

Unpacking our Founding Purpose

A charter of what it means for Mission Australia to be a Christian organisation.

Introduction

The Founding Purpose of Mission Australia has been expressed for 160 years as:

“Inspired by Jesus Christ, Mission Australia exists to meet human need and to spread the knowledge of the love of God.”

This document provides additional clarity about our Founding Purpose, and what that means for us as a Christian organisation.

Our Founding Purpose

Mission Australia’s Founding Purpose expresses a calling that remains as relevant as ever. It should not be read in a nostalgic way, nor as an historical artefact, but as an ongoing reality. The opening words call us to reflect on the person and work of Jesus as our source of purpose, strength and guidance.¹ When we do this our Founding Purpose is enlivened from one generation to the next. As Christians we are called to hold fast to foundational biblical principles.² We acknowledge that the diligent use of spiritual disciplines including prayer and bible study will help bring those principles to life in our faith and actions at Mission Australia.³

A. General themes

Holism in our mission

Our Founding Purpose recognises the breadth of human need, both physical and spiritual. Mission Australia aims to meet the needs of the whole person, which sets us apart from secular service providers.⁴ We believe that lasting transformation in individuals and societies flows from internal regeneration,⁵ and that there are many linkages between ‘meeting human need’ and ‘spreading the knowledge of the love of God’.⁶ Mission Australia recognises that God is the supreme change agent in this world, and that He calls us to prayerfully and obediently apply biblical principles as we work out His plans for the communities where we work.⁷

¹ Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 8:9

² Psalm 119:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

³ Philippians 1:27; 2:12; James 1:22

⁴ Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 15:11; Mark 14:7

⁵ John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁶ John 13:35; 1 John 4:20

⁷ Jeremiah 29:7; 1 John 4:20; Philippians 2:12

Mission Australia seeks to address human need in a holistic way, recognising the spiritual aspects of personhood, and the sovereign guiding presence of God in the world.

Faithfulness and inclusion

Our Founding Purpose very clearly recognises that Mission Australia draws its inspiration from Jesus Christ.⁸ At an organisational level, we seek to remain faithful to our Christian identity, recognising that this is a shared responsibility. While chaplains have an important role to play in our work, our Christian faith is not 'outsourced' to any one group of employees. Because our Christian identity is to be authentic, we resist superficial labelling or compartmentalising of Christian faith within organisational life.⁹

Reflecting on the example of Jesus, we note the way Jesus drew people from many different backgrounds into his life and mission. It is also noted all people have valuable gifts and experience which are used by God in fulfilling His purposes.¹⁰ The workforce of Mission Australia includes Christians, people of other faiths, people on a faith journey, and people of no-faith. Mission Australia values the dedication, giftedness and goodwill of all our staff from their diverse backgrounds and we expect every staff member will know and acknowledge Mission Australia's commitment to its explicitly Christian identity and not act in any way which diminishes or undermines it.

Mission Australia will recruit all staff transparently on this basis, being clear about who we are. The role of induction and on-boarding have a particular relevance to Mission Australia given that every staff member will take their own part in its history as a Christian organisation of 160 years' standing.

Finally, the role of mature Christian leaders - especially Directors and Executives - as culture bearers is celebrated and affirmed within the life of Mission Australia. These leaders have a particular responsibility in commending the Christian faith through their lived example in the workplace, by exhibiting the highest ethical and operational standards, and in setting a collegial tone that is gracious, appreciative and non-judgemental towards others.¹¹

Mission Australia develops policies which are faithful to our Christian identity, including reflecting inclusiveness as an important biblical value.

⁸ 2 Timothy 1:8-14

⁹ Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 12:1-2

¹⁰ Proverbs 21:1

¹¹ Leviticus 19:11-18; Philippians 4:8-9; 1 Timothy 3:2-7; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2

Stewardship and risk

As a Christian organisation, Mission Australia must exercise the highest standard of accountability in the application of its resources.¹² The level of probity required is the same, whether these funds are from governments or private sources. A well-developed sense of good stewardship requires efficiency in the use of funds and effectiveness of outcomes.

At Mission Australia we are mindful of Jesus' commandment *"love your neighbour as yourself"*.¹³ Mission Australia remains committed to evidence-based programming, and to measurement of our impact, so that we can serve our neighbours in the best way that we possibly can. As the Proverb says: *"Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding."*¹⁴

Mission Australia continues to develop comprehensive effectiveness measures across all its services

It is important that we are able to faithfully discharge our founding purpose on a sustainable basis, and in doing so that we reflect credit on our Christian identity and mission.¹⁵ In addition, our love for all people means that we will give priority to the safety of our staff, clients and the communities we serve.¹⁶ As stewards of this earth and everything in it, we promote social and environmental policies which minimise harm and promote wellbeing.¹⁷ Therefore,

Mission Australia manages risk carefully as an organisational, reputational and pastoral responsibility under God.

B. How and why do we work to meet human need?

A focus on the disadvantaged and vulnerable

Jesus interacted with people from all walks of life, but had a special concern for people living on the margins of society. He proclaimed a unique kingdom which blesses those who are least or last in this world.¹⁸ The life of Jesus affirmed the dignity and value of the poor,

¹² Proverbs 14:34-35; Matthew 24:44-46; 1 Corinthians 4:2

¹³ Matthew 22:39; Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 15:7-15

¹⁴ Proverbs 3:13

¹⁵ Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15; Titus 2:9-10

¹⁶ Proverbs 14:16 (ESV), 22:3; Matthew 22:39; Romans 12:9; 1 Corinthians 12:25

¹⁷ Genesis 2:15

¹⁸ Matthew 5:3-12

disabled and disempowered by giving them his time, attention and heartfelt compassion.¹⁹ Inspired by Jesus we will support those in our society who experience persistent disadvantage.

In addition, our history has shown that many Australians experience vulnerability because of natural disasters and climate events. Mission Australia will respond proactively and with compassion as we identify with and seek to protect our fellow Australians from disasters and to care for those who suffer through them.

Following Jesus' example, our work is designed to address persistent disadvantage and vulnerability within Australian society. In doing so, we will promote social and climate policies which minimise harm and promote wellbeing.

First Australians

As an Australian services organisation, we recognise a particular responsibility to our First Nations peoples. We acknowledge that God has been present and active in our Indigenous communities since time immemorial. We acknowledge with shame the actions during European settlement of systemic injustice and dispossession and honour the special relationship that Indigenous people have as custodians of the land on which we meet and work.

Jesus Christ by His life and saving death reconciles His people to God,²⁰ and calls us to be reconciled to one another.²¹ Therefore Mission Australia recognises the task of reconciliation as an essential aspect of our Christian work, and wholeheartedly strives for reconciliation with First Nations people through recognition, empowerment and service.

Mission Australia commits to indigenous reconciliation, in its many dimensions, as a Christian responsibility.

Evangelising

Mission Australia bears an unashamedly Christian 'brand' but we are not an evangelistic association, and we do not engage in or support proselytism in the course of meeting human need. We believe that unconditional love and grace lie at the heart of the gospel, and we will therefore provide care and service to everyone without distinction. We will never insist on anyone engaging in discussions about Christian faith, or accepting Christian material or messages, in order to receive assistance or to work with Mission Australia. This type of

¹⁹ Leviticus 19:13-15; Deuteronomy 24:17-22; Proverbs 31:8-9; Mark 2:15-17; Luke 8:26-39; John 4:9,27; 9:1-41; Romans 12:16, 14:19; Hebrews 12:14

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Ephesians 2:13-22; Colossians 1:19-23

²¹ Ecclesiastes 4:12; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27, 4:2; 1 Peter 3:8-9

behaviour does not promote the Christian gospel but diminishes it through manipulation. There is an added responsibility when the people we are dealing with have particular vulnerabilities. Consistent with those important caveats, Mission Australia is committed to spreading the knowledge of the love of God in a sensitive way, including having Christian literature readily available in our premises to anyone who wants it, in the hope that we may help build up, encourage and transform many lives.²²

Mission Australia will not engage in any form of manipulation when seeking to meet spiritual need

True wellbeing

Jesus' intention is that, through Him, people might experience a more abundant life.²³ With this in mind, Mission Australia aims to help our clients make good choices that will promote their own wellbeing and help them to make a positive contribution in the lives of others.²⁴ We recognise that helping people to take greater responsibility in their own lives will in the longer run avoid dependence and build personal dignity.²⁵

Mission Australia commits to achieving lasting change in people's lives.

Building community

All people are made in the image of God, and this is fundamentally an image of community.²⁶ Father, Son and Holy Spirit subsist in relationships of mutuality, love, and service²⁷ and this is the paradigm set for humans.²⁸ Everyone is uniquely created and gifted and has a contribution to make for others.²⁹ Meaning and purpose come from a broader sense of belonging and inter-connectedness, and this can be experienced both socially and spiritually. Part of our work at Mission Australia is to strengthen communities so that all people can flourish. For Mission Australia, an especially important community of belonging is the local church.³⁰

Mission Australia seeks to strengthen communities and community participation, including in partnership with local churches.

²² 1 Peter 3:15

²³ John 10:10

²⁴ Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 3:13-18, 4:7; James 3:17

²⁵ Proverbs 14:23; Ecclesiastes 2:24, 3:9-13, 9:10; Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

²⁶ Genesis 1:26-27

²⁷ Mark 9:37; John 8:16; 10:30,38; 12:44-45; 14:10; 15:23; 17:4-5,10-11,20-24; Acts 10:38

²⁸ Romans 12:3-5; Philippians 2:5-8

²⁹ Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11

³⁰ Romans 14:16-19; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 13:17

Building strong families and relationships

Marriage and family are sanctified by God and form a picture of the relationship between God and His people.³¹ Under God, families of different kinds exist and have a key role in building a strong and thriving communities.³²

Mission Australia works to honour and build up safe family structures and relationships by providing support where they are fractured or at risk. In doing so Mission Australia will seek to understand and overcome destructive pressures on families including domestic violence³³, financial strain, and poverty³⁴ recognising that in some circumstances safety can only be achieved by people living apart.

Mission Australia works to honour and build up safe family structures and relationships by providing support where they are fractured or at risk.

Relational, not transactional

Being inspired by Jesus means that we are called to mirror Christ's self-sacrificial compassion.³⁵ We will undoubtedly be moved by the stories we hear and the circumstances we encounter while we work. Importantly, at Mission Australia we understand that our work is relational rather than transactional, and that real empathy is the best window to genuine human understanding.³⁶ The needs of the diverse cohorts we serve will be illuminated by pastoral attentiveness and professional excellence.³⁷

Mission Australia takes a people-centred and relational approach in its work.

³¹ Ephesians 5:25, Galatians 6:10

³² Genesis 2:18; Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:8

³³ Proverbs 5; Ephesians 4:31-32; 5:25-28,33; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8; 1 Peter 3:7

³⁴ Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Psalm 41:1; 82:3; Proverbs 14:20-21; 19:17; 21:13; 28:27; Galatians 2:10; James 2:1-10

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:25; Philippians 2:3-8; 2 Timothy 1:8; 2:3

³⁶ Romans 12:10, 15; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Hebrews 13:1-3; James 1:27

³⁷ Acts 20:26-28,31; Hebrews 13:17

Advocacy

As an organisation inspired by Jesus, we seek to give a voice to those who have none. Jesus own ministry stands in a time-honoured prophetic tradition, and we too will speak out on issues of injustice and unfairness.³⁸ The advocacy work of Mission Australia has a central role in seeking to influence public policy in the interests of the disadvantaged and vulnerable.

Mission Australia uses its advocacy to help address human need at the systemic level.

C. How does our work spread the knowledge of the love of God?

Sharing the good news

In the words of our Founding Purpose, Mission Australia acknowledges Jesus' calling to spread the knowledge of the love of God.³⁹ We accept this invitation gladly, without timidity or embarrassment. Jesus continuously seeks relationship with all people and His purpose in doing so is completely good: to restore, heal and make whole His creation. While only the Holy Spirit can convince people of the truth about God,⁴⁰ the task for Mission Australia is to share openly and honestly its Christian belief.⁴¹

All Mission Australia staff, whether or not they are able to represent this calling personally, are expected to make use of available referral material whenever clients seek spiritual guidance.

Mission Australia commits to spreading the knowledge of the love of God as an inseparable aspect of our organisational calling.

Investment in Christian communication

Spreading the knowledge of the love of God requires effective communication.⁴² We will continue to invest in the development of resources such as bible studies, prayer guides, prayer diaries, and small groups that may be helpful to our staff and clients and have them visibly available in all our facilities. Mission Australia makes Bibles available to anyone who is interested in receiving them. We also invest in the discipling and Christian formation of staff and clients who want to understand more deeply what it means to follow Jesus.

³⁸ Psalm 82:3-4; Proverbs 21:3; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 22:3; James 1:27

³⁹ Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:20

⁴⁰ John 16:8-11

⁴¹ Romans 1:16

⁴² Acts 8:30-31; Romans 10:14,17

Mission Australia invests in developing and distributing resources that will help to share God's love.

The local church

Mission Australia is not a church, but its ministry stands in solidarity with the mission of churches. We will work non-denominationally, reflecting the generous and practical ecumenism that has been part of the story of Mission Australia since its inception. At Mission Australia we want to be informed about the support, social programs and worship opportunities available at local churches, and to make sure that local churches are aware of our work and mission.⁴³ Relationships with churches are encouraged at program sites, recognising the important partnership of local churches as an expression of God's welcome, renewal and support. Mission Australia will support and work with churches which are planting new Christian faith communities in places where Mission Australia is active but where no Christian church exists.

Mission Australia reaches out to local churches to build supportive working relationships with them.

Resilience

Global research and experience shows that a personal religious faith can be a source of resilience that helps people to navigate difficult or traumatic circumstances in life. People who identify with a particular faith may also have a clearer sense of identity and belonging.

As a specifically Christian organisation, Mission Australia affirms faith in Jesus Christ as providing hope for the future and strength and solace in the present.⁴⁴ We believe that the personal knowledge of God in Jesus Christ is life-changing and life-affirming, and that all people, as the beneficiaries of His common grace, have intrinsic value.⁴⁵ Therefore:

Mission Australia believes that while spiritual belief may positively inform resilience and personal wellbeing, we affirm the Christian faith specifically as being true and transformative.

Societal realities

At Mission Australia we recognise pain caused by churches and their affiliated institutions to some people, and the widespread abuses of trust that have taken place across generations.

⁴³ Philippians 1:5

⁴⁴ Romans 5:1-6; 15:13

⁴⁵ Genesis 1:27-30; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Galatians 6:10

This impacts our ability to spread the knowledge of the love of God to some people.⁴⁶ At Mission Australia our sincere hope is to play a part in the journey of healing for people who have been hurt, by providing a positive example of Christian ministry.⁴⁷

We also recognise that in our secular Australian society many of our clients, partners and staff will not want to engage on spiritual matters. As people of grace we humbly accept that, and we will work doubly hard to live out a positive and welcoming example as a Christian organisation.⁴⁸

Mission Australia works to build trust and promote healing in the general community through its positive Christian example.

Pastoral care

Spreading the knowledge of the love of God requires our staff, especially our chaplains, to have a warm and pastoral disposition, and to be willing to listen and care for people of any faith and no faith. At Mission Australia we will pray for and with anyone who desires it.⁴⁹ We recognise that we live in a pluralistic society and while our preference will always be to refer clients to Christian counsellors, we will also refer our clients to practitioners of other religious faiths when this is requested. We do this knowing that other faith communities can provide a sense of belonging, moral teachings and social support.

Appropriate pastoral care is offered to Mission Australia staff and clients who request it.

Christian witness

To be inspired by Jesus Christ means that Mission Australia follows Jesus attentively.⁵⁰ As an organisation, we want to be faithful to Him and to have integrity in all that we do and say. This means that Mission Australia will not disguise or dilute its Christian identity when explaining or expressing itself to others.⁵¹ Our posture will reflect our thankfulness to God and our humility before Him, avoiding brashness, triumphalism, or dogmatism.⁵²

Mission Australia maintains a clear and consistent Christian witness, with a thankful and humble spirit.

⁴⁶ Ezra 9:4-7; Nehemiah 5:9; Proverbs 11:2; 18:3; Jeremiah 2:32-37; 1 Timothy 3:6-7

⁴⁷ Titus 2:7-10; 1 Peter 2:12: 3:16

⁴⁸ Matthew 5:13-16

⁴⁹ 1 Samuel 12:23-24; Jeremiah 29:7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; James 5:13-16

⁵⁰ Matthew 11:29; 1 Peter 2:21

⁵¹ Mark 8:38; Romans 1:16

⁵² 1 Peter 3:15