

NATIONAL COUNCIL SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

The Society acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to the elders past, present, and emerging.

The St Vincent de Paul Society has a long and proud history of advocating for social justice.

On 22 March 2014 the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia established a National Council Social Justice Advisory Committee (the Committee) to coordinate and promote the social justice and advocacy work of the Society across Australia.

Catholic Social Teachings offer the Society foundational principles to live the Gospel message in the world and to bring hope to those who are in any way afflicted, poor or oppressed.

The Rule of the Society provides the Committee with a foundation for its work.

The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the unjust structures that cause it. (Part I Article 7.1)

Vincentians envisage a more just society in which the rights, responsibilities and development of all people are promoted. (Part I Article 7.2)

Blessed Frederic Ozanam said: ...You must not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crisis. You must study their injustices which brought about such poverty, with the aim of a long-term improvement

CONTEXT

The work of the Committee aligns with [National Council's 2023-27 Strategic Plan](#), in particular, Good Works Vision and Objectives and Advocacy Vision and Objectives.

PURPOSE

The role of the Committee is to assist the National Council fulfil its Vision to be recognised as a caring lay Catholic charity offering “a hand up” to people in need by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.

SCOPE

The aims of the Committee are to create a more just and compassionate Australian society by:

1. advising and making recommendations to the National Council on social justice issues
2. sharing information on Social Justice activities undertaken by the States and Territories
3. supporting Social Justice activities undertaken by the States and Territories
4. investigating, researching and providing advice on any social justice issue referred by National Council.

SOCIAL JUSTICE PRIORITY AREAS

Each year the Committee shall identify Priority Issues and these Priority Issues shall provide the main focus of activities undertaken by the Committee for the following year.

Priority Issues will be identified by reviewing matters raised by National Council and the Committee members throughout the year and may include surveying the National Council, State and Territory Councils and Committee members.

Each year, the Committee shall notify the National Council of the Priority Issues and the National Council must agree to the Priority Issues to be addressed by the Committee. The agreed Priority Issues may be those notified by the Committee or may be other Priority Issues identified by National Council.

MEMBERSHIP

The Committee shall comprise:

1. a Chair who shall be appointed by National Council
2. a member committed to, or interested in, social justice and advocacy matters to be appointed by their state or territory council
3. a National Council member responsible for keeping National Council informed of national social justice committee matters and providing feedback to the committee

Each State and Territory will have only one vote.

All Members of the Committee shall step down upon the end of the National President's term of office. Persons are eligible for reappointment to the Committee under the new National President.

Employees of the St Vincent de Paul Society who are engaged in social justice activities may provide support to the Committee and attend meetings.

If a Member of the Committee is unable to attend a meeting, a co-opted Conference member, nominated by the Member of the Committee, may attend on their behalf. The co-opted Conference member will hold the same rights as the Member of the Committee. A co-opted Conference member cannot be an employee of the Society.

BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT

St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia is committed to ensuring a positive culture of safeguarding, inclusiveness and privacy practices in which our interactions are respectful, collaborative and cross culturally informed.

National Council's commitment means that at every level of the Society, all people, regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to respect, inclusion and protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

The Committee will foster this culture in its interactions with its members, the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia and its National Council, and companions and stakeholders engaged with in the course of fulfilling the aims of this Terms of Reference.

Committee members must abide by National Council's *Working Together Guidelines* (Attachment 1). These Guidelines seek to encourage collegiality and professional and courteous manners as the foundations of working together within the Society.

REPORTING

The Committee shall report to the National Council through the nominated National Council member (Membership, item 3)

Those members of the Committee who are drawn from State and Territory Social Justice Committees shall provide to their respective State or Territory Council the Annual Workplan and a written report of the Committee's activities as soon as possible after each meeting.

The Committee will produce social justice and advocacy material which may include:

- reviews of government policies relevant to the Priority Issues; and
- individual jurisdictional events and campaigns; and
- changes in national and state laws affecting St Vincent de Paul social justice principles and service delivery; and
- invitations to join in and promote participation in jurisdictional Social Justice Committee activities.

MEETING PROTOCOL

The Chair may invite observers to Committee meetings.

The secretariat for the Committee will be provided by the National Council's Secretariate.

Meetings will be held at least quarterly online and may include one face to face meeting each year.

ANNUAL WORK PLAN

The Committee Chair, with the National Director - Policy and Advocacy, will submit an Annual Work Plan and budget, through the National Council Chief Executive Officer, to the National Council for endorsement.

The Committee Chair with the National Director - Policy and Advocacy, will prepare a written report after each meeting, mapping progress against milestones in the Annual Work Plan and will make it available to Committee members.

PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO URGENT REQUESTS REGARDING SOCIAL JUSTICE, POLICY AND ADVOCACY

From time to time the National Council and/or the National Secretariate may be called on, with short notice, to comment or provide a policy statement on issues relating to social justice and advocacy. In consultation with the Committee Chair, the CEO National Council will formulate the policy position which will then be forwarded to the National President, for approval.

VINCENTIAN REFUGEE NETWORK (VRN)

For social justice matters concerning migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, the VRN's policy work will feed into the work of the Committee. The VRN will provide regular updates of its work to the Chair of the Committee by email, with a copy to the National Secretariate.

COSTS

An annual allocation, determined by National Council, will be used to cover costs for Committee meetings.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Each year these Terms of Reference will be ratified by the Committee's members when finalising its Annual Work Plan.

Terms of reference will also be reviewed at the commencement of the term of the National President or where required in the interim.

These Terms of Reference can be amended or modified by the Committee and forwarded to the National Council Board of Directors for endorsement.

Revised:	Date:	By:
	October 2016	Committee
	October 2019	Committee
	November 2019	NCCEO
	19 August 2024	Committee
	05 September 2024	NCCEO
	19 September 2024	National President

Endorsed	Date:	By:
	November 2016	National Council
	23-24 November 2019	National Council
	12 October 2024	National Council