



Victorian Council of Churches

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23rd DECEMBER

A RESPONSE TO THE STATEMENT 'STRONG ACTION TO FIGHT HATE AND HELP VICTORIA HEAL' (a joint statement by Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan, Minister for Police Anthony Carabines and Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ingrid Stitt)

"Glory to God in highest heaven and on earth peace to people of good will." Luke 2:14

It is good to see that the Victorian government is opening up a conversation and proposing measures to deal with the deep and sometimes violent divisions that have become apparent in our society. These divisions have been recently demonstrated by the attack in Ripponlea. Attacks on places of worship are an attack on the community that worships there and have no place in a free society.

Freedom of speech is a fundamental human right and this involves the right to peaceful protest, to be able to make your voice heard. It does not, however, include a right to violence or intimidation. It does not include a right to call for violence or to treat those with whom we disagree as unworthy of respect. It does not even include a right to hamper others from going about their lives.

The government can, and should, implement measures to deal with the more extreme symptoms of these deep divisions, with the violence, physical and verbal, that has marred our civic discourse. It is the whole of society, however, that needs to deal with the root cause of these problems.

This can only be resolved when we can sit and listen to those with whom we profoundly disagree and deal with them not simply as opponents but as fellow human beings, having a profound respect for their innate dignity.

This Christmas, the Christ Child offers peace to all people of good will. That peace and good will would make these proposed laws and regulations unnecessary and unused. That's a society and a future to hope for.

Rev Deacon Dr Joseph Leach
President, Victorian Council of Churches

Victorian Council of Churches – Member Churches

Anglican Church – Archdiocese of Melbourne, and Dioceses of Ballarat, Bendigo, Gippsland and Wangaratta;
Antiochian Orthodox Church; Armenian Apostolic Church; Bulgarian Orthodox Church; Churches of Christ; Coptic Orthodox Church;
Greek Orthodox Church; Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East; German Lutheran Trinity Church;
Lutheran Church of Australia; Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church; Mar Thoma Syrian Church; Melbourne Church of South India;
Melbourne Welsh Church; Melkite Catholic Eparchy; Religious Society of Friends; Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne,
Dioceses of Ballarat, Sale and Sandhurst; Romanian Orthodox Church; St George Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church; Salvation Army;
Syrian Orthodox Church; Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy; Uniting Church in Australia.