



Open Letter to the Honourable Premier of Victoria

13th November 2023

Honourable Jacinta Allan MP
Premier of Victoria
Level 1
1 Treasury Place
East Melbourne
Victoria, 3002

Dear Premier Allan,

Re: Urgent Intervention Required for the Continuation of Funding for Spiritual Care in Victoria

We, the undersigned faith leaders of communities currently receiving funding for spiritual care services, are writing to express our deep concern over the recent decision to cease all funding to the Spiritual Health Association (SHA) and faith communities as of June 30, 2024.

For nearly 70 years, this funding has been a cornerstone in providing emotional and spiritual support to Victorians in need. It has been a bipartisan commitment that has not only elevated the quality of healthcare but has also generated significant goodwill within our diverse communities.

The decision to discontinue this funding undermines the efforts made by countless volunteers and professionals dedicated to the well-being of patients and their families. We are particularly concerned about the impact this will have on Victoria's healthcare system, which prides itself on offering a holistic approach to patient care.

We understand that financial considerations are a factor in policy decisions. However, it is essential to recognise that the value of spiritual care extends far beyond monetary metrics. The emotional and spiritual support provided through this funding significantly contributes to the quality of life for thousands of Victorians, aligning with the principles of compassion, dignity, and holistic health.

We, therefore, respectfully request that you intervene in this decision and ensure that the funding for SHA and the faith communities is restored. In the context of a healthcare system that aims to be inclusive and person-centred, the cessation of this long-standing financial support would be a step backward, affecting not just the spiritual care sector but the very fabric of our diverse society.

Your immediate attention to this critical matter will make a profound impact on the lives of countless Victorians. We are open to engaging in constructive dialogue to find a sustainable path forward.

Sincerely,

Leaders of the Faith Communities of Victoria (As listed below)



Archbishop Dr Philip Freier, Archbishop of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

Archbishop Peter Comensoli, Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

Mr Dinesh Weerakkody, President, Buddhist Council of Victoria

Ms Agnes Sheehan, CEO, CatholicCare Victoria

Makarand Bhagwat, President, The Hindu Council of Australia (Victorian Branch)

Adel Salman, President, Islamic Council of Victoria

Daniel Aghion KC, President, Jewish Community Council of Victoria

Bishop Lester Priebbenow, Lutheran Church of Australia, Victorian District

His Eminence, Metropolitan Petar, The Diocesan Bishop of The Macedonian Orthodox Church, Diocese of Australia and New Zealand

Reverend Ian Hutton, Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Victoria

Jasbir Singh Suropada, Chairperson, Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria

Reverend David Fotheringham, Moderator, Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria & Tasmania