

# **PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION**

The Public Affairs Commission appointed by General Synod has the responsibility to

1. develop a process to assist people engage with public affairs.
2. respond, within its capacity, to aspects of public affairs. These aspects may be referred to the Commission or initiated by the Commission.
3. report to General Synod.
4. work collaboratively with National Diocesan Social Issues Network.

The membership of the Commission consists of the following:

Dr Ray Cleary (Chairman)	
Wayne Brighton	
Mr Rowan Callick	Resigned December 2005
The Revd Peter Catt	Resigned
Ms Ellen Davis-Meehan	Resigned February 2007
The Revd Dr Mark Durie	
The Revd Dr Marian Free	
Dr Beth Heyde	
Mr John Langmore	
Ms Sue Leppert	Resigned February 2007
Mr Theo Mackaay	
The Revd Dr Ruwan Palapathwala	
Ms Carolyn Tan	

The agenda for the Public Affairs Commission is provided by:

- references to the Committee by the Primate.
- initiatives undertaken by the Commission itself in response to a wide range of issues in the community.

In recent times the major issues addressed by the Commission include:

- responding to the Federal Government's initiative on Citizenship and the future requirement that migrants into Australia undertake a Citizenship test .
- the provision of energy for Australia, including the issue of nuclear power.
- Human Rights including the detention of David Hicks, the West Papuan crisis in 2006, the Middle East and the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel, and Iraq.
- Members of the Public Affairs Commission met with Bishop Riah, the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem during September 2006 to discuss the ongoing crisis in the Middle East.
- Overseas Aid - the Commission initiated a joint meeting of overseas aid agencies to discuss closer working relationships and coordinated responses during periods of crisis.

The Commission is responsible for the ongoing dialogue between the Anglican Church and the Jewish community. This was an initiative of the Primate and Standing Committee and during 2006 two meetings of this group were held. Membership of the Dialogue is:

**Anglicans**

Dr Ray Cleary (Chairman)  
The Reverend Ray Barraclough  
The Reverend Dr Greg Jenks  
Archdeacon Philip Newman

**Jews**

Mr Jeremy Jones  
Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence  
Mr Grahame Leonard  
Rabbi John Levi

Topics discussed in this dialogue have included:

- the meaning of justice and its application in contemporary Australia;
- ways in which the Jewish and Anglican Communities can work together to pursue a common good;
- the ongoing conflict in the Middle East;
- Passover; and
- the role of minority groups in the community.

Other issues addressed by the Public Affairs Commission, including the release of media statements, are as follows:

- Protecting children from tobacco;
- The establishment of the Centre for an Ethical Society;
- The preparation of ecumenical social justice statements, this year entitled "Australia's Role as a Global Citizen";
- Questions on Islamic relationships;
- Climate change and poverty;
- Homeland security;
- Industrial Relations;
- Ethical Investments.

The Chairman of the Commission attended the International Anglican Communion Conference in South Africa in March 2007 entitled, "An International Conference on Prophetic Witness, Social Development and HIV and Aids." Over 450 delegates from across the Anglican Communion attended the Conference. The communiqué from the conference is on the website [www.team2007.org](http://www.team2007.org).

The Commission operates from a limited resource base and meets only once a year face-to-face. Other meetings are conducted by teleconference or via email. The Chairman of the Commission participates in the Centre for an Ethical Society and has attended a number of meetings with the Department of Foreign Affairs in relation to Overseas Aid and other meetings from time to time. The work of the Commission is undertaken during periods of broad community discussion and Diocesan Bishops and others are invited to comment on various papers that have been prepared by the Commission. This is notwithstanding the fact that many Dioceses themselves respond separately to these issues.

The work of the Commission is severely restricted by budget restraints which limit the Commission's ability to meet face-to-face on a more regular basis so as to provide timely advice and discussion on important areas of mission in the public domain for the National Church. If the work is to be done more effectively additional resources will be necessary.

Canon Dr Ray Cleary

Chair, Public Affairs Commission