

The Victorian Council of Churches' Commission on Social Questions

The Victorian Council of Churches exists to bear witness that Christ's people are one body under one Lord. It seeks under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to work to make this oneness more clearly visible.

The Commission on Social Questions is to help the churches and church members to be instruments of God's love and justice, living in such a way that all people in our communities have the opportunity to fully develop all their capabilities, and to ensure that all structures in society support such endeavours. It will do so with explicit awareness of, and regard to, the Australian Aboriginal and Islander communities, the multicultural churches, the multifaith and secular environment.

Mandate: within the context of encouraging the churches to move towards greater visible unity in worship, common life and mission in Christ, this Commission will:

- gather and appraise material on social issues and the relationship of the Christian faith to them, and promote research on selected social issues;
- encourage the churches and their agencies to work together to promote the dissemination of material, discussion on social issues and joint action;
- encourage churches and church people at all levels to study issues of social concern in the light of the Gospel, and to act together for change in their local communities, and advocate together for change in State and Federal Government policy.

Membership: A Chairperson and eight other persons, elected by the Council at the Annual General Meeting after receiving the report of the Nominations Committee. Nominations for this Commission shall be made following discussions with the church concerned, and shall have due regard for gender, age, Lay/Clergy and church representation. Appointments shall be made for an initial three years, with the possibility of 2 further 3-year appointments. No more than one third of the membership should retire each year or end of three-year term. Any vacancy or appointment of Chairperson may be filled by the Executive of the Council.

Responsibility: This is a Commission of the Council, and as such is responsible to the Council and to the Executive. This Commission shall meet at least bi-monthly and following its meeting submit a brief written report to the Executive, and each year the Commission will also discuss its work at a meeting of the Executive. The Commission will provide a written report to the Annual General Meeting of the Council, and when requested to do so, shall facilitate an in-depth discussion of its work-plans and goals. The Commission may also ask for issues to be addressed by the Executive or the Council at any time.

In consultation with the Council and the Executive, this Commission shall develop Key Tasks for the three years following in-depth

discussions at the Annual General Meeting of the Council, these Key Tasks subject to change following discussions with the Executive.

Structure: The Commission may appoint such Task Groups as it sees fit, provided the establishment of such Task Groups is approved by the Executive and includes not less than one member of the Commission.

Publications: Any publication and Statement from this Commission shall be produced in the name of the Victorian Council of Churches, with due acknowledgment of the work done by this Commission. The Executive may appoint a member of the Commission as the Council's spokesperson on the issue raised in the publication or Statement.

The Commission, with the inclusion of the names of any dissenting members, shall submit any Statement or document which it recommends to the Executive to be adopted as a formal publication of the Council. Formal Statements or publications prepared by the Commission may be approved by the Executive as a formal document of the Council, with any dissenting opinion of a member church included if that is so desired.

Amendments: The Mandate for this Commission is from the Victorian Council of Churches and as such may be amended by the Assembly of the Council following three weeks notice having been given to members of the Assembly. The Assembly may also resolve to dissolve this Commission following formal notice to that effect.