

Presbyterian Church of Victoria

CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

Human rights Statement

- All human beings are made in God's image and likeness and are therefore afforded great dignity and intrinsic worth (Gen.1:26ff). Being made by Him and for Him, human beings, along with all creation, exist for His glory (Col. 1:16; Rom. 11:36)
- Because humans beings are image bearers, God's moral law places duties on them with respect to how they treat other 'human beings' (Ex.20:3-17; Deut. 5:7-22 and Matt 22:36-4; 23:39). We can deduce from these duties what might be called human rights. For example, the right to worship (1st to 3rd), work and rest (4th); the right to a mother and father (5th); the right to life (6th); the right to be married (7th); the right to property (8th,10th); the right to a fair trial (9th). The Presbyterian Church of Victoria believes that for human rights to be valid, they need to be:
 - Universal – they apply to all people at all time.
 - Absolute – they cannot be abolished.
 - Non-derogable – because they are absolute they cannot be limited in any way, at any time, for any reason, even in time of a national emergency.

Human rights are different to, and take precedence over selective rights. Selective rights are those rights that only apply to certain people, at certain times, in certain ways (eg., rights based on ethnicity or sexuality).

- Human rights include the right to life, liberty and security (UDHR, Article 3). The right to life and security includes the right not to be killed, tortured, crippled, aborted, euthanased, eugenically removed or subjected to involuntary experimentation. The right to liberty includes the fundamental right to freedom of religion, conscience and speech (UDHR, article 19). And while not exhaustive, we recognise other human rights like the right to work and rest, own property and be given a fair trial (UDHR, Article 6-11, 17, 23-24).
- Because human rights are ultimately derived from God, states do not establish human rights; rather, they recognise them. Established, recognised laws should enshrine universal human rights, and these are best upheld by a state with both limited powers and the ability to execute the rule of law. Accordingly the state, instituted by God, should not be a terror to good conduct (Rom. 13:1-7), and it is the role of the church to humbly remind the magistrate of this duty (W.C.F 31:5).