

Friday 10 May, 2024

Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Member of Parliament,

As religious leaders who minister to and care for more than two million Victorians in our communities, we write to express the fundamental and ongoing importance of prayer in Parliament.

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. It is a strong reminder that Parliament is not the ultimate authority for building a just and caring society. 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.

Parliamentarians do not recite the Lord's Prayer in Parliament because it is a workplace, but rather, because it is an action of public acknowledgement of their responsible service to the people of Victoria.

As leaders of faith communities, we urge you, as an elected representative of the people of Victoria, to recognise the valuable role of prayer in Parliament and ensure its practice continues to play an integral part of our democratic tradition.

Please be assured of our continued prayers – for you, your work and families – as you seek to serve our community by advancing the common good.

Yours sincerely,

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli DD STL MLitt PhD
Archbishop, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne



The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier
Archbishop, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne



Sheikh Muhammad Nawas Saleem
Secretary, Board of Imams Victoria



Shri Makarand Bhagwat
President, Hindu Council of Australia (VIC)



Rabbi Ralph Genende OAM
Director Jewish Life, Jewish Care
Interfaith and Community Liaison, Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC)
Rabbi, Keshet Community

