

Photo by Darren Pateman for AAP.

Faith in action: An election guide

FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF VICTORIA

There is no Catholic political party, nor one required way for Catholics to vote. In making a decision, we may consider the record, policies and guiding values of candidates and political parties. Our faith calls us to support those who seek to govern in ways that advance the common good, protect the vulnerable and build a just society in which all people can truly flourish.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Respect for God's creation, including respect for the dignity and worth of every human being, stands at the heart of our Catholic faith. Every person is uniquely created in the image of God and is loved by God.

As members of one human family, we are bound to one another in mutual responsibility and love. We are called to seek not only our own good but the good of others and of society as a whole.

Catholic Social Teaching offers four key principles to guide our discernment of the choices before us: human dignity, the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity.

As we discern between the policies of political parties and candidates to assist us in informing our vote, we might ask:

- **How do they uphold the human dignity of every person?**
- **How do they promote and advance the common good?**
- **How do they support subsidiarity, enabling communities and local institutions to participate in decisions that affect them?**
- **How do they foster solidarity, especially with those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or excluded?**

KEY POLICY MATTERS

Among many important issues at stake, the following issues deserve careful attention:

Freedom of religion and conscience

Human beings are able to act in freedom, to reason and to make decisions formed by belief and conscience. Violating a person's right to act according to their conscience is a grave matter that goes against God's plan. The rights of parents to make decisions for their children, and of individuals and religious organisations to act according to their beliefs, must always be protected, as must the right to practise faith publicly.

The place of faith communities

People of faith make up a substantial part of the Victorian community, with faith communities making a significant contribution to the common good, including through education, health care, aged care and social services. Governments should recognise this contribution and respect the place of faith in the lives of Victorians and in public life.



Respect for life

Every person is made in the image and likeness of God and has an inherent dignity that cannot be taken away. Life is sacred from conception until natural death. Public policy should give particular care to the unborn, children, people with disability, those who are seriously ill and those nearing the end of life.

Among laws violating respect for life, recent legislation providing access to euthanasia and assisted suicide—so-called 'voluntary assisted dying'—claims to offer choice but instead masks inequitable access to palliative care. Adequately supporting palliative care and protecting the right of health care professionals and providers to conscientiously object should be a priority for government.

The family

The family has a privileged place in society. It is where we first learn love and responsibility, and it remains the most basic social structure. Governments should enact social and economic policies that strengthen families and assist those experiencing hardship or family breakdown.

Parents should be supported in guiding their children's formation, care and faith. Currently the *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act* places arbitrary limitations on parents, families and people of faith, affecting the care available to children experiencing gender incongruence or dysphoria. Governments should ensure parental care and guidance, consensual counselling, religious teaching and non-coercive prayer are not unduly restricted.

For more information on the key principles of Catholic Social Teaching, scan the QR code or visit: bit.ly/StateElection2026

Care and protection of children



The rights of children to be protected, nurtured, loved, educated and cared for are paramount. Past failures, including within the Church, remind us that child protection must be at the forefront of public policy and community life. We all share responsibility for creating a hopeful future in which young people can thrive.

Education and just support of our schools



Education is essential to society and deeply formative for young people. Parents must have the right to choose a faith-based education. Catholic schools should receive just and fair support, including the continuation of current funding arrangements for non-government schools and capital funding to support the expansion and establishment of schools in growth areas. The government should also prioritise amending the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act* to ensure that faith-based schools can employ those who share their faith and mission.

Health care



How we care for those suffering ill health, especially the most vulnerable, is a fundamental test of our society. While Australia has strong health care, delays and gaps in access remain. Adequate resourcing is needed to meet growing need and to ensure timely care, particularly for the most vulnerable.

Catholic hospitals and care services must always be free to deliver care in accord with our faith, without facing attempts to force participation in gravely evil practices such as abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide. The conscience of health care providers and professionals should always be respected.

Justice and social services



Many issues of justice require our attention, including the rehabilitation of prisoners, care for First Nations people who face disproportionate disadvantage, addressing homelessness and housing stress, prevention of domestic and family violence, and care for children unable to live safely with their own families. How we treat the vulnerable is a key measure of our community and of those seeking election.

Our common home



We are called to be good stewards of the natural world, caring for and respecting the common home gifted to us by God. The earth's valuable resources should be used in ways that are responsible, safe, equitable and sustainable.

Economic management



An economy is not abstract; it is made up of human relationships and choices. Economic management affects the cost of living, employment, housing, services and opportunities. Governments must ensure economic decisions serve the common good and that limited resources are used responsibly, equitably and prudently.

Artificial intelligence



Artificial intelligence is reshaping society, but as Pope Leo XIV reminded us in his first encyclical, we need not reject technology or fear progress. Technology should always remain at the service of the human person, strengthening rather than weakening our relationships with one another and with God. Governments considering AI should place human dignity at the centre their decisions.



Prayer for Victoria and the upcoming election

Heavenly Father,
you are the source of all goodness, justice and truth.

We thank you for the freedoms we enjoy in Australia,
including the gift of free and fair elections.

We entrust to you our State of Victoria and all who live within it.

We pray for wisdom and discernment as we approach the upcoming election.

Guide us in our deliberations, that we may elect representatives who will work tirelessly to pursue the common good.

We pray for all those standing for election.
Give them wisdom, courage and genuine commitment to the service of others.

May we honour and glorify you in all that we do,
and seek always to contribute to the common good.

We ask all this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Amen.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

Most Rev Mark Freeman
BISHOP OF BALLARAT

Most Rev Gregory Bennet
BISHOP OF SALE

Most Rev René Ramirez RCJ
BISHOP OF SANDHURST