Everyone Should Be Secular

Presentation to the Sunday Assembly

August 21\textsuperscript{st}, 2016

http://victoriansecular.org
(image from Monty Python's The Holy Grail)
Many people confuse atheism with secularism.

Atheism is a lack of belief in Gods. This is a metaphysical position.

Some atheists come across as rather 'gnostic' about this (especially when it comes to contradictory expressions of a deity). Others are 'agnostic atheists'.

(image from 'Atheist Revolution'
http://www.atheistrev.com/2011/09/atheist-or-agnostic-i-both.html)
Secularism is not Atheism. It is not a metaphysical claim. The word 'secular' comes from the Medieval Latin "secularis", meaning worldly or temporal in distinction to the eternal.

Secularism is a term coined by George Holyoake in 1851. "Secular knowledge is manifestly that kind of knowledge which is founded in this life, which relates to the conduct of this life, conduces to the welfare of this life, and is capable of being tested by the experience of this life."
Everyone is *secular*, because everyone exists in this world. But not everyone is a *secularist* or supports *secularism*.

Secularism is a political position that religious beliefs should not influence public and governmental decisions, and that government institutions should not include religious appointments.

Secularism is a necessary but not sufficient condition for universal rights.

Image is Sushil Kumar Shinde, former Minister of Home Affairs, member of the Indian National Congress, from the following article: http://www.rediff.com/news/2002/aug/07inter.htm
Secularists consist of everyone who thinks that political decisions should be secular, regardless of their own metaphysical views, or personal practises.

You can be a secular atheist, a secular Christian, a secular Muslim, a secular Hindu, a secular Buddhist, a secular pagan & etc.

(Image by Randall Munroe from: https://xkcd.com/154/)
Secularism assumes religious pluralism, but is not "equal rights to all religious beliefs" (theocratic pluralism).

Secularism is also opposed by various anti-religious public doctrines (e.g. anti-clericalism, State atheism)

Secularism is the application of "militant agnosticism" on metaphysical claims.
Some Example Questions

The public carrying of potential weapons vs Sikh wearing of the Kirpan.


Racial and Religious Tolerance Act: Distinction between "religious offence" and "group defamation"

(Image by Hari Singh)
The Sunday Assembly and The Victorian Secular Lobby

The principles of The Sunday Assembly is to "Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More".

One way members of the Assembly can "help often" is to become involved in secularism.

Consider joining The Victorian Secular Lobby. We are an incorporated association and a member of the Secular Council of Australia.

Email: public@victoriansecular.org for more details.