



**20 May 2024**

### **Letter from Victorian religious leaders on prayer in Parliament**

Religious leaders who minister to and care for more than two million Victorians have written to all members of the Victorian Parliament to express the fundamental and ongoing importance of prayer in Parliament.

The letter was signed by the Most Reverend Peter A Comensoli, Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne; The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier, Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne; Sheikh Muhammad Nawas Saleem, Secretary of the Board of Imams Victoria; Shri Makarand Bhagwat, President of the Hindu Council of Australia (VIC); and Rabbi Ralph Genende OAM, Director Jewish Life at Jewish Care, Interfaith and Community Liaison at Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC), Rabbi at Keshet Community.

The leaders urged members to recognise the valuable role of prayer in Parliament and ensure its practice continues to play an integral part of our democratic tradition.

“For more than 100 years, the Victorian Parliament – along with Parliaments across Australia – have commenced Parliamentary sitting days with prayer. This short time of prayer, embodies the deep contribution thousands have made to our democracy and its institutions,” the leaders wrote.

“The recitation of prayer is a common tradition of the Westminster system, and together with the Acknowledgement of Country, provide a vital link to two important facets of our heritage.”

“The Lord’s Prayer, which is recited in our Victorian Parliament, is a simple prayer – commonly held across traditions. It represents a call to our community to honour God, so as to love and serve others before ourselves. It is underpinned by crucial notions of forgiveness, gratitude, reconciliation, unity and the common good – recognising that we alone, are not the sole arbitrator of our destiny.”

“While diverse in many ways, the majority of Victorians – Christian and non-Christian alike – believe in a God or a Higher Power other than themselves. It remains incumbent on our Members of Parliament, to respect these beliefs and the rich, long-held traditions on which our parliamentary system has been built,” the leaders said.

The leaders also assured parliamentarians of their continued prayers – for them and their work – as they seek to serve the community by advancing the common good.

A personalised copy of the letter is attached.

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