



INCLUSIVE AND EQUAL SOCIETY



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OUR VISION:

We live together in a society where all are equal, safe and free to exercise our rights equally, regardless of faith, cultural background, race, ability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. We defend those rights for all.

OUR HOPES

- That all people are free to participate in society and exercise their right to be treated equally and without discrimination or prejudice, regardless of age, race, ability, income level, educational attainment, sexual orientation, or gender identity.
- That older people and people with disability are treated with respect and dignity and able to live their life to the full. Where they require supports to live independently, they have voice, choice and control around those supports.
- That every child can live their best life and realise their potential in later life.
- That every person is safe in their own home and community.
- That disability and age are not barriers to participating as an equal member of society.
- That people in Australia of all backgrounds and beliefs feel safe and able to challenge destructive and demeaning language and behaviour.
- That we have robust and responsive structures that ensure everyone can access the support they need, when and where they need it.

THE STATE OF THE NATION

Disadvantage is determined early in life

- 1 in 6 Australian children aged 0-14 years lived in poverty in 2019-2020.
- More than 1.3 million children live in a household where all or some go hungry and single parent households are hit the worst.¹
- More than 1 in 3 children living in the most disadvantaged locations have higher rates of developmental vulnerability when they start school, more than twice that of children in the least disadvantaged areas (14.9%).²
- Children from areas of greatest socioeconomic disadvantage are 10 times more likely to be under justice supervision.³

Many others face barriers to social and economic participation due to their faith, cultural background, race, ability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity

- The greatest determinant of where a person will end up in terms of wealth and income in our society is the wealth, income and education level of their parents.
- Abuse is most prevalent among physically, financially or emotionally vulnerable people.⁴
- Homelessness is a pervasive and growing issue across society. One in seven people experiencing homelessness are children under 12 years, one in four are young people aged between 12 and 24, and one in five are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.⁵
- 3.3 million people (13.4%) in Australia live below the poverty line, including one in six children.⁶
- Gender-based inequalities and discrimination disproportionately affect women and girls with disability. They face greater risk of violence, especially sexual violence, abuse and harassment.⁷
- People with high support needs, people living in rural and remote areas, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and members of LGBTIQ communities can face even greater difficulties accessing appropriate services and support, particularly when they belong to more than one of these groupings.⁸
- The need for combatting racism has been recognised by the Australian Human Rights Commission as it released its 2024 "An Anti-Racism Framework". This is particularly pertinent at this time as Australia experiences rises in anti-semitism, islamophobia and racial slurs towards First Nations peoples.
- In 2022, 60% of First Nations people had experienced at least one form of racial prejudice, compared to 52% in 2020 and 43% in 2018.⁹
- One in six (18 per cent) people reported having experienced discrimination in the last 12 months prior to the survey due to their 'skin colour, ethnic origin or religion.'¹⁰
- Only 48% of people in Australia with disability are employed, compared to 80% of all working-age people,¹¹ with lower employment rates contributing to high rates of poverty.¹²

- A disproportionate number of LGBTIQ+ Australians experience poorer mental health outcomes and have higher risk of suicidal behaviours than their peers. These health outcomes are directly related to experiences of stigma, prejudice, discrimination and abuse on the basis of being LGBTIQ+.¹³

People with disability need better choice and control

- An estimated 1.4 million people with disability needed formal assistance from a service provider for at least one everyday living activity.¹⁴ Many people with disability face barriers in accessing services to support them or experience some form of discrimination.¹⁵
- The roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) requires adequate resourcing by the Commonwealth, states and territories.
- The transition to the NDIS is having a significant impact on the support workforce, with some providers struggling to recruit and maintain a suitably skilled workforce.¹⁶
- Access to support staff and contracted services outside of the metropolitan area, especially in rural and remote communities, is another significant barrier for people with disabilities being able to negotiate adequate assistance.

High levels of family violence

- 104,000 people sought homelessness services in 2022–2023 due to domestic/family violence; this included 37,000 children, with women making up the majority (90%) of adults seeking support.¹⁷
- Approximately one in four women (23%) and one in 14 men have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner since the age of 15.¹⁸
- Domestic or family violence against women is a leading cause of homelessness for women.¹⁹

WITNESS FROM THE BIBLE

- All people have been made in the image of God (Gen 1: 26 – 27).
- The prophet Isaiah’s vision of a servant of God, which Jesus later claimed for himself, was of someone who lightens the burden of workers, breaks chains and brings freedom to the oppressed, brings good news to the poor and comforts the broken hearted (Isaiah 58: 6; 61: 1; cf. Luke 4: 18).
- Jesus is described as coming to enable a rich and full life (John 10:10). During his ministry he regularly crossed social boundaries, including within his ministry many who were otherwise dismissed or avoided by his society including “sinners and tax collectors” (Matthew 9:10 – 11; 11: 19), Samaritans and other non-Israelites (Luke 17: 11 – 19; John 4: 7 – 30), lepers (Matthew 8: 1 – 4; 11: 4 – 6) and women, including those seen as unclean or undesirable (Matthew 9: 18 – 26; Luke 7 36 – 50; 8: 1 – 3). Jesus even taught that enemies should be treated with love and care (Matthew 5: 43 – 48).
- The New Testament epistles look toward a community for all with no distinctions or favouritism (Galatians 3: 28, James 2: 1 – 9) and a final gathering in of all nations and peoples (Revelation 7: 9 – 10; 22: 22 – 26, Colossians 1:20).

WHAT THE UCA AFFIRMS

The Basis of Union (1971, 1992 Edition)

“God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. The Church’s call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation...”

The Statement to the Nation (1977)

“We affirm our eagerness to uphold basic Christian values and principles, such as the importance of every human being, ... rights for each citizen to participate in decision-making in the community, religious liberty and personal dignity, and a concern for the welfare of the whole human race.

We affirm the rights of all people to equal educational opportunities, adequate healthcare, freedom of speech, employment or dignity in unemployment if work is not available. We will oppose all forms of discrimination which infringe basic rights and freedoms.”

Australian Bicentennial Year Statement (1988)

“We give thanks for those times when the Australian society has established justice, equality, and mutual respect among people; has placed care for the people who have least above sectional interests; has welcomed new migrants and refugees; has exercised solidarity and friendship in times of crisis in Australia across divisions of race and culture...

We deplore the divisions of humanity along racial, cultural, political, economic, sexual and religious lines. In obedience to God, we struggle against all systems and attitudes which set person against person, group against group, or nation against nation.”

Reconciliation People: A Statement from the National Young Adult Leaders’ Conference (2010)

“We believe that we were all created equal and are one people in the eyes of God. We encourage our country to embrace and celebrate our diversity. We challenge our government to welcome, with empathy, those who seek refuge in our land. There is no supremacy of any culture or gender; rather, when we work together as a united people, in recognition of, but regardless of difference, we will bring about change.”

Pastoral Statement - Dr Deidre Palmer - Racism and Police Brutality UCA Assembly 3rd June 2020

“... We need to focus on the racism which blights our land, the racism, which leads to Aboriginal deaths in custody, which has First Peoples experiencing discrimination, poverty, ill health and disadvantage. We began this National Reconciliation week by saying we need to strengthen our actions for justice, healing and reconciliation. This is not an abstract call – it is seen expressed daily in our relationships with one another in this country. It is seen when we:

1. Call out racism
2. Tell the truth about the history of colonisation, dispossession and the undermining of First People’s culture, language and spirituality
3. Advocate for First People’s voice to be heard in determining their future
4. Respect and appreciate the culture and stories of First Peoples, and work together to deepen our relationships based on reconciliation that arises from justice, and leads to healing, and
5. Live in harmony with the sacred land that we share.

To stand by and remain silent is to be complicit in contributing to a system and world that is against God’s intention for us all. ‘What God desires is for us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God’. (Micah 6:8)”

OUR ASKS

1. People with disability and older people have access to appropriate, quality, well-funded services that meets their needs in the location they choose.
2. Safeguards are in place which protect against violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of older people and people with disability in line with the recommendations of relevant Royal Commissions.
3. Ensuring our legal system protects all people from discrimination.
4. The government needs to continue in its efforts to ensure people on the NDIS are not abused or exploited by providers and that fraud by providers continues to be curbed
5. Prioritise promoting inclusion and addressing all forms of discrimination in communities, including through awareness-raising, policies and action plans.
6. A comprehensive approach to preventing gender-based violence and domestic and family violence with targeted strategies for those most at risk. This includes challenging the social norms

7. Sustainable funding for services and housing which support survivors of domestic and family violence.
 8. Implement and adequately resource the National Plans to End Violence Against Women and Children including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan.
 9. Ensure universal access to quality early learning and care for all children prior to their commencement of school.
 10. Significantly increase investment in prevention and early intervention programs to support vulnerable families.
 11. Ensure disadvantaged and 'at risk' families have access to vital supports, including social housing, early childhood education and care, health and domestic and family violence support services.
 12. Ensure social security and family payments settings provide adequate support to low- income families, including single-parent families.
- a) Offer care and support for older people?
 - b) Promote awareness of domestic and family violence and offer support for people impacted by this violence?
 - c) Offer care and support for people suffering from discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability?
 - d) Increase accessibility for and inclusion of people with disability and older people in your community?

CONVERSATION STARTERS

You may like to select one or two of these questions to put to MPs or community leaders

1. What policies will ensure all children receive the best start in life?
2. How can we ensure older people in Australia are treated with dignity, and where care is needed, that they receive high quality care?
3. What is your commitment to the equality of women across our community and what actions will you take to promote this?
4. How will you tackle the high rates of domestic and family violence, both in terms of prevention and supporting people who are affected?
5. What is your response to discrimination based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability?
6. What initiatives are already happening or could happen in your local community that could:

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19. Ibid.