



Catholic Social Justice Commission
Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

STATEMENT FOR ACT ELECTION 2016

A VOTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

This pamphlet aims to inform its readers about some issues that will be decided in the Australian Capital Territory's election on 15 October 2016. It also suggests questions that voters might care to raise with candidates.

As Christians, we need to be active and informed participants in our society. The Catholic Church does not tell us how to vote and does not endorse any political party.

CONSIDER THESE PRIORITIES

In the context of the ACT election, the CSJC has identified many concerns central to the well-being of the most disadvantaged members of the ACT community.

The CSJC has issued a survey to candidates. It consists of a brief statement of the issues followed by a series of questions seeking candidates' views on how the incoming government might address them. A brief statement of the issues canvassed in the survey is below. The full survey can be found on the CSJC and the Archdiocesan website along with the responses received to date.

Housing. Renters, home-buyers and people seeking emergency shelter face increasing pressures.

- Low-income families and individuals are particularly affected.
- Rents in the ACT are among the highest in Australia.
- Emergency accommodation and public housing are in short supply.
- **Question: What role do you think that the ACT Government can play in this area?**

Mental health. Many people in our community have a mental illness.

- Mental illness not only affects those who are afflicted but also has serious consequences for their families, those around them, and the community as a whole.
- Governments have become more responsive in recent years.
- It is vital that adequate services for mental health be available at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (the ACT prison).
- **Question: What steps do you think that the incoming government can take to improve mental health services?**

The right to life. The Catholic Church's position on the right to life is unequivocal.

- Human life is sacred from conception to natural death.
- The Church actively supports women who face an unintended pregnancy
- The Church, while opposing euthanasia, recognises the right of a terminally ill person to refuse medical intervention which is futile or overly burdensome.
- **Question: Would you support changes in ACT's law to ensure adequate protection for human life?**

The justice system. Rehabilitation of offenders and meeting the needs of crime victims are vital.

- Restorative justice may help to achieve such outcomes in many instances.
- It is striking that the ACT has the highest percentage of repeat offenders of any state or territory and has an Indigenous imprisonment rate more than nine times the non-Indigenous rate.
- **Question: Do you think that the penalties currently prescribed in ACT law are too severe, too lenient or about right?**

Education. Meeting the needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds must be a priority.

- There is a strong correlation between schools' outcomes and students' socio-economic status.
- In both the government and non-government sectors, education resources flow disproportionately to schools in higher-income locations, despite the fact that schools in low-income areas need a greater share of education resources if they are to give their students a decent chance in life.
- Catholic Education seeks priority allocation of suitable land to allow choice in education for new communities and for Catholic Education to continue to play its significant role in meeting the Territory's need for school age education.
- **Question: Do you think that school students from low-income families are receiving a fair share of the ACT Government's education dollar?**

Gambling. The ACT government is heavily reliant on gambling revenue, especially from poker machines, but we know that gambling can be dangerous and addictive and that poker machines are particularly problematic in this respect.

- An immediate end to poker machines is, however, not practical.
- The steady reduction that the ACT has initiated in their numbers is, however, a good start.
- **Question: Do you think that the rate of reduction in the number of poker machines in the ACT is fast enough?**

Climate change. Consensus opinion among climate scientists is that global warming caused by human activity represents a major threat to life on the planet.

- The ACT has legislated to achieve a reduction of 40 per cent (of 1990 levels) in carbon [dioxide] emissions by 2020.
- This will complement Commonwealth measures and is as an example for other jurisdictions.
- **Question: What is your position on the reality or otherwise of human-induced global warming?**

Empowering Indigenous communities. The Catholic Church promotes dignity and justice for all.

- We must ensure the preservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and keep working for an inclusive multicultural Australia.
- The first Australian peoples have cared for the land and challenge their fellow Australians to learn with them how to preserve our fragile environment.
- **Question: How would you support the Indigenous initiative after-school program, *Solid Sista's and Brotha's*?**

Equity in the economy. The Catholic Church is far from alone in calling for equity in the economy. We maintain that we can measure the quality of any society by the way its most vulnerable are treated. Catholic Social Teaching demands a 'preferential option for the poor'. A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring.

- Economic equity is a fair and just distribution of assets, resources without undue hardship.
- The 'preferential option for the poor' refers to a trend, throughout the Judeo-Christian Bible, of preference being given to the well-being of the disadvantaged and powerless.
- **Question: Does the principle of a 'preferential option for the poor' provide a sound basis for public policy affecting vulnerable and marginalized people in society?**

For more information and responses from candidates, visit:

- [Catholic Social Justice Commission \(ACG\) web site](#)
- [CSJC Brochure for 2016 ACT Election](#) (pdf 100Kb)
- [CSJC Candidate Survey](#) (pdf 140Kb)
- [CSJC Candidate Responses](#) (pdf)
- [Archdiocesan web site](#)