

Consider these principles

The core principles of the Church's social doctrine are the **dignity of the human person**, the **common good**, **subsidiarity** and **solidarity**.

Human Dignity

We recognise the sacredness of life – the right to life from conception to its natural end – and the dignity of each individual as inviolable. In every person we see the living image of God. Each person, especially the most disadvantaged and marginalised, is entitled to more than just the basic necessities of life.

Common Good

We seek conditions that enhance the good of all and contribute to the common life of our society. Those made poor or experiencing marginalisation are a focus of special concern. Social values and structures that cause such disadvantage are questioned and challenged for the sake of the common good.

Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity ensures problem-solving and meeting responsibilities occurs at the appropriate level of society and protects against undue interference of higher authorities. Government has a role in supporting individuals, families and communities to fulfill the duties proper to them. Those most affected by policies have a right to participate in this decision-making.

Solidarity

We recognise each person as our neighbour. The responsibility to care for others crosses national, racial, cultural, economic and ideological differences. We have a spiritual and material solidarity with all people and are called to give priority to those in greatest need.

For an outline of Catholic Social Teaching, access the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

For the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Election Statement 2013:

<http://www.catholic.org.au/catholicsvote2013/>

A vote for social justice

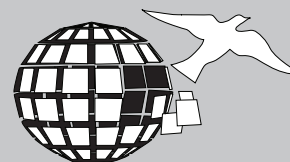


As Christians, we are called to be informed, active participants in our society, to vote wisely and to have a special concern for the most vulnerable individuals and families.

As we approach the federal election, we need to be informed about policies proposed by all political parties.

The Church does not tell us how to cast our vote, nor does it endorse any political party. Often, it can be difficult to judge which policies are the most consistent with Christian values, and people may legitimately disagree on such matters.

This leaflet aims to help you think about some important issues that will be decided in this election and offers some questions that you could raise with all candidates in your electorate.



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... to empower Indigenous communities	... to lift income support payments	... to restore the dignity of asylum seekers	... to eradicate world poverty	... to build equity into the economy
<p>Our political leaders have committed to a referendum within two years for the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This recognition will be made real where partnership, respect for culture and the promotion of self-determination underpin government policy.</p> <p>Many Indigenous communities say policy has been driven by a bureaucratic service delivery model imposed without adequate consultation. Many services run effectively by local Aboriginal agencies are being lost to mainstream providers outside the community. This impact is seen across housing and municipal services, employment, legal, health and education services.</p> <p>A new approach is needed that empowers communities to be the principal decision-makers regarding their future. In their Election Statement, the Catholic Bishops call for a sustained effort for justice that ensures Indigenous representation, 'so Australia's first peoples are heard and their needs are pursued as a national priority.'</p> <p>QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES</p> <p><i>How will you promote constitutional recognition of Australia's first peoples nationally and in this electorate?</i></p> <p><i>What steps will you take to ensure proper consultation with communities about policies affecting them?</i></p> <p><i>How will you ensure local Indigenous people are involved in the management and delivery of services to their communities?</i></p>	<p>Over 800,000 Australians are struggling to survive on income support allowances that have fallen well below the poverty line and have not been increased substantially since 1994. The low rate of the Newstart Allowance – at only \$35 a day for singles – is inadequate to meet living costs: health care, basic shelter, utilities and food.</p> <p>Over 60% of Newstart recipients have been on the payment for more than a year and 20% for more than five years. Under Welfare to Work policies, tens of thousands of people are being shifted from Parenting Payment and Disability Pension onto the lower Allowance.</p> <p>It is time for a substantial increase to allowance payments to prevent these citizens falling into poverty. Like pensions, allowances should be indexed to average wages to help maintain their value.</p> <p>QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES</p> <p><i>Will you support an increase to the base rate of the Newstart Allowance by \$50 per week?</i></p> <p><i>How will you ensure allowance payments keep pace with costs of living?</i></p> <p><i>Would you support the establishment of an independent commission to set benchmarks for income support and a standard of living below which no citizen should fall?</i></p>	<p>Australia sees only a tiny proportion of the 45 million people worldwide who are forcibly displaced by persecution and conflict. The greatest burden is borne by developing countries.</p> <p>For years Australia has been divided by inflammatory debate over asylum seekers. The Catholic Bishops have urged political responses that promote Gospel values of compassion and respect for human life. For Australia, this should be more than a 'border security' issue, as we have UN obligations to assist people fleeing their homelands.</p> <p>Pope Francis recently called on leaders and legislators around the world 'to confront the reality of those who have been displaced by force, with effective projects and new approaches in order to protect their dignity, to improve the quality of their life and to face the challenges that are emerging from modern forms of persecution, oppression and slavery'.</p> <p>QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES</p> <p><i>How will you lift the standard of political debate and encourage a response of compassion and respect?</i></p> <p><i>How will you ensure Australia meets its international obligations to refugees and asylum seekers?</i></p> <p><i>How will you protect the dignity of asylum seekers and prevent the outsourcing of Australia's responsibilities to poorer neighbours like Papua New Guinea?</i></p>	<p>In 2000, Australia joined 189 nations in committing to eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to address extreme poverty by 2015. While there has been great progress, many of the goals will not be realised.</p> <p>The contribution of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) from all developed countries would ensure the MDGs are achieved. In 1967 and again in 2002, Australia said it would commit 0.7% of GNI to overseas aid. Australia has never met that target and has now put on hold a recent commitment to increase aid to from 0.35 to 0.5%.</p> <p>The challenge remains. The Bishops note in their Election Statement: 'As the world prepares to mark the progress against the MDGs, we ask our leaders to recommit to our international commitments on international aid and development.'</p> <p>QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES</p> <p><i>How will you progress the vision of the MDGs beyond 2015?</i></p> <p><i>What will you do to lift Australia's spending on foreign aid from 0.35% to 0.7% of GNI?</i></p> <p><i>In the last budget, \$375 million of foreign aid was earmarked for the on-shore processing of asylum seekers. Will you prevent the diversion of aid funding to immigration detention in Australia or elsewhere?</i></p>	<p>Australia remains prosperous despite the financial crises that have rocked other economies. In a wealthy nation where there remains some fear of economic decline, the needs of the most vulnerable can be obscured and easily ignored.</p> <p>This election, the Bishops remind us that 'any society is judged by how the weakest and poorest of its members are treated.' Think of the vulnerable – remote Indigenous communities, those in poverty related to unemployment, homelessness, disability or single parenthood, asylum seekers without work rights, the working poor, and rural communities who have not received a fair share of the mining boom.</p> <p>In his 2009 Encyclical 'Charity in Truth', Pope Benedict XVI said, 'justice must be applied to every phase of economic activity ... as the economic process unfolds, and not just afterwards or incidentally'.</p> <p>QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES</p> <p><i>How will you build equity into the operation of the market and reduce the wealth divide in Australia?</i></p> <p><i>How will you ensure that costs incurred and wealth generated in the exploitation of natural resources are shared equitably?</i></p> <p><i>How will you support the environmentally sustainable use of resources and the development of renewable energy sources?</i></p>