

## Letters to Governments and Major Organizations

### Jobseeker

Another letter has been sent to the Minister for Social Services providing further justification for increasing the Jobseeker rate. This is in response to her earlier claim it was adequate.

### Funding of Fossil Fuel

A response has been received from the ANZ Banking Group Ltd to the earlier letter from 49 members and associates of the Central Bendigo Cluster seeking an end to the Group's provision of funding for fossil fuel expansion projects.

A draft reply has been prepared together with seeking advice from the Synod's Senior Social Justice Officer.

### Electric Vehicles

Consistent with concern for increasing the use of electric vehicles, a letter has been forwarded to the Federal Minister for Industry, Energy & Emissions Reduction requesting urgent changes to existing policies to ensure the transition to emissions free vehicles is encouraged.

### Age of Criminal Responsibility

The further request to the Victorian Attorney-General to support raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years remains unanswered.

Support from the Member for Bendigo West has been sought. This is a concerning issue since a disproportionate over-representation of First Nations' children are imprisoned-of some 600 children aged 10 to 13 years locked up each year in Australia 70% are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

We note that Australian Attorneys General have recently agreed to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12. This ignores the expert advice that it should be 14.

### Haiku

**The endangered reef  
of denial. Look away;  
nothing to see here!**



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## Bendigo Uniting Churches Social Justice Group

*This is the fourth Quarterly Insert for 2021; it is circulated within all Clusters and the Weeroona Combined Congregation. We thank them for their support and welcome opportunities to share their social justice concerns.*

### Uluru Statement from the Heart Workshop and beyond

Following the on-line Workshop in August last discussions are being held and advice sought on how we could proceed in responding to the implications of this significant Statement.

The third – and final part of our brief study, *Makarrata*, is inside.

### Social Housing Update

The City of Greater Bendigo Council unanimously adopted its Affordable Housing Action Plan at its September last meeting. Its development has been a lengthy process, beginning in 2013 with a review of the City's Residential Strategy, to which a Submission was made encouraging the provision of additional affordable housing.

Since then, our Group has continued its advocacy for the inclusion of social housing. We plan to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.

**A Submission** has been made to the Government Land Standing Advisory Committee encouraging the Minister for Planning to include a provision for social housing when determining the future zoning for the former Golden Square Primary School site.

**Haiku for the SIEV X**

The fishing boat came laden with broken people; hoping and trusting.

Sinking 'neath the waves, the hopes of the abandoned people of SIEV X.

The authorities, regarding them a nuisance, looked the other way.

We lament, we weep at the tragedy, the loss, and our helplessness.

Our tears remind us to continue the struggle. For the sake of love.

*The SIEV X sank on the 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2001, with the loss of 353 refugees, mostly women and children, on route to Australia. Bendigo RAR held a vigil on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the sinking.*

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## Uluru Statement from the Heart: 3. Makarrata

In this issue we are going to look at what it means to create a Makarrata with our First Peoples. This is the last of the 3 part series.

The UCA Assembly has published its vision and hope for a just Australia. Grounded in the life and mission of Jesus, the vision is for a nation which includes recognition of the sovereignty of its First Peoples, has enshrined a First Peoples voice and is committed to truth telling about our history.

### Read the final section of the Uluru Statement.

*Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.*

*We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.*

*In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.*

To come together after a struggle, to listen, to learn, to value truth, these things are the key to any reconciliation. Only after true reconciliation has been reached, can a relationship blossom and bear the fruits of justice and hope

Our First Peoples in seeking reconciliation, are requesting the opportunity for truth-telling. They are inviting us to journey with them, and to share in the pain of their 200+ years of dispossession and struggle. To do this, we must be prepared to re-examine our history, to let go our comforting assumptions, and to allow the uncovering of things that are disturbing and things that are shameful

Are we willing to do this? Are we prepared to accept the uncomfortable truths that may emerge from a Makarrata Commission, in order that we can embrace a shared future based on justice and self-determination?

**Refer to Synod's Study Guide pps 13-17** The Study Guide is available at <https://justact.org.au/first-people/actions/>

## Asylum Seeker Banners

Thanks to those key people at Kangaroo Flat, Chum St., Neale St and Eaglehawk UCA for their valued assistance.

## Emergency Relief Centre at Forest Street

The Social Justice Group wrote to Bronwyn Pike seeking further explanation about the closure of the Emergency Relief Centre at Forest Street, and the expansion of services at the Kangaroo Flat U C Relief Centre. Ms Pike replied to our letter with reasons for the changes. The Social Justice Group remains hopeful that Uniting will offer some services in central Bendigo in the future.

## Invitation

We know that there are many among us who also ponder issues of social justice. Some of us feel that there have been few periods in our history when the needs of justice have been more urgent. The BUCSJK hope that in the new year we might call people together to reflect on issues of public policy that touch people's lives in Australia, to think through issues from a Christian perspective, and to explore opportunities to respond in faith.



At the SIEV X vigil in Bendigo, October 9<sup>th</sup>.