

CIS IMPACT REPORT

DECEMBER 2025



Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton

NSW Premier Chris Minns

Australian Minister for Education Jason Clare
and NZ Minister for Education Erica Stanford

The ideas that shaped 2025

2025 has been one of CIS's most active and influential years. Our research programs expanded, our events reached new audiences, and our commentary helped set the agenda in key national debates. From education and housing to energy, fiscal policy and civic culture, CIS provided clear, evidence-based leadership at a time when Australia needed it most.

This year has been a reminder of why CIS is one of Australia's leading think tanks: progress depends on ideas, not slogans; on argument, not outrage; and on evidence, not ideology. As we look ahead to our 50th anniversary in 2026, this commitment to serious thinking remains at the heart of everything we do.

None of this would have been possible without our members and donors, and because of this support, we remain truly independent. Your interest in CIS research and your commitment to freedom, opportunity and prosperity mean CIS remains a strong and influential voice in Australian public life.

NEW RESEARCH

Understanding Australia's pressures

In 2025, CIS launched two major research programs to understand the cultural and civic pressures reshaping the lives of Australians today.

Together, they examine how people experience freedom, opportunity and civic life, and why our institutions are struggling to uphold liberal democratic values in a more fractured public environment.

Make freedom practical again

Led by Senior Fellow **Parnell Palme McGuinness**, this project explores how people experience freedom, opportunity and constraint in their daily lives. It examines the pressures and trade-offs that shape how Australians make decisions; how well-intended government programs can sometimes limit choice or independence; and how a freedom-first approach can provide more meaningful options for people.

At its heart, the project argues that true freedom is not about receiving support — it's about having choices. This research will build a renewed liberal policy agenda grounded in lived experience and practical possibility.

The new intolerance

Directed by Research Fellow **Peter Kurti**, this project investigates the rise of antisemitism and religious hatred in Australia and its corrosive impact on civic norms. It examines how universities, public institutions and cultural bodies are responding to these pressures and where neutrality, accountability and equal treatment are breaking down. The program will offer policy recommendations to strengthen institutional courage and protect the principles of a pluralistic, liberal society.

Looking ahead

Both programs will publish major publications in 2026 and mark an important new chapter in CIS's work at the intersection of culture, society, and democratic resilience.

EDUCATION

Strengthening evidence-based teaching

In 2025, the CIS Education Program shaped national conversations about evidence-based teaching and early learning.

Our work focused on improving teacher knowledge, supporting early numeracy, and contributing to policy reform in early childhood education and care (ECEC). Together, these efforts provided practical tools and clear analysis to help improve student outcomes across Australia.

Science of learning

A significant milestone was the release of *Knowledge is power: What do teachers believe about learning?* by **Trisha Jha**, which examined how teachers understand the science of learning and highlighted crucial gaps in knowledge. Its findings will inform reforms to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, reinforcing CIS's longstanding advocacy for knowledge-rich teacher preparation.

The development of our science of learning website also progressed, positioning it as a central hub for educators seeking evidence-based guidance.

Early numeracy screening

CIS led Australia's largest early numeracy screening field trial, piloting the Early Number Sense Screener for Australia (ENSSA) in 200 schools with 8,000 students. This first-of-its-kind tool will help teachers identify students at risk in the earliest years of schooling, ensuring targeted intervention when it matters most.

Early childhood education and care

Gigi Foster's *Childcare in Australia: A new approach* and our submission to the Senate Inquiry into ECEC quality reinforced CIS's voice in a rapidly evolving policy area. Our work emphasised parental choice and the need for evidence-based program design.

Looking ahead

In 2026, we will support the ENSSA's rollout across school systems, expand science-of-learning research with benchmarking tools, and explore how preschools can better prepare children for school success.

PRODUCTIVITY

Reviving national prosperity

In 2025, CIS revitalised its Productivity Program to confront Australia's decade-long decline in economic performance.

Our work identified the structural issues hindering growth, contributed directly to national reform discussions, and proposed a practical plan to reduce regulatory burden. This renewed focus helped ensure productivity returned to the centre of national economic debate.

Diagnosing the slowdown

Jim Cox's major report, *The Productivity Problem*, identified key causes of Australia's weakening productivity growth, including stalled innovation, increasing regulation, and slow technology adoption — all of which threaten future living standards.

Influencing the national debate

CIS's submission to the Treasurer's Productivity Roundtable — which was later published as the paper, *Our Prosperity is Slipping Away* — drew on insights from housing, education, energy and labour markets to illustrate how policy drift has constrained growth and placed pressure on younger Australians. These contributions positioned CIS as a central voice in long-term reform planning.

Cutting red tape

Jim's follow-up report, *Addressing Australia's Productivity Problem*, proposed the Charter of Regulatory Effectiveness (CORE) to remove obsolete rules, streamline approvals, and strengthen accountability, offering a credible pathway to reduce regulatory drag and support economic dynamism.

Looking ahead

In 2026, CIS will continue advancing supply-side reforms and delivering evidence-based solutions to rebuild productivity and national prosperity.

ENERGY

Improving energy accountability

In 2025, the Energy Program played a central role in scrutinising the assumptions guiding Australia's energy transition.

Through detailed analysis, public commentary, and sustained engagement with regulators, CIS helped improve public understanding of system costs, reliability pressures, and the implications of large-scale infrastructure decisions. This work strengthened the

national conversation at a time of rising bills and major policy shifts.

Shaping the debate

Through submissions, op-eds and video explainers, CIS exposed inconsistencies in CSIRO's optimistic assumptions for renewables and pessimistic modelling of coal. This critique helped shift national cost estimates closer to realistic ranges and improved understanding of the transition's economic implications.

Guiding regulators

Our submissions were regularly referenced by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC), and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), reflecting CIS's growing influence in shaping regulatory decisions and system planning.

Challenging proposals

The Energy team intervened in multiple project-specific consultations where renewable developments risked costs or disruption to local communities. In a significant step, the AEMC commenced consultation on CIS's proposed rule change requiring AEMO's Integrated System Plan to publish transparent cost calculations and accommodate government policy change or delay in scenarios.

Looking ahead

In 2026, CIS will publish a major paper on the economic realities of green hydrogen.

HOUSING

Fixing housing affordability

In 2025, CIS reinforced its role as Australia's leading advocate for planning reform and housing affordability.

Our research shaped debates in state and federal policy, influenced major planning reviews, and clarified the trade-offs behind competing reform proposals.

Shaping the debate

The Australian Financial Review profiled CIS Chief Economist **Peter Tulip** as "one of the five most powerful people in property," reflecting the program's influence on national housing discussions.

Driving change across jurisdictions

CIS briefed ministers, frontbenchers, departmental leaders, and party forums throughout the year, and contributed to key planning reviews in NSW and Victoria, offering evidence-based guidance on zoning,

density, and land release. Our research also informed major federal election debates by assessing how party proposals would affect supply and affordability.

Looking ahead

In 2026, CIS will continue to push for reforms that increase housing supply, lower barriers to home ownership, and address Australia's long-term affordability crisis.

FISCAL POLICY

Curbing 'tax and spend'

In 2025, CIS played a key role in scrutinising government spending, taxation, and long-term financial sustainability.

As government spending reached record levels, CIS provided clear, independent analysis of the risks to future prosperity and the reforms needed to restore discipline and credibility to the budget process.

Highlighting spending and poor tax policy

Robert Carling's headline report, *Leviathan on the Rampage*, brought national attention to the consequences of rapid spending growth — including rising debt, higher taxes, and weaker productivity. Its findings helped re-centre fiscal responsibility in public debate.

Robert has called for stronger fiscal rules and reduced reliance on income tax, while **Gene Tunny** proposed reforms to strengthen productivity and improve transparency.

CIS played a central role in critiquing the proposed tax on unrealised gains in large superannuation balances, contributing to the government's decision to postpone and revise the policy.

Looking ahead

In 2026, CIS will continue to advocate for disciplined spending, efficient government, and tax settings that support long-term growth.



Michael Stutchbury with Leader of the Opposition, Sussan Ley, at the Restoring Australia's Economic Strength event

CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Cost-of-living pressures
are policy failures

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