

Victoria: A state of opportunity

Jesuit Social Services' Victorian Election Platform

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation with a big vision of building a just society. We work with some of the most marginalised individuals, families and communities, often experiencing multiple and complex challenges.

For 45 years, we have worked to deliver support and advocate for improved policies, legislation and resources to achieve strong, cohesive and vibrant communities where every individual can play their role and flourish.

Our services and advocacy span a range of interconnected areas including:

- Place-based approaches and ecological justice
- Justice and crime prevention
- Education, training and employment
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Gender Justice
- Settlement and community building

Victorian Election 2022: an opportunity to build on existing foundations

The current Victorian Government has undertaken a range of important reforms that work towards increasing equity, reducing disadvantage and helping Victorians reach their full potential.

While these reforms act as the foundation for social change, there is more that needs to be done.

Many people in Victoria continue to experience significant and persistent disadvantage, including disengagement from education, unemployment, homelessness, contact with the justice system, family violence and mental illness.

Over recent years, we have seen COVID-19 and the climate crisis disproportionately impact marginalised people and communities, and exacerbate social inequalities.

There has never been a more important time to continue to push a social reform agenda, provide equitable services and to stand alongside people on the margins.

This election is pivotal to progressing the gains we have made so far. It gives us a chance to call on our political leaders to be accountable and to commit to policies, practices and investments that create inclusion and opportunity for all Victorians.

About our Victorian Election Platform

Our Victorian Election Platform, Victoria: A state of opportunity, draws on 45 years of advocacy and action to provide recommendations across a range of interconnected social policy areas, calling for resources, policies, practices and ideas to continue driving a social change agenda for Victorians.

We advocate for a Victoria that prioritises support for people most at risk, builds community resilience, and advances social, ecological, and gender justice. We believe that Victoria can become an inclusive State where all Victorians have access to the opportunities they need to thrive.

Recommendations

Our key recommendations include for the incoming Victorian Government to:

- **IDENTIFY** locations of complex disadvantage, through Dropping off the Edge research, and develop long-term, place-based and systemic approaches in these locations that centre community decision making and address factors that lead to inequity and disadvantage
- **RAISE** the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years and partner with key stakeholders to develop a therapeutic response for this age group
- **EMBED** restorative justice practices across the Victorian adult justice system, including making group conferencing available to adults
- **HELP** more people facing barriers to employment by continuing both the Jobs Victoria Employment Services initiative and Jobs Victoria Advocates Program beyond June 2023, when funding is due to expire
- **BUILD** at least 60,000 public and community homes available by 2032 with linked support and strengthen protections
- **DRAW** on our Modelling Respect and Equality program and Unpacking the Man Box workshops to up workforce capacity building training for role models who work with men and boys in a range of settings such as schools, youth justice facilities, prisons and community health services to prevent the use of violence
- **PROVIDE** secure, long-term funding for state-wide suicide prevention and bereavement services, including Support After Suicide provided by Jesuit Social Services
- **STRENGTHEN** the interface between the NDIS and state-based services to ensure that issues experienced by people with multiple and complex needs are addressed in congruence
- **IMPROVE** culturally safe access to the service system for newly arrived people, particularly for education, mental health, alcohol and other drugs and family violence.