

PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION

ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The Public Affairs Commission (PAC) is reference commission under the Strategic Issues, Commissions, Task Forces and Networks Canon 1998. Its functions as set out in s12B of that Canon are:

- (a) to develop a process to assist people engage with public affairs;
- (b) to respond within its capacity to aspects of public affairs referred by the Primate, the Standing Committee or the General Synod or initiated by the Commission;
- (c) to work collaboratively with any diocesan body engaged in public affairs or any network of diocesan bodies engaged in public affairs.

The PAC also observes the Protocol for Making Public Statements which was developed by the Standing Committee in 2011 and updated in 2020.

MEMBERSHIP

PAC members are appointed by the Primate on the recommendation of the Standing Committee.

The current members and Dioceses, and, where relevant, their organisations, are:

The Rev'd Dr Lynn Arnold AO, Adelaide
 The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt, Brisbane
 Ms Kasy Chambers, Anglicare Australia, Canberra-Goulburn
 Mr Brad Chapman, Anglican Board of Mission, Adelaide
 Ms Rose Elu, NATSIAC, Brisbane
 The Rev'd Dianne Langham, NATSIAC, Newcastle
 The Rev'd Bronwyn Pagram, Brisbane
 The Rev'd Dr Evan Pederick, Tasmania
 Dr Carolyn Tan, Perth (Chairperson)

The Right Rev'd Dr Stephen Pickard, Canberra-Goulburn, is a consultant to PAC.

Since General Synod in 2017, the following members have resigned from PAC:

The Rev'd Dr Andrew Cameron, Canberra-Goulburn
 Dr Beth Heyde, Canberra-Goulburn
 The Rev'd Jan Crombie, Melbourne then Brisbane
 The Rev'd Roberta Hamilton, Melbourne

Meetings of PAC have mainly taken place by regular telephone hook-ups and the occasional face to face meeting. Most of the work is done by email exchange between meetings.

Attendances at meetings from Jan 2017 to December 2021 have been as follows:

Attendance at Meetings		
Member's Name	Eligible to attend	Attended
The Hon Rev'd Dr Lynn Arnold AO	22	11
The Rev'd Dr Andrew Cameron (resigned in October 2019)	17	8

The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt	27	21
Ms Kasy Chambers	27	15
Mr Bradley Chapman	27	15
The Ven Jan Crombie (appointed Dec 17, resigned in August 19)	10	8
Ms Rose Elu (appointed Dec 17)	23	5
The Rev'd Robert Hamilton (appointed Dec 18, on leave of absence through most of 2019, resigned December 2020)	12	1
The Rev'd Dianne Langham (appointed Dec 19)	11	0
The Rev'd Bronwyn Pagram (appointed Dec 19)	11	10
The Rev'd Dr Evan Pederick	26	19
Dr Carolyn Tan	27	27

MAIN ACTIVITIES SINCE GENERAL SYNOD IN 2017 UNTIL END OF JANUARY FEBRUARY 2022

The PAC has written submissions to government and government or parliamentary inquiries and (where indicated) appeared in hearings on the following topics:

- To the Expert Panel on Religious Freedom (2018)
- To the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2018)
- To the Senate Committee Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee on the Modern Slavery Bill and appeared before the Senate Inquiry into the Bill (2018)
- Joint letter with Anglican Board of Mission to the Prime Minister and Minister for First Australians on the Statement from the Heart (2019)
- To the Senate Inquiry into amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) (2019) and appearing before the Senate Inquiry (2019)
- To the Commonwealth Attorney-General on the exposure drafts of the Religious Discrimination Bill (2019 and 2020)
- To the Review of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (2020)
- To the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 (2020)
- To the Joint Select Committee of NSW Parliament on the NSW Anti-Discrimination (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Amendment Bill (2020)
- To the Prime Minister and Treasurer on the proposed amendments to the responsible lending obligations in the *National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009* (Cth) (2020)
- To the Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment on the amendments to the Fair Work Amendment (Supporting Australia's Jobs and Economic Recovery) Bill 2020 (2021)
- To the Treasurer and some senators on the changes to governance standards in the amendments to the Charities Regulations (2021)
- To the Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process in relation to their 2021 Interim Report (2021)
- To the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights on the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 (2021) and appearing before the Committee (2022);
- To the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee on the Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 and appearing before the Committee (2022)

The PAC has also provided reports and advice to Standing Committee on the following:

- Recognition in the Anglican Church of Australia Constitution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2017-2019 and ongoing)
- The implications of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth) (2019)
- On the submissions referred to above.

The PAC also issued statements and information for Anglicans and the wider public on:

- To Dioceses on the General Synod resolution on the Paris Climate Accord and a guide to complying with the Protection of the Environment Canon 2007 and on their carbon footprint (2018)
- On Climate Change as an election issue (2019)
- On the National Day of Climate Action (2019)
- A summary of concerns and draft letter re the second exposure draft of the Religious Discrimination Bill (2020).
- A Position Paper on Climate Action (2021)

The various submissions and statements outlined above can be found on the Social Issues and Public Affairs page on the Anglican Church of Australia website.

The PAC also co-signed the following letters or statements:

- a letter to the Prime Minister with the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (2020);
- a letter to the Premier of NSW urging the enactment of the NSW Modern Slavery Act, organised by Be Slavery Free and co-signed by various NSW Dioceses (2020);
- an open Inter-faith letter to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition in support of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and co-signed by the Primate;
- in support of Earth Over-shoot Day, co-signed by various Anglican Cathedrals and the National Council of Churches (2020).

In 2018, the PAC co-hosted the Abundant Justice Conference in Brisbane which brought together Anglicans and other Christians working for social justice around the country.

In 2019, the PAC has provided advice to NATSIAC on the legal processes to amend the Anglican Church of Australia Constitution and on various other church constitutions which contain provisions providing recognition or a special place for First Nations members.

In 2019, the PAC members attended Parliament House in Canberra to speak to various parliamentarians about issues of concern to the PAC.

In 2020, the PAC has provided advice to the Primate on the campaign and open letter on the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

We have worked with ABM in publicising the Voice in the Wilderness, such as in letters to Bishops in 2019.

We are currently working on developing a paper for parishes and agencies to engage with of reconciliation and the need for decoloniality.

In addition, PAC has kept a watching brief on:

- assisted dying. We have provided resources to the Perth Social Responsibilities Commission in its submissions and seminars on assisted dying legislation in Western Australia;

- the Global Goals for Sustainable Development;
- Modern Slavery legislation and reports;
- Indigenous Voice Co-Design issues;
- Electoral legislation amendments proposed;
- Ethical investment issues.

SYNOD RESOLUTIONS ADDRESSED BY THE PAC

As outlined above, the PAC has carried out work in relation to the Synod resolutions calling for action by the PAC or by the Standing Committee and referred to the PAC:

R 28/17 – First Nations' Voice

R 62/17 – Action on the Paris Climate Accord

It has also carried out a watching brief in relation to the following resolutions which were referred by Standing Committee to the PAC but did not request any specific action from the PAC:

R 37/17 – UN Conference on Nuclear Disarmament

R 42/17 – Australian Freedom Network

R 54/17 – Global Goals for Sustainable Development

R 63/17 – Assisted Dying

EXPENSES INCURRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BUDGET AND REASONS FOR VARIATION

2017:

Budget - \$3000

Costs incurred –\$699

2018:

Budget - \$3000

Costs incurred - \$2515

2019:

Budget was a total of \$6,100 (being standard annual \$3100 plus project funding of \$2000 for organisation of Parliament House meetings and \$1000 for attendance at NATSIAC)

Actual costs were - \$9781.46.

The budget was exceeded by \$3681.46 due to a meeting in Canberra with politicians this year and an appearance before the Senate Inquiry on the Sex Discrimination Act amendments.

2020:

Budget - \$3000

Costs incurred in 2020 - \$0

2021:

Budget - \$3,100

Costs incurred in 2021 - \$0

MOTIONS FOR GENERAL SYNOD 2022

It is proposed that the PAC will promote at least the following motions at General Synod in 2022. There may be additional motions but these have not been formulated yet as at the date of this report in February 2022:

Motion 1:**Jobseeker:**

That General Synod –

1. Notes that:

- a. More than a million people across Australia live on government payments that do not cover the cost of housing, food, transport and healthcare.
- b. The next generation is paying the price of poverty. Over one million children live in households reliant on JobSeeker. Living on JobSeeker is the biggest risk to growing up in poverty.
- c. The Government has previously briefly raised the rate of JobSeeker above the poverty line, lifting hundreds of thousands of people out of poverty. It has the power to do this again.

2. Calls for:

- a. An immediate raise to the rate of JobSeeker above the poverty line.
- b. An independent Social Security Commission with the power to set government payments, to make sure payments never again fall below the poverty line.

Moved: Rev Canon Peter Sandeman

Seconded: Dr Carolyn Tan

Rationale

Across Australia, one out of every eight people lives in poverty. Worse still, one child in every six lives in poverty. The biggest risk factor for living in poverty is living on income support.

Even with top-ups and extra payments, JobSeeker traps people in hardship. The Government's increase of the rate above the poverty line during the pandemic briefly tackled this crisis, lifting Australians out of poverty more quickly than at any other time in history. Their cuts in 2021 plunged people back into poverty just as quickly.

With one million children living in households that rely on JobSeeker, the next generation is bearing the brunt of the poverty crisis. Research from Anglicare Australia shows that these families could be skipping meals as often as daily, and some are forced to couch-surf because they can't afford to pay the rent.

To tackle poverty, the Government must raise the rate of these payments above the poverty line. This would again lift Australians out of poverty, make it easier for people to look for work, and help parents give their children the best start in life.

Australia has done it before. We can do it again.

General Synod is asked to join Anglicare Australia in calling for an end to the poverty trap by raising the rate of JobSeeker above the poverty line.

See:

The Poverty in Australia Report 2020 at:

<http://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Poverty-in-Australia-2020-Part-1-Overview.pdf>

Australian National University study on JobSeeker and poverty at:

https://csm.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2020/8/Impact_of_Covid19_JobKeeper_and_Jobseeker_measures_on_Poverty_and_Financial_Stress_FINAL.pdf

Anglicare Australia Asking Those Who Know study at:

<https://www.anglicare.asn.au/publications/asking-those-who-know/>

Motion 2:

Climate Change- call to the church

That this Synod,

A. Noting:

1. Resolution A17:05 of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) 2017, in which the ACC recognised that there is a Climate Emergency and called on member churches to respond in ways that are 'a living testament to our faith';
2. Resolution A17:06 of the ACC 2017, in which the ACC called upon member churches to work towards building climate resilience;
3. That the 2020 meeting of the General Synod of The Church of England (C of E) called on 'all parts of the C of E ... to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target'.
4. With concern, the lack of progress in the Anglican Church of Australia in reporting on the Environmental Canon 2007 and reporting on the calculation of emissions as requested in R62/17.

B. Recognises that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice.

C. Affirms the actions involving worship, mission, advocacy, and community participation commended to the Church in ACC 2017 Resolutions A17.05 and A17.06.

D. Encourages the Diocese and Agencies of the Anglican Church of Australia to work towards net zero carbon emissions by 2040.

E. Urges the Diocese and Agencies of the Anglican Church of Australia to:

1. Strengthen their efforts to report on the Environmental Canon 2007;
2. Submit their best estimates of carbon emissions on an annual basis to The Standing Committee to enable us as a Province to track our progress toward net zero carbon emissions; and
3. Embrace the actions commended to the Church through ACC 2017 Resolutions A17.05 and A17.06.

Moved: The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt

Seconded: TBA

Notes of other resolutions referred to in the motion:

Resolution of General Synod of the Church of England in 2020

That this Synod, recognising that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice, and following the call of the Anglican Communion in ACC Resolutions A17.05 and A17.06;

- (a) *call upon all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, BMOs [Bishop Mission Orders], education institutions, dioceses, cathedrals, and the NCIs [National Church Institutions], to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target;*

- (b) *request reports on progress from the Environment Working Group and the NCIs every three years beginning in 2022 and;*
- (c) *call on each Diocesan Synod, and cathedral Chapter, to address progress toward net zero emissions every three years.*

From Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) 2017 Resolutions:

A17:05 Anglican Communion Environmental Network

The Anglican Consultative Council:

- recognises that there is a global climate emergency,
- encourages Member Churches to make the Fifth Mark of Mission, 'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth', a living testament to our faith, and calls upon Member Churches to:
 - promote a day during the Season of Creation as a day of public repentance
 - develop an action plan and resources for sustainable living at individual, parish, diocesan and provincial level; including policies and procedures to minimise waste, increase use of renewable energies, and incorporate creation care into liturgical practice,
 - prepare a Lenten Fast for Creation,
 - hold strategic planning conferences on the Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change, ensuring the involvement of Indigenous, youth, and women's voices, and to report back to ACC18,
 - identify environmental and climate-related threats in their context and to develop or adapt existing tools on disaster preparedness and mitigation,
 - encourages the organisers of the Lambeth Conference 2020 to make the conference as environmentally sustainable as possible.

A17:06 Climate resilience

The Anglican Consultative Council:

- celebrates the work undertaken by some Member Churches and the Anglican Communion Environmental Network to shift messaging and action from climate vulnerability to climate resilience
- regrets that the ongoing impacts of climate change are yet to be adequately resourced or responded to with due seriousness or urgency by all Member Churches, and therefore commits immediately to:
 - o recognising the important role of Indigenous/First Nation peoples' knowledge in building resilience to climate change in communities,
 - o encouraging Member Churches to prioritise investment in resources to support education, training and activism in addressing climate change,
 - o encouraging Member Churches to identify and assist actively the most at risk communities within the Anglican Communion,
 - o encouraging Member Churches to develop a strategy for climate-induced disaster preparedness, emergency relief and post-disaster rehabilitation;
- calls on the Anglican Alliance to work with the Secretary General, Anglican Communion relief and development agencies, and relevant sections of the Anglican Communion Office to coordinate an implementation report on this resolution to the Standing Committee, before ACC18.

Anglican Church of Australia General Synod 2017

R62/17 Action to contribute to the Paris Climate Accord

Noting:

- the global groundswell of community and industry support for effective and rapid action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the very challenging goal expressed in the 2015 Paris Climate Accord (to limit warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels);

- the critical importance of community action, both in achieving that goal and in leading governments to act;
- the Anglican Communion's fifth mark of mission: 'to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth', and
- General Synod's Protection of the Environment Canon 2007 which required meaningful action and reporting by participating Dioceses on steps taken to reduce their environmental impact;

The General Synod

1. encourages Federal and State governments in Australia to act quickly to resolve perceived conflicts of interest between the wider community and commercial beneficiaries of fossil fuels, and show leadership in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through effective market mechanisms based on consistent expert recommendations;
2. requests each Diocese that has adopted the Protection of the Environment Canon 2007 to report to the Standing Committee of General Synod in 2018, and to the next meeting of General Synod, on progress in reducing their environmental impact (as required by s.3(1)), with particular emphasis on energy efficiency in order to minimise contributions to global warming;
3. encourages Dioceses to make use of standardised instruments such as the Parish Quick Carbon Self-Report instrument (available through the Public Affairs Commission) in order to develop an internal reporting mechanism;
4. encourages Dioceses to report to the Standing Committee of General Synod in 2018, and to the next meeting of General Synod, on progress made towards divestment from fossil fuels or other measures to improve the ecological sustainability of Diocesan investments portfolios, as encouraged by motion 61/14 of General Synod;
5. encourages Dioceses to engage in teaching and preaching on the theology of the environment;
6. encourages Dioceses to consider the work of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) towards spiritually-inspired stewardship in reducing greenhouse gas emissions: and to encourage participation in the work of this multi-faith network and consideration also of secular networks with similar aims to reduce global greenhouse emissions.

Motion 3:

Climate change – call on Australian governments

Noting:

- A. Australia's endorsement of the 2015 UN Paris Climate Change Agreement (COP21) and in particular the global framework to avoid dangerous climate change caused by emissions of greenhouse gases by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.
- B. Australia's pledge to the 2021 UN Glasgow Conference (COP26) to achieve nett zero emissions by 2050, and the endorsement of this pledge by both the Coalition government at the time of the Conference and the Australian Labour Party then in Opposition.
- C. That all Australian sub-national governments have also endorsed the goal of nett zero emissions by 2050 or earlier.
- D. That all levels of Australian government apart from WA and NT have committed to interim reductions by 2030.
- E. That urgent action to keep the 1.5C goal alive was called for at COP26 with 190 countries pledging to rapidly phase down their use of coal – a pledge that was not adopted by Australia.

- F. That while Australian greenhouse gas emissions in the electricity generation sector are declining, in all other sectors including transport, agriculture and resource extraction emissions continue to increase consistent with a 3C warming scenario if other countries followed similar policies and emissions trajectories.¹

This Synod:

1. understands the theological value of the natural world as a divine blessing intended by God to flourish and to be shared in harmony by human communities, and recognises that this blessing has been spoiled and abused by human greed and carelessness;
2. laments the suffering already being endured across the world by communities facing drought, water insufficiency, loss of arable lands, destructive fire events, cyclones, floods and rising sea levels, and the increasing threat to life caused by rising global temperatures, air pollution and loss of biodiversity which will be borne disproportionately by the poorest of the world's poor;
3. is appalled at the lack of action by governments and powerful corporations who pay lip-service to the need for climate action but do not take the urgent and far-reaching actions consistent with avoiding climate catastrophe and immense suffering;
4. is ashamed of the low ambition for climate action shown by government, major institutions and businesses in Australia, and resolves to hold major stakeholders to account;
5. calls upon the Federal government to explain how its stated support for the 1.5C warming goal can be consistent with its refusal to adopt the COP26 pledge to phase down the use of coal;
6. calls on all levels of Australian government to significantly lift interim 2030 emissions targets in recognition that action must be taken this decade to avoid breaching the 1.5C warming target;
7. calls upon the Federal and each of the sub-national governments to advise what policies it has implemented or plans to implement in order to achieve both the net zero by 2050 goal and the keeping of global warming below 1.5C
8. demands that Australian governments enact legislation to ensure businesses profiting from our shared environment are made accountable and financially responsible for the true cost of environmental degradation including climate change mitigation and adaptation;
9. encourages all levels of Australian government to think beyond the next budget cycle, to commit the level of resources consistent with the scale of the problem, to equip and encourage Australian institutions, media organisations, businesses and places of learning in order that we can work together to develop imaginative and creative responses to climate catastrophe.

Moved: The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt
Seconded: TBA

1 Climate Action Tracker <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/australia/>, accessed 12/2/2022.