



Uniting Church in Australia Social Justice Statements

A foundation document of the CES drawn from UCA statements

At its inaugural Assembly in 1977, the Uniting Church in Australia issued a Statement to the Nation which makes very clear its commitment to social justice. In addition, the 1997 Assembly issued an Invitation to the Nation setting out the values to which it believed Australia should aspire.

Statement to the Nation – Inaugural Assembly, June 1977

People of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches have united. A new church has been born.

We, who are members of the first Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia address the people of Australia in this historic moment. The path to unity has been long and at times difficult, but we believe this unity is a sign of the reconciliation we seek for the whole human race.

We acknowledge with gratitude that the churches from which we have come have contributed in various ways to the life and development of this nation. A Christian responsibility to society has always been regarded as fundamental to the mission of the Church. In the Uniting Church our response to the Christian gospel will continue to involve us in social and national affairs.

We are conscious of our responsibilities within and beyond this country. We particularly acknowledge our responsibilities as one branch of the Christian church within the region of South-East Asia and the Pacific. In these contexts we make certain affirmations at the time of our inauguration.

We affirm our eagerness to uphold basic Christian values and principles, such as the importance of every human being, the need for integrity in public life, the proclamation of truth and justice, the 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 pledge ourselves to seek the correction of injustices wherever they occur. We will work for the eradication of poverty and racism within our society and beyond. We affirm the rights of all people to equal educational opportunities, adequate health care, 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.

We will challenge values which emphasise acquisitiveness and greed in disregard of the needs of others and which encourage a higher standard of living for the privileged in the face of the daily widening gap between the rich and poor.

We are concerned with the basic human rights of future generations and will urge the wise use of energy, the protection of the environment and the replenishment of the earth's resources for their use and enjoyment.

Finally we affirm that the first allegiance of Christians is God, under whose judgment the policies and actions of all nations must pass. We realise that sometimes this allegiance may bring us into conflict with the rulers of our day. But our Uniting Church, as an institution within the nation, must constantly stress the universal values which must find expression in national policies if humanity is to survive.

We pledge ourselves to hope and work for a nation whose goals are not guided by self-interest alone, but by concern for the welfare of all persons everywhere — the family of the One God — the God made known in Jesus of Nazareth the One who gave His life for others.

In the spirit of His self-giving love we seek to go forward.

Invitation to the Nation – Eighth Assembly, July 1997

We, the members of the 1997 National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, are deeply concerned for our nation at this time. Therefore, in response to our understanding of our calling as Christian people and as citizens, we commit ourselves to participate in the building of our nation as one which:

- seeks the truth about its present and its past, knowing that this is essential for our health as a nation
- refuses to give power to those who call us away from the generosity, hospitality, fair-play and sense of community which we have honoured in ourselves over the years
- recognising the long-standing relationship of Aboriginal people with the land, unswervingly sustains a commitment to being a nation which moves towards justice and reconciliation with them, with special concern about our responses to the Wik decision and the damage done to the “stolen generations”
- affirms Australia as a multicultural society in which all its people, whatever their ethnic origin, are cherished and respected
- with due alarm about the ever widening gap between rich and poor, upholds values, both economic and social, which move us towards a society of equity and compassion and a sharing of resources for the common good
- listens and responds to the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in remote, rural and urban areas, both here and overseas
- stands firmly for human rights, even at cost to itself, as a responsible member of the international community
- takes its place as a country which makes its rightful contribution to the well-being of the environment, for the sake of the whole creation and for future generations.

21 November 2006