

NATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

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 is informed by its Policy Statement (2018) and aligns with Item 3.2 of the National Council's Strategic Plan 2016-2020.

The Committee's Policy Statement is at Attachment A.

PURPOSE

The role of the Committee is to assist the National Council fulfil its Vision to be recognised as a caring 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:

1. create a more just and compassionate Australian society
2. advise and make recommendations to the National Council on social justice issues
3. share information on Social Justice activities undertaken by the States and Territories
4. support Social Justice activities undertaken by the States and Territories
5. investigate, research and provide advice on any social justice issue referred by National Council.

SOCIAL JUSTICE PRIORITY AREAS

In July of 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. the Social Justice Committee Chair drawn from each State and Territory Social Justice Committee who shall be a Conference member of the St Vincent de Paul Society in their jurisdiction as defined in Part III Article 1 of The Rule.
3. a Director, nominated by National Council, who will act as Board Champion.
4. other persons with expertise or experience in social policy or public advocacy or working with people whom are disadvantaged and/or socially excluded from the life of local community.

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.

REPORTING

The Committee shall report to the National Council through a Board Champion whose portfolio includes Social Justice.

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 Saint 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 Secretariate.

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

ANNUAL WORK PLAN

After the annual face to face meeting, the Committee Chair will submit an Annual Work Plan, incorporating an annual budget, through the National Council Chief Executive Officer, to the National Council for endorsement.

The Committee Chair will prepare a written report, after each meeting, mapping progress against milestones in the Annual Work Plan and circulate it to Committee members, with a copy to National Secretariate.

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.

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS AND CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

The Committee will retain a list of subject matter experts to whom topics will be referred for advice or public statement. The subject matter experts may be members, volunteers or employees who have agreed to assist the Committee in this way.

The Committee may establish a circle of friends comprising eminent persons who may be called on to provide advice as required.

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 National Secretariate.

COSTS

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

AMENDMENT OF THESE TERMS OF REFERENCE

These Terms of Reference shall only be amended or modified by the National Council Board of Directors.

Revised:	October 2019	Committee
	November 2019	NCCEO
Endorsed:	23-24 November 2019	National Council