

ISCAST Vic Symposium

7 September 2019

It's Not that Simple! Theological Approaches to Wicked Problems in Australia Today

Call for Papers

"Some problems are so complex that you have to be highly intelligent and well informed just to be undecided about them." Laurence J. Peter

Wicked problems are the only ones worth tackling! Anon

ISCAST Victoria is hosting a symposium to explore how Christians can get involved in dealing with the incredibly complex problems we are facing in society today. Refugee resettlement, climate change, the global loss of biodiversity, aboriginal health, family violence, and economic development are examples of some of these and for which there are no simple, straightforward solutions.

Such problems typically feature incomplete data or scientific knowledge, significantly differing perspectives and priorities from those affected, and are persistent, so we cannot ignore them in the hope that they might go away. These are sometimes called "Wicked" not because they are inherently evil but because they are so difficult to deal with.

These problems are also "whole-of-society" and not just for Christians to face and resolve in isolation. This poses challenges to us as Christians including:

- To what extent should we get involved in resolving them? 'Isn't that why we elect our government—to make these decisions? Alternatively, can't we rely on God to sort them out?'
- What value is there in doing the little we can do if we are not contributing to solving the problem? 'Doesn't tinkering at the edges only make things worse?'
- How should our Christian insights be offered to a society that is increasingly suspicious of anything branded as "Christian" and which itself is struggling with these issues in its own way?
- Is there an over-arching theological understanding we can adopt to offer us as Christians guidance in getting involved (particularly in our professional capacities); an understanding that will help us both to keep our perspective and maintain our hope in Christ in the face of the apparent futility. Can we do this while being persuaded of the urgency of the problems concerned and that inaction is not an option?

The Symposium will be held at East Camberwell Baptist Church, cnr Hunter and Highfield Roads, Camberwell, on 7 September 2019. It will start at 9:00am and we will aim to finish at 4:00pm. Lunch and morning tea will be provided.

If you feel you have something to share on the day, particularly related to the dot points above, please let us know according to the Submission Guidelines below.

Note that the audience will be fellow ISCASTians and friends of ISCAST who may not be familiar with your subject material. So please do not to assume too much technical knowledge. Also, we are looking to explore how Christians can and should be involved in such issues and how we can support

each other in so doing. We are not looking for proposals to resolve particular issues nor for arguments as to which issues should take priority.

A Call for Presentations

ISCAST invites those with professional standing in public policy, in the science and technology fields, and those who have taken the opportunity to reflect theologically on these matters to present papers of 20 minutes duration (exclusive of discussion). These will explore the items in the dot points listed above. Specifically, we are looking for:

- Examples of wicked problems that ISCASTians are facing on a day to day basis in their studies, research or professions.
- A rationale for Christians to get involved in such issues, particularly in areas where there may be slight or ambiguous Scriptural direction regarding such involvement and where traditionally Christians have not been involved.
- Examples or ideas as to how Christians can contribute to a secular debate on such a subject and especially where our faith in Jesus Christ is seen to be irrelevant to such an issue.
- An introduction to an over-arching theological perspective on Christian involvement in a secular society struggling with complex problems that also are of concern to Christians.

This Symposium will assume that participants will conduct their presentations and contribute to the discussions in the spirit of ISCAST's Core Values, recognising that different people will come up with divergent answers and that at times we will disagree.

Submission Guidelines

- Proposals should be received by Friday, 26 July 2019 via email using the contact details below.
- Proposals should be about 200–250 words long and must include:
 - your full name, title, work or institutional affiliation (if relevant), email address, telephone/mobile phone number, and mailing address;
 - title, aim, and an indication of the line of argument taken (an abstract is preferred);
 - any additional information that may help reviewers weigh your submission.
- Presenters are expected to register for the Symposium and pay the registration fee.
- Whether you will require audiovisual or other equipment for your presentation.
- Selected presenters will be invited to submit their papers for publication on the ISCAST website and, possibly, for a fuller presentation at another ISCAST forum.

Proposals will be peer-reviewed, and we will notify you whether yours has been accepted by Friday, 16 August 2019.

For more information visit: <http://www.iscast.org/symposium2019>

Contact Information:

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