of investing in large scale renewable energy technologies to help us transition as a society away from coal fired power.

However, the Renewable Energy Target (RET) has now been amended (and been passed through the Senate). The legislation splits the Renewable Energy Target into two parts from 1 January 2011. This means a separate scheme for households - a Small Scale Renewable Energy Target and a Large-scale Renewable Energy Target which will drive investment in renewable energy projects like wind farms, commercial solar and geothermal energy generation. Combined, these

are expected to deliver more renewable energy than the existing 45,000 GW-hr target by 2020. It also means that households wanting to put on solar panels will now actually make a difference if you install after 1 January next year.

The price for the RECs will also be fixed at \$40 per tonne from next year. This means when you cash in your RECs you are assured of receiving a certain amount back to help with the up front costs of installation. Under the current system the price for RECs fluctuates depending on market value and has been very low due to an oversupply on the market.

A number of churches have installed solar panels in Victoria (after reducing their energy first) and are saving money on their electricity bills. Case studies and contact details can be found in the new Greening your Church resource available from <http://wr.victas.uca.org.au/green-church/> or contact: Cath James: (03) 9251 5279 or cath.james@victas.uca.org.au.

Consultation on drought support and milk pricing injustice by the JIM Unit at Echuca Uniting. If you want the JIM Unit to hold a consultation in your area call (03) 9251 5265.



■ MAKE A DONATION

Full Name

Address

Phone

Mobile

Email

Cheque enclosed for

cheques payable to Uniting Church in Australia

Card #

Name

Expires

A **once-off** contribution of

or

A **regular** contribution of

every 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 6 / 12 months (please circle)
until further written notice

Signature

return to 130 little collins street, melbourne 3000
All information provided by you will be managed in accordance with the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's Privacy Policy.