

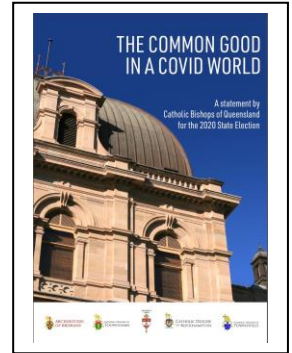
## **MEDIA RELEASE – Archdiocese of Brisbane**

**7 September 2020**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Catholic bishops call for new solidarity in election statement**

Queensland’s Catholic bishops believe the state must discover “a new kind of solidarity” to deal with the impacts of COVID-19 and to find a way beyond the pandemic.



The bishops of Queensland’s five Catholic dioceses today launched The Common Good in a COVID World – their combined statement ahead of next month’s Queensland election.

The statement from the bishops is the first of its kind in the modern Queensland political era and pinpoints eight areas for special focus ahead of the October 31 poll.

“As bishops, we offer this statement as a way of sharing key points of Catholic teaching ... as we prepare for the State election,” the bishops write. “No political party fully aligns with Catholic teaching, but we can point to clear and enduring principles which can help us make the kind of responsible judgements that allow us to be both faithful Catholics and good citizens.

“The COVID-19 crisis has shown more clearly than ever the need for a new kind of solidarity both to deal with the pandemic and find a way beyond it.”

The bishops explained that Catholic social teaching has a preference for the poor and vulnerable, underpinned by the principles of the dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity.

Creating the new solidarity drives the bishops’ statement that urges the policymakers of the next Queensland Parliament to focus on:

- The dignity of employment and the provision of support services, advocating for a just living wage and the right economic balance between the dignity of workers and the encouragement of entrepreneurial creativity
- Helping regional, rural and remote Queenslanders to access adequate health care

- Adequate funding for Catholic schooling, particularly for disadvantaged students. Catholic schools educate more than 150,000 students, making them the second-largest provider of schooling in Queensland
- A renewed urgency in the commitment to close the gap between Indigenous Queenslanders and the rest of the population.
- Better funding and resourcing for palliative care as the push for euthanasia and assisted suicide continues.
- Improving the quality regulatory framework for aged care.
- Better resourcing around social and pastoral education including in the mental health space and on occasions when people are considering abortion.
- A continued focus on climate change

“These are some of the many important issues for Catholics to consider when voting in this election,” the bishops write. “In offering this statement, we want to highlight some principles of Catholic social teaching which may help you consider your vote.

“We have a responsibility to present our views clearly and, if necessary, to disagree, while still remembering that all people are made in the image of God and therefore deserve our respect.

“We all have a role in building that solidarity – which means speaking to our fellow Australians with love not hate, with respect not contempt, with understanding not indifference.

“In the COVID-19 response and recovery 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.”

Archbishop Mark Coleridge, the leader of the Brisbane Archdiocese, said the statement was not designed to tell Catholics how to vote but rather to create wider discussion around issues that may not always be at the forefront of election debate.

“The days of the Church attempting to dictate its views are long gone but we have a responsibility to talk about the issues that we see on the ground in the many different ways in which the Catholic Church is involved in our communities,” Archbishop Coleridge said.

“We are everywhere in Queensland through our schools, our outreach work, our parishes and in ways in which some people may not consider. It’s a privilege to be involved with Queenslanders in so many

parts of their lives but that also brings about a responsibility to speak up on behalf of those who may not always be heard.

“This is an important election for Queensland as we look for ways in which we can emerge from this pandemic as a state that will consider the needs of its people during the most challenging times. Fortunately, the Church has weathered its share of tough times in 2000 years so we can offer experience drawn from all centuries and all parts of the world.”

**ENDS**

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