



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops call for politics that promote peace, common good

Media Release

April 17, 2019

Australia's Catholic bishops have called for respect and understanding in the federal election campaign, reminding Australians they all have a part to play in combating "crude tribalism" and promoting peaceful public debate.

The comments are included in *Politics in service of peace*, a statement the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference released this morning. The name is derived from a quote from Pope Francis, who urged that "Good politics is at the service of peace".

The bishops' statement shares important principles of Catholic social teaching and comments on key policy issues to consider before voting.

"Election campaigns can be fractious; there will be claims and counter-claims; emotions will run high," the statement acknowledges.

"But despite difficult and sometimes hostile debates, Australia is blessed to have peaceful contests, free of the physical violence known in other countries."

The statement says people have "a responsibility to present our views clearly and, if necessary, to disagree", but all views should be respected.

"We all have a role in promoting peace – which means speaking to our fellow Australians with love not hate, with respect not contempt, with understanding not indifference.

"We all need to be more open, interested and engaged in order to combat the crude tribalism that is infecting Australia and other nations at this time."

The statement, which includes a prayer for Catholics – and others – to use during the lead-up to the May 18 election, speaks of the importance of prayer and discernment in the electoral context.

"Democratic processes stripped of transcendent truth risk becoming soulless, with majorities deciding issues based on power rather than the consideration of truth and the common good," it says.

"Some find the idea of the common good bemusing, but it's critically important because it obliges us to look beyond our own needs and desires to consider the interests of the broader community."

Among the policy issues the bishops' statement addresses are economic fairness, support for the vulnerable and marginalised, including the unborn and older people, just treatment of those seeking asylum, action on climate change and the unacceptable differences in health, education and employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The bishops call that final reality "A running sore at the heart of the nation".

Significant attention is given to key areas in which the Church is a major service provider, including education, social services and health and aged care.

Politics in service of peace, can be found at www.catholic.org.au