

Introduction

Ahead of the 2022 Federal Election, the Uniting Church Assembly has released this election resource which expresses our hope for Australia to become a nation where all people and the whole creation can flourish.

Drawing on the UCA document, [Our Vision for a Just Australia](#), the election resource identifies seven critical issues that Australia must address urgently to build a more just, compassionate and inclusive nation. It includes the current situation and key actions needed in these areas to fulfil our vision. It will be a useful resource to help start discussion and for UCA members to consider as they engage with candidates about their policies.

Uniting Church in Australia President Rev Sharon Hollis said in the context of two years of the pandemic, the recent flooding emergency and global unrest with the conflict in Ukraine, many Australians felt anxious and uncertain about the future.

"We are looking to our leaders right now to seek to rebuild our communities without leaving anyone behind," said Rev Hollis.

"As followers of Jesus, we believe each person and all creation is deeply loved by God, and we are called by Jesus to be communities of justice, compassion, inclusion and mercy."

"In the midst of the challenges we face, we encourage current and future leaders of our country to work with courage and commitment, and to work collaboratively with communities, to provide all people and all of God's creation with every opportunity to flourish and to live life abundantly."

The critical issues identified in the resource include a voice for First Peoples, climate change, refugees, income inequality, aged care, housing and mental health in rural and remote Australia and Australia's humanitarian assistance.

Assembly Associate General Secretary Rob Floyd encouraged Uniting Church members and congregations to use the resource to learn more about some of the key issues facing Australia ahead of the election and to generate conversations in their community and with their local candidates.

"As we approach the election, we encourage Uniting Church people to engage in the issues and to seek out policies and commitments which focus on the good of all people and the good of the planet," said Mr Floyd.

"We hope the resource assists people to be actively involved in their communities and to raise their voice for justice and compassion."

The election resource includes contributions from those engaged in working for justice across the Uniting Church.

A First Peoples Heart Voice, Treaty, Truth

Our vision:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, nurtured and sustained by God before invasion, are celebrated at the very heart of what it means to be Australian. First Peoples' sovereignty is affirmed, First Peoples have a voice in the decision making of our country and are living out their right to self-determination. As First and Second Peoples, we walk together, creating socially just and culturally safe relationships, listening and learning from one another.

Our context:

The Statement from the Heart developed at Uluru has been given to us by First Peoples as the basis for how we can work together to build a better future, but governments have not followed their lead. First Peoples communities, whether remote, regional or urban, experience heightened levels of disadvantage, including a lower life expectancy and worse health, education and employment outcomes than other people in Australia.

For the election:

As you consider your vote, you might like to begin a discussion or approach your candidates about their policies on the following key actions:

- Constitutional change to enshrine a First Nations Voice to Federal Parliament.
- Recognise the sovereignty of First Nations People and establish a commission for treaty making, truth telling, justice and reconciliation.
- Sufficient funding to achieve the Closing the Gap targets, prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to deliver services wherever possible.

For more information:

For additional context and other areas of concern for justice for First Peoples see:

Our Vision for a Just Australia: A First Peoples Heart:

<https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/F1-A-First-Peoples-Heart.pdf>

Further reading:

Statement from the Heart website:

<https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/>

Statement from the Heart Study Guide, Synod of VIC/TAS:

<https://uniting.church/statement-from-the-heart-study-guide/>

Assembly Covenanting Action Plan:

<https://uniting.church/a-covenantal-vision/>

Renewal of the Whole Creation

Action on Climate Change

Our vision:

We seek the flourishing of the whole of God's Creation and all its creatures. We act to renew the earth from the damage done and stand in solidarity with people most impacted by human-induced climate change. Government, churches, businesses and the wider community work together for a sustainable future.

Our context:

While we acknowledge our Government's commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, we need to do more, and sooner. Global temperatures are rising as human activity continues to pollute the atmosphere with greenhouse gases. Australia faces significant climate change impacts: rising sea levels, extreme heat and flooding, longer droughts and bushfire seasons and the loss of coral reef. Our neighbours in the Pacific and elsewhere are suffering the impacts of climate change, to their lands and waters, their livelihoods, their culture and identity.

For the election:

As you consider your vote, you might like to begin a discussion or approach your candidates about their policies on the following key actions:

- Setting more ambitious targets for 2030 - committing to a 45-50% carbon reduction as a minimum but working towards a target closer to 70%.
- A strong renewables target – which embraces the potential for Australia as a global leader.
- Just transitions for impacted communities currently dependent on fossil fuels.
- Australia must play a significant role in our region and globally in addressing the causes and impacts of climate change, responding to the call from Pacific countries, including the Pacific Conference of Churches, for our country to act more decisively to reduce carbon emissions.

For more information:

For additional context and other areas of concern including waste management and support for farmers who are already adapting their practices see:

Our Vision for a Just Australia: Renewal of the Whole Creation:

<https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/F2-Renewal-of-the-Whole-Creation.pdf>

Further reading:

Assembly Climate Action Plan:

<https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Assembly-National-Climate-Action-Plan.pdf>

Towards Zero: Connecting Faith and Action (video series)

<https://uniting.church/towards-zero-2/>

Lessons from COVID-19 for the Climate Emergency (UCFAMS video series)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2KelfQhz4XY-sjDb-dcJjg>

A Welcoming, Compassionate and Diverse Nation Safety for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Our vision:

We are a nation of diverse cultures, languages, faiths, ethnic groups and experiences. We celebrate and value the strength of this diversity. We see this diversity reflected in our leaders, key decision makers, institutions, industry, sports and media. We are a compassionate nation, where every person who seeks refuge here is treated fairly and made to feel welcome and safe – regardless of their country of origin or mode of arrival.

Our context:

In response to the Afghanistan crisis, the Australian Government has committed to receiving more than 30000 people from Afghanistan. We welcomed this response. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is further seeing people flee their homes in fear, seeking refuge in other countries. Recently, a number of refugees held in detention have been released, while others still remain. Some have been detained for up to nine years. Australia's immigration policies continue to create an uncertain future for people seeking refuge with a large number of people on temporary or bridging visas. The Federal Government continues to direct funding to offshore processing with \$482.5 million allocated for its offshore processing policy in the 2022-23 Budget.

For the election:

As you consider your vote, you might like to begin a discussion or approach your candidates about their policies on the following key actions:

- An end to mandatory and indefinite off-shore and on-shore detention either in Alternative Places of Detention (hotels) or detention centres.
- Community detention of refugees and asylum seekers must allow access to education, work and housing support.
- A target for Afghan and Ukrainian refugee resettlement much higher and appropriate to the magnitude of the problem.
- Permanent protection for Afghan people already in Australia but on temporary visas.
- Enhance safeguards for people on temporary visas including including overseas students and migrant workers.

For more information:

For additional context and other areas of concern including community refugee sponsorship, processing of protection claims and developing regional solutions see:

Our Vision for a Just Australia: A Welcoming, Compassionate and Diverse Nation:

<https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/F3-A-Welcoming-Compassionate-and-Diverse-Nation.pdf>

Further reading:

Calls for more Compassion and Places for Afghan Refugees:

<https://uniting.church/more-compassion-for-afghan-refugees/>

Christians United for Afghanistan:

<https://www.unitedforafghanistan.com/>

¹ <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/australias-afghan-resettlement-response-a-bitter-disappointment/>

² <https://www.migrantworkers.org.au/livesinlimbo>

An Economy for Life

Economic Participation for All

Our vision:

Our government makes economic decisions that put people first: decisions that are good for creation, that lift people out of poverty and fairly share our country's wealth. The economy serves the well-being and flourishing of all people. We believe in an Australia where prosperity is shared fairly, embracing all people regardless of their privilege or upbringing.

Our context:

Aspirations for shared prosperity in Australia are unravelling under the sustained, twin trends of weak wage growth and rising asset prices. Over the past 10 years wage growth has limped under 2.5 per cent annually. Over the same period share portfolio and real estate values have grown around 10 per cent annually. These settings deliver economic gains toward those with assets and away from those doing it tough. Resulting in a greater and growing gap between the haves and the have-nots. Greater inequality strongly tracks with stress, hunger, poor physical health, poor mental health, homelessness and social exclusion, and has a negative impact on economic growth.

Older women are more at risk of reduced financial security after a lifelong gender pay-gap, interruptions to employment for care and reduced superannuation. The retirement savings gap between males and females in 2019 was almost one quarter. The result is that 34 percent of single women in Australia live in poverty.

For the election:

As you consider your vote, you might like to begin a discussion or approach your candidates about their policies on the following key actions:

- A clear commitment to undertake a review into the past decade of low-income growth.
- An increase in social security payments, especially Jobseeker.
- Tax reforms to increase the progressive nature of the Australian tax system to address unhealthy inequality.
- A clear commitment to make superannuation contributions on top of the government Parental Leave Pay.

For more information:

For additional context and other areas of concern including fairer tax and superannuation systems, social housing and the quality of work see:

Our Vision for a Just Australia: A Welcoming, An Economy for Life
<https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/F4-An-Economy-of-Life.pdf>

Further reading:

Uniting Church Australia, [An Economy of Life](#)
UnitingCare, [Pre-Budget Submission 2021-22](#)

National Inquiry into Stagnant Wages

Economics Society of Australia, [Policies for Higher Wage Growth](#)
John Buchanan, [Australia's 2.5% minimum wage rise: there's something in it for you, and the economy](#)
TradingEconomics Statistics, [Wage Growth](#)

Paid Parental Leave

Services Australia, [Parental Leave Pay](#)
National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, [Women and Superannuation in the 21st Century: Poverty or Plenty?](#)
UnitingCare Australia discussion paper, [The objectives of superannuation](#)

An Inclusive and Equal Society

Ageing to our Full Potential

Our vision:

We seek a fairer Australia where wellbeing in older years is protected and defended. We also believe in appreciating and recognising the value of care work undertaken in Australia. This vision is based on the dignity of all human beings created in the image of a loving God. We believe in a world class aged care system. Older Australians should have access to the appropriate and affordable support and care services that they need, when they need them.

Our context:

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety identified many barriers to providing universal access to high quality aged care. Over the past two years in particular, the aged care crisis has escalated significantly and threatens the continued operations of the sector. A key component of that threat is the capacity to attract and retain enough workers: aged care workers are the lowest paid caring workforce and yet are doing some of the most important work in the nation, supporting our ageing and aged citizens.

For the election:

As you consider your vote, you might like to begin a discussion or approach your candidates about their policies on the following key actions:

- A clear commitment to make sure all parts of the aged care system have adequate funding.
- Fair wages for aged care workers.

For more information:

For additional context and other areas of concern including universal access to early childhood education, raising the age of criminal responsibility and addressing domestic and family violence see:

Our Vision for a Just Australia: An Inclusive and Equal Society

<https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/F5-An-Inclusive-and-Equal-Society.pdf>

Further reading:

Rev Dr Ji Zhang, [Resource Paper on Theology of Ageing](#)

Uniting AgeWell, [A New Conversation About Ageing](#)

UnitingCare, [Pre-Budget Submission 2021-22](#)

Stephanie Dalzell, [Aged Care Worker Pay Rise](#)

Australia Aged Care Collaboration, [The Way Forward on Aged Care](#)

[Aged Care Royal Commission](#)

Flourishing Communities, Regional, Remote and Urban Housing and Mental Health in the Bush

Our vision:

We live in communities where we are connected and we care for one another. In communities all over Australia, from our big cities to remote regions, we seek the well-being of each Australian and uplift those who are on the margins.

Our context:

People in Australia living in rural and remote areas tend to have shorter lives, higher levels of disease and injury and poorer access to and use of health services, including mental health care, compared to people living in metropolitan areas. The housing crisis and mental health crisis are converging in regional Australia as rental vacancy rates in some regions fall below 1%. Regional towns have experienced a significant reduction in available properties and rental affordability, particularly since the onset of the pandemic. The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health, the state's peak body for community mental health said the situation was "pushing people experiencing mental distress into homelessness"³.

For the election:

As you consider your vote, you might like to begin a discussion or approach your candidates about their policies on the following key actions:

- Improved mental health support for people in rural and remote Australia that is adequately funded, able to be flexibly used and well managed locally.
- Governments to do more to provide affordable housing in the regions - to boost housing for vulnerable people and strengthen local economies.

For more information:

For additional context and other areas of concern including rural and remote health services, child safe communities and a fully funded National Disability Insurance Scheme see:

Our Vision for a Just Australia: Flourishing Communities, Regional, Remote and Urban

<https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/F6-Flourishing-Communities-Regional-Remote-and-Urban.pdf>

Further reading:

Business Insider John Buckley: [The work from home revolution](#)

National Rural Health Alliance: [Mental Health in Rural Australia](#)

³<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/oct/20/twofold-crisis-regional-australia-housing-shortage-compounding-poor-mental-health>

Contributing to a Just and Peaceful World

Humanitarian Assistance and Foreign Policy

Our vision:

Australia acts with courage and conviction to build a just and peaceful world. We are a nation that works in partnership with other nations to dismantle the structural and historical causes of violence, injustice and inequality. Our government upholds human rights everywhere, acting in the best interests of all people and the planet.

Our context:

We remain one of the wealthiest countries in the world, with the highest median wealth per adult, and fourth highest average wealth per adult⁴. Historically, we played a significant part in reducing world poverty and making significant gains in human flourishing. COVID-19 has made the world poorer, less equal and less secure. Climate change and increased geopolitical competition is destabilising democracies and increasing the number of refugees in the world. In 2020, Australia boosted aid to our local region to support pandemic response. However, the current government has capped ongoing aid to pre-COVID levels, the lowest since 1961⁵. Despite our relative wealth, we are ranked an ungenerous 21st on the global list⁶ of overseas development aid as a percentage of gross national income. The recent and ongoing conflict in Ukraine reminds us again of the urgent need to rid the world of weapons capable of catastrophic, widespread destruction.

For the election:

As you consider your vote, you might like to begin a discussion or approach your candidates about their policies on the following key actions:

- Centering Australia's foreign policy on a commitment to justice and peace; collaborating internationally to deliver community development and human rights.
- Legislate Australian Aid to reach 0.5% GNI by 2026 and 0.7% GNI by 2030.
- Increase support to fight COVID globally.
- Sign on to the global treaty banning nuclear weapons.
- Increase support to vulnerable nations to help address the impact of climate change.

For more information:

For additional context and other areas of concern including modern slavery and human trafficking, nuclear prohibition treaty, West Papua and the Philippines and Palestine see:

Our Vision for a Just Australia: Contributing to a Just and Peaceful World

<https://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/F7-Contributing-to-a-Just-and-Peaceful-World.pdf>

Further reading:

[The Australian Council for International Development Federal Election 2022 Resource](#)

[Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021](#)

[Australian Government Aid Program](#)

⁴ [Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook 2021](#)

⁵ <https://devpolicy.org/aidtracker/trends/>

⁶ <https://donortracker.org/country/australia>