



*Summary of*  
**NATIONAL COUNCIL DELIBERATIONS**  
**FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT**  
**OCTOBER 2024**



## **SUMMARY OF DELIBERATIONS – OCTOBER 2024**

It was my honour to welcome three new State and Territory Council Presidents as new members of the National Council at the October meeting. Mr Peter Houweling (NSW President) who took office in September, Ms Geraldine Hawkes (SA President) and Mr Damian Legg (NT President) who both took office in October.

**National Council met online on 12 October 2024. Below is a summary of key matters discussed.**

### **UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS OF CONGRESS 23+ PROJECTS**

October marks the first anniversary of the face-to-face element of Congress 2023+ so it was timely to think about delivering an update on progress on the Congress initiatives to as many Society stakeholders as possible. In dialogue with the Chair of the Membership, Mission and Spirituality Standing Committee and Mr Brendan Podbury (a Standing Committee member) a proposal as presented to National Council for consideration and subsequently endorsed. Keep an eye out in the coming weeks for Member update on the progress of Congress Projects via initiative 1 through to 5.

### **UPDATE ON THE SOCIETY AS A LAY CATHOLIC ORGANISATION**

In response to National Council's request in May 2024 to develop a single national framework to articulate the meaning for the Society being a lay Catholic organisation. Two iterative explorations elicited feedback from across the Society which assisted with setting the goals that could be achieved through a new and separate foundational document.

That document, which now is moving from a 'draft-in-progress' to a final document, is being developed by a drafting group drawn from a combination of State and Territory mission and spirituality employees alongside Sr Therese. Those responsible for drafting this document brought an intimate knowledge of the Society's spiritual foundations and Catholic Social Teaching. They have been toiling away preparing a potential Formation Framework that captures the essence of what it means for the Society to be a lay Catholic organisation and which will become an important formation document for the Society's stewards and those employees we engage as leaders. As this draft-in-progress document continues to be refined, it is now clear that it could become a foundational resource for the Society for the coming decade.

The National Council noted the work of the drafting group and endorsed the conceptual foundation of the draft-in-progress Foundational Framework.

### **UPDATE ON SAFEGUARDING MATTERS**

As at 9 October 2024, the overall assessment is that the Society's bodies corporate involved are moving towards compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. Some entities are very advanced, others are just starting. Progress, on the whole, is good and should continue to build with the establishment of a Safeguarding Officer Network which will value the technical advice and proposals developed by the Technical Working Group-Safeguarding and access to available NCSS compliant policies and procedures.

### **ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY REDRESS LTD**

The quarterly report was received from the NRS Operator and an important fact from that report is that of the 44,046 applications that have been submitted to the Scheme, 18,520 (42%) have been finalised. Further, in late September 2024, the Redress Act was amended to allow applicants to request a review of a past

determination and this option is available until 30 June 2027. Together, this information provides evidence that the Society will be involved in potential redress claims until approximately 2029.

## **SSVP OCEANIA PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

A key initiative for the Oceania Partnership Program the SSVP Oceania Partnership Meeting will be taking place in Canberra 16-18 November 2024. The purpose of the meeting is to further the establishment of the SSVP Oceania Partnership and its aims to support the development and sustainability of the National Councils in the Oceania region that are twinned with Australia.

## **UPDATE ON REVIEW OF *THE RULE* PART III**

Following almost three months of consultation, feedback on the 2nd amendments to Part III were due at the end of September 2024. There have been over 100 suggestions for the Rule Review Drafting Committee to consider. The Secretariat will shortly commence preparing a format that seeks to highlight all the feedback by Article; this will be distributed when complete.

## **FEDERAL ELECTION MATTERS**

The Society's national advocacy work strongly draws on Catholic Social Teaching that provide the principles to judge the adequacy of government policies. In this respect, social policy initiatives that emerge as part of the next Federal Election will be assessed against how these announcements encourage the common good, support human dignity and promote a fairer Australia for all citizens.

Since the 2022 Federal Election material had been published, the National Council Secretariat has revised those papers which now deliver a more nuanced and comprehensive position on the social justice issues being advanced by the National Council Social Justice Advisory Committee (NCSJAC) for a few reasons. First, the Society's policy positions reflect the Society's most current reflections of the experiences and the views of the community over a significant period, which include a pandemic and more recently cost of living and housing crises.

Secondly, the revisions reflect the growing social policy evidence base and significant research commissioned by the Society over the same time. And finally, the Commonwealth Government has made policy and program inroads in some areas (such as secure work and housing) but less so in others (such as people seeking asylum) and these initiatives need to be reflected in the content and National Council's final public positions.

The Society's advocacy employees in SVdP-NSW, SVdP-Vic, SVdP-Qld, SVdP-C-G and members of the NCSJAC and the Vincentian Refugee Network (VRN) have been involved in and agree with the proposals outlined in the revised advocacy papers.