

RMIT Business and Human Rights Centre



RMIT
UNIVERSITY

Business and
Human Rights Centre

Overview

About Us

The RMIT Business and Human Rights Centre (BHRIGHT) is an interdisciplinary team of researchers with deep expertise in the application of human rights to business contexts.

Established in 2020, we explore how business activities can be better shaped by, and respond to, regulation to address the most significant human challenges facing business and society.

We offer research, advisory and design services on business and human rights. We work in partnership with Australian and international corporate, NGO and government partners and affected communities.

Through conceptual frameworks and methods, we analyse contemporary problems in business and human rights and develop solutions for a future that is fairer, more equitable and sustainable.

We promote human rights in business education through the Global Network of Business Schools for Human Rights.

Unique Value

- We are Australia's first and only dedicated Business and Human Rights research centre, offering unparalleled expertise at the intersection of commerce, policy and human rights.
- Uniquely positioned to guide organisations across all sectors, especially those operating in complex stakeholder environments, with evidence-based strategies and practical policy insight.
- Provides authoritative guidance on meeting the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), helping businesses translate expectations into effective action.
- BHRIGHT supports businesses to:
 - Avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their operations
 - Address and remediate impacts when they occur
 - Prevent and manage human rights risks arising from business relationships, even where the business has not directly contributed to the harm.



Our Vision

A world where businesses respect human rights or are held accountable when they fail to do so.

Our Mission

To contribute research, education and practical support to ensure that businesses respect the human rights of workers, customers and communities where they operate, as well as throughout their national, regional and global value chains.

What we do

- Research to build evidence of human rights' impacts of businesses
- Amplifying the voices of affected communities and workers
- Analysis of contemporary business and human rights problems
- Training and capacity building to integrate human rights standards in industry contexts
- Influence on law reform and public policy in Australia, the Asia Pacific region and globally
- Embedding human rights into business education
- Critical engagement with existing corporate social responsibility, accountability and business literature

Capability Statement

Research themes



Labour in Supply Chains



Gender



Peace and Conflict



Health



Digital Technologies



Work in Transition



Climate Change and Environment

Impactful projects

Reducing barriers to employment for Aboriginal people: Rethinking criminal record checks

Aboriginal communities have highlighted the serious hurdles to employment posed by employers' use of criminal record checks. Access to fulfilling employment is critical to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

This project explored ways to improve employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. Researchers worked with employers across sectors to identify existing good practice in managing risk and supporting opportunities for employment.

This work ultimately aims to reform criminal record laws, introduce spent convictions and prevent discrimination based on outdated history.

Lead: Professor Bronwyn Naylor

UN Business and Human Rights Regional Forum: Australia and New Zealand

The first forum of its kind in the region – convened more than 500 participants and over 100 speakers, generating conversation around business' human rights responsibilities.

Attendees represented industry, government, civil society, affected communities and academia from across Australia, NZ, the Asia-Pacific and beyond. Co-organised with leading UN bodies, universities and civil society partners, the Forum delivered multi-stream sessions on critical issues including modern slavery, Indigenous Peoples' rights, just transitions, AI and human rights, finance, and due diligence.

A keynote public dialogue featuring global leaders, including Helen Clark and Sharan Burrow, underscored the Forum's influence and standing.

Lead: Associate Professor Jonathan Kolieb

Doing Responsible Business in Armed Conflict

A joint initiative to support Australian businesses operating in, or exposed to, conflict-affected environments. The project addressed a critical capability gap in business understanding of international humanitarian law (IHL), including the legal risks, responsibilities and protections that arise during armed conflict.

The research translated complex legal obligations into clear, practical guidance tailored for senior leaders, risk managers and professional advisers, ensuring relevance across multiple industry sectors.

The project has strengthened corporate capacity to manage legal, operational and reputational risks in high-risk contexts. By clarifying how IHL applies to business decision-making, it supports safer operations, improved protection for personnel and communities, and more accountable corporate conduct in conflict-affected environments.

Lead: Associate Professor Jonathan Kolieb



See all projects
and publications

Developing digital tools to improve access to justice

This project aims to deliver a voice-activated digital prototype to support debt-waiver initiatives in the community justice sector, improving access to justice for women and other vulnerable groups affected by debt.

Launched in 2025, the project has secured further funding and is expanding in 2026.

It also fostered international knowledge exchange through hosting justice innovation leaders from India in partnership with UN Women, DFAT and the Office for Women – strengthening global collaboration and real-world impact.

Lead: Professor Penelope June Weller

Supporting Australian businesses to address climate change

BHRIGHT published *Supporting Australian businesses to address climate change: Four key federal policy recommendations* - outlining how the role of Australian businesses in achieving net zero carbon emissions.

Noting that businesses account for the majority of Australia's emissions, the report examines how federal and state governments can better support, regulate and incentivise changes in business practices.

It presents a set of recommendations to help businesses reduce emissions while adopting new technologies.

Lead: Dr Leanne Morrison

Improving the Regulation of Modern Slavery

The project examines the effectiveness of Australia's *Modern Slavery Act 2018* in reducing labour exploitation across global and domestic supply chains.

It assesses how business practice changes in response to the legislation have led to genuine improvements in working conditions. By analysing supply chain data and business conduct, the project built a clearer picture of how well the Act is working and where gaps remain.

Findings have benefitted regulators, reporting entities and civil society by providing practical tools and insight to drive meaningful reform and better protect vulnerable workers.

Lead: Professor Shelley Marshall

New tools to support worker agency and empowerment in global garment supply chains

Explored the effectiveness of mobile phone technologies in promoting worker voice and empowerment, and assessed whether these tools reach all workers – including informal and home-based workers.

Using participatory supply chain mapping, the research examines how mobile systems address labour rights issues, enhance individual and collective worker voice, influence perceptions of those managing the tools, and support continuous learning and improvements in business practices.

The findings will help researchers and industry partners better understand the limits and potential of digital tools to support fairer, more inclusive supply chains.

Lead: Sara Tödt (HDR)

Director



Associate Professor Jonathan Kolieb
BHRIGHT Director
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Jonathan's research and teaching interests focus on global governance issues, including current projects on international conflict resolution, business and human rights, and the accountability of transnational corporations under international humanitarian law.

Jonathan holds a PhD (Law) from University of Melbourne, an LL.M. (International Law) and an M.A. (International & Area Studies) from University of California, Berkeley.

Partnerships



Contact Us

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Interested in partnering with BHRIGHT? We are keen to discuss further with you.



Your contributions will make a significant social and economic impact at local, national and global levels.

We offer training engagements, consultancies, internships, industry-linked research projects and impactful project support.