



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Make Your Vote Count say Catholic Bishops

An election Statement from the Bishops of Australia

August 9, 2010

“Catholic Bishops do not tell people who to vote for” Archbishop Philip Wilson, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference, said today, speaking on behalf of the Catholic Bishops of Australia.

“Bishops are aware that, at election time, many in the community look to church leaders for advice about relevant issues.” Archbishop Wilson said.

“We are privileged to live in a democracy such as Australia where voting matters. We urge all people to take their vote seriously. We urge them to think carefully about the issues that are relevant in their local area and nationally. We urge them to think about the issues that are not just important for them but for the whole of Australia”.

“The 2010 Federal Election is of great importance for the future and the welfare of all residents of Australia. Though many Catholics are rightly involved in the political process in all political parties, the Catholic Church in Australia does not take sides in party politics. But the Church proposes that politicians, political parties and political campaigns should all be judged against six essential criteria. Those six essential criteria are:

- The right of every person to human dignity;
- The right of every person to adequate food, shelter and protection;
- The right of every person to equality of access to education, health, employment and basic services;
- The right of every person, both present and future generations, to live in a safe, healthy and secure environment;
- The right (and the duty) of every person to contribute to society to the extent that they are able;
- The right of every person to live according to their own beliefs, to the extent that those beliefs do not impact upon the rights of others.”

Particular issues that Catholic Church Agencies see as important include:

Health: A Health System that is efficient and accessible for all; properly funded mental health services and an improvement in aged care services.

Social Justice: Human dignity demands that a wealthy country such as Australia must define its priorities so that those who cannot cope in society are helped through government spending by those who can;

Migrants and Refugees: All those seeking to live in Australia should be treated with dignity and in accordance with international law;

Overseas Aid: Increase Australia's overseas aid to 0.7% of GNI as a step towards recognising Australia's plenty in the midst of great need;

Women: To protect their dignity, steps must be taken to protect women from all forms of violence; pay equity should be improved and paid parental leave is an important step forward.

Indigenous Australians: Until the most disadvantaged of our Indigenous citizens move beyond 3rd world living conditions, all Australians must feel ashamed and work together to change their conditions.

Disability: People with a disability are entitled to a quality of life equivalent to that of other Australians; serious effort must be made to improve access to services for people with disabilities and their carers.

Environment: The debate about the environment must shift to consideration of the needs of future generations, not just to avoiding present inconveniences.

Education: Schools funding should be available equitably and respect parental choice.

Religious Liberty: In a society with a variety of faiths and non-faiths, we need to be respectful of others.

Human Dignity: The value of human life must be respected at every stage.

The Catholic Church in Australia seeks to contribute to building the Australian society through schools, universities, hospitals, social services, aged care, international relations and our response to poverty locally and in the developed world. Various Catholic Agencies (such as Catholic Health Australia and Catholic Social Services Australia) have detailed Election Platforms. Specific details can be provided by contacting:

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