



Uniting Church in Australia

The Northern Synod & Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia

Social Justice Preliminary Work Plan 2019

Objectives:

- Congregations in PPNA/NS are adequately supported and resourced in their work, activities, and advocacy for social justice;
- PPNA/NS are informed and briefed on important social justice issues and initiatives, including current Assembly social justice projects;

Goals:

- A Social Justice Advocates Network within PPNA/NS.
- Strong partnerships in social responsibility and justice among the three pillars: PPNA/NRCC/NS.
- Effective sharing across PPNA/NS of Assembly and other Church resources in Social Responsibility, Justice and Advocacy.
- A Social Justice Steering Committee comprising the Social Justice Staff, Presbytery Minister/Chairperson, NRCC Rep, and a Synod Rep is formed to ensure the Vision Statement and Goals of the Synod as they relate to social responsibility and justice are implemented.
- Proactive resourcing of congregations and their leaders to engage with social responsibility, justice and advocacy in their local context and as part of the wider Uniting Church.

The Role:

Part-time 25% involving one day a week which is usually **Thursdays**. Nightcliff Uniting Church provides the office space. All meetings involving the Presbyteries and Synod will be held on a Thursday in the Synod office for convenience, and to allow for fellowship and engagement with other colleagues.

Clearly the area of social responsibility and justice is huge and very demanding, in the Northern Territory itself, let alone Australia and the rest of the globe. Given the part-time nature of the role, the approach must be strategic and proactive. This requires good forward planning, and a disciplined process of prioritising. It is not possible to do everything and being reactive is to be discouraged.

It is envisaged that a first meeting of the Social Justice Steering Committee may be convened within the next few weeks to ensure more detailed strategic planning is in progress before end of the year. In addition, a PPNA/NS Social Justice Network is being formed and its first gathering is planned for late November.

Work Plan:

(i) Issues

As mentioned, there is no shortage of social responsibility and justice issues demanding attention. The issues already identified, consistent with current Assembly concerns include:

- Economy of Life & Ecological Justice (Sustainability)
- Climate Change, Resilience, and Justice (Environment)
- Migration - Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Human Rights – Racial, Gender, Sexuality
- Justice for Indigenous Australians (Covenanting)
- Uniting for Peace – Palestine etc...
- Society, Religion, and Politics – Homelessness, West Papua, Nuclear Disarmament

The first meeting of the Social Justice Steering Committee (SJSC) will look at prioritising the work and ensuring focused and strategic approach for maximum and sustainable impact.

(ii) Annual Celebration – Social Justice Sunday

- The last Sunday of September each year is Social Justice Sunday. The intention is that congregations in PPNA/NS will celebrate Social Justice Sunday annually and the staff will take leadership in the development and provision of worship resources that will be made available across the synod in advance.
- This year (**29 September 2019**) the focus is on genuine encounter in a digital world. We are reminded that while some positive changes to human lives have been the outcome of advances in this technology, there are challenges that urgently need attention particularly in relation to the dignity of vulnerable people harmed by online bullying and exploitation. Due to time constraints an email notice will go out from the synod office inviting congregations to mark Social Justice during their worship services in some way, by a prayer or even just a mention. Worship resources for Social Justice Sunday 2020 will be available in Feb next year.
- For the longer term the intention is to produce a theological and biblical resource on social responsibility and justice outlining the vision and rationale for our calling to work for social justice and peace and why we do what we do. This document will frame the vision and priorities of the PPNA/NS as they relate to social justice and will include group studies as well as suggestions for practical application accessible for congregations and leaders to use at the grassroots.

(iii) Preliminary Plans: Activities/Events

1st Quarter (Sept-Dec 2019)

- Social Justice Sunday 29 Sept 2019
- Report to SSC 26 Sept 2019
- 1st Meeting of the SJSC Nov 2019
- Report to PPNA&NS late October 2019
- 1st Gathering Social Justice Network end Nov 2019
- West Papua Info & Awareness Raising Event early Dec 2019
- Short & Long Term Strategic Plan published Dec 2019

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