



On the journey to a more ecologically just future

Jesuit Social Services has been dedicated to building a just society for more than 40 years.

Over the last decade, this approach has evolved to have a focus on ecological justice – that is the interconnection of social justice and environmental justice and the recognition that one cannot be achieved without addressing the other.

Effective ecological justice work requires a balance between urgently addressing the current climate emergency and ensuring the most marginalised members of the community are always included in solutions.

We invited Pedro Walpole SJ, Director of Research at the Institute of Environmental Science for Social Change in the Philippines to help us grapple with these issues by delivering a series of workshops to Board members and staff over a number of years. These workshops helped to expand our understanding of the impact humans are having upon the earth, the changes in climate and environment we are seeing as a result, and how those changes are most keenly felt by poor communities and nations around the globe.

A simple example of this is the rising sea levels threatening small pacific nations and driving forced migration. These poor nations are not contributing to climate change but are bearing the brunt of its impact.

Since 2013, Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards has played a significant role internationally by leading the Jesuits' Justice in Mining network.

The network aims to protect human rights and the environment and advocates with and for local communities affected by mining activities.

Locally, Jesuit Social Services has sought to improve its own practices and processes by establishing working groups to focus on sustainable business practices, ecologically aware program delivery and spirituality.

This process of introspection has led us to implement many changes in the way we go about our business and the way we relate with our participants and partners in the sector.

Continues on page 2

In this issue:

Ecological Justice Hub

Page 3

Alice Springs climate forum

Page 5

ChangeFest Western Sydney

Page 6



Ecological justice underpins all of our work

I have been deeply saddened by the extent and impact of the Australian bushfire crisis. I'm sure you have too. It has had catastrophic consequences that will impact long into the future. Summer has been a period of mourning and reflection, with more than half of all Australians directly affected by the crisis. As a nation, we must respond effectively to the confronting reality of climate change.

Disadvantaged communities are often the least responsible for climate change but the most impacted by it. At Jesuit Social Services, we see the interconnected nature of social justice and environmental justice every day. We know that we must build and promote healthy relationships between people, place and planet as we work towards building a just society.

Many of you may not be aware of our commitment to ecological justice which we have been embedding across our organisation for more than 10 years. This approach shapes how we see our organisation and underpins all of our work, across our program areas, our research and advocacy work.

Given our commitment to supporting marginalised people for more than 40 years, we work to ensure that they are included in solutions, so that future generations can lead healthy, sustainable lives.

In this newsletter, you will be introduced to some of our ecological justice work including that of our Ecological Justice Hub in Melbourne and climate justice workshops we have recently held in the Northern Territory.

As always, we welcome your support towards helping us to work towards a just and sustainable society.

Julie Edwards

CEO, Jesuit Social Services

On the journey to a more ecologically just future

Continues from page 1

A few years ago we established an Ecological Justice Hub in Brunswick, Victoria to deliver hands-on work with individuals and groups to support people to lead more sustainable lifestyles and ultimately lessen the impact of climate change.

We also appointed Bronwyn Lay as Ecological Justice Coordinator.

Bronwyn's work in ecological justice and climate change is recognised internationally. Her own study was on the issue of international land governance and environmental law.

"The marginalised and vulnerable people and communities we work with are often the least responsible for ecological risks and threats – but the most affected by them," says Bronwyn.

"These risks and threats create new classes of vulnerable people and disproportionately impact those already experiencing poverty, mental illness, housing insecurity and disability."

Our ecological justice work also recognises that broad systemic reform is needed, and includes advocating for change at federal and state levels.

"Our commitment to ecology is a commitment to a connection and care for our common home," says Bronwyn.

As Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si*, "Today we have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment."

In an increasingly complex era of climate crisis, environmental degradation and rising social inequality, the challenges we must overcome to achieve a just and sustainable society are evident - but many of the solutions are still to be discovered.

We hope you will join us on our journey towards an ecologically just future.



Ecological Justice Hub springs into a busy 2020

Our commitment to ecological justice includes advocacy and research work around the systemic change needed to achieve a 'just transition' towards a sustainable future.

We also know that all members of the community can play a role in supporting climate change reduction, environmental recovery and leading more sustainable lives.

That's why we established our Ecological Justice Hub in Melbourne in 2018. The Hub is a hotbed of activity – on any given day you may stumble across people learning about growing mushrooms or zero waste harvesting, find others promoting beekeeping, wax-making and honey production, or women participating in the Hammertime program that supports the development of carpentry skills and pathways to the trades industry.

"Ecological justice is the term for the interrelation between social and environmental justice – and our hub aims to strengthen community connections, restore our regenerative relationship with nature and build ecological awareness," says Stuart Muir Wilson, Program Coordinator at the Ecological Justice Hub.

Established in 2018, the Hub runs a range of workshops and training programs to help community members learn new skills and lead more sustainable lives.

This year will see the launch of two new courses *Zero Waste: Sustainable Food Systems* and *Saving Money, Energy and the*

Environment, to explore the impact of climate change on our food, energy and water systems.

These events follow two ecological justice symposiums facilitated by the Hub in 2018 and 2019, and the current Our Waste discussion series (read more below).

The Hub is also expanding its waste to energy program, with a new composting system and a biogas digester to turn organic matter into valuable gas for heating and cooking.

"We are keen to help build meaningful community connections. The impact the Hub already makes to education, training, employment and skill development is continuing to evolve alongside the garden's eco-systems," says Stuart.

For more information about the Ecological Justice Hub, visit bit.ly/ecological-justice



Ecological Justice Hub volunteers tending one of the Hub's gardens

Discussion forum explores environmental impact of food waste

Zero-waste cooking and the understanding of waste in the food system will be on the agenda at an upcoming discussion forum presented by Jesuit Social Services' Ecological Justice Hub and Moreland City Council.

The event, titled *FOOD*, will be the second in a series of three *Our Waste* discussions, which explore how community members can reduce their home, kitchen and plastic waste and provide practical solutions to help people contribute to a safer climate.

Executive Director of Programs Sally Parnell says "the bushfire crisis has left many Australians feeling helpless and wondering what they can do to respond to the climate emergency. This series of events focuses on how we can make our lifestyles more sustainable."

The first event, held in February as part of the Sustainable Living Festival, focused on the impact of consumer waste and how people can support a second-hand economy.

The final event, in June, will explore how the most marginalised members of the community get left behind and how we can all recognise ways in which we can create a fairer society.

FOOD takes place on April 25 at Welcome to Brunswick, 1 Frith Street, Brunswick, VIC 3056.

To book, visit bit.ly/our-waste-food

A just transition to sustainability must support the most marginalised

Climate change is not the only cause of ecological injustice and environmental degradation – but it is real and it is here.

The unprecedented and destructive bushfires of the Australian summer have had a devastating impact across many parts of the country and will have both short and long-term ramifications on all sectors, ecologies and communities.

The foundation of Jesuit Social Services' ecological justice work is care of our common home. Ecological justice is the interconnectedness of social justice and environmental justice, and climate change and environmental degradation are a result of inharmonious relationships between people and the environment.

Our 2017 paper *Ecological justice – Expanding the Conversation* outlines our journey towards bringing an ecological justice perspective towards all of our operations, and our commitment to building a just society inclusive of both social and environmental justice.

It is increasingly clear that the impacts of climate change disproportionately impact the most disadvantaged people and communities, in many cases exacerbating existing inequality and marginalisation.

Many of the people Jesuit Social Services works with live in urban regions which have not been directly impacted by the fires, but the causes and secondary impacts such as extreme heat and smoke impact significantly on our participants, especially the homeless and people living in substandard housing.

Much of our research and advocacy work in the ecological justice area has been around the concept of 'just transitions' – how to move from current untenable economic and social systems to an ecologically sustainable, zero greenhouse gas emissions world in an effective way.

A just transition would ensure that those least able to cope with climate change receive the support they need to successfully adapt. It is vital that proactive policy responses, genuine community involvement and carefully targeted social protection are part of the solution.

In our recent *Submission to the 2020-21 Federal Budget*, we call on the Federal Government to recognise the serious and imminent risk posed by climate change to the planet and people, to legislate an emissions reduction target of net zero by 2050 and set a clear path to a just transition to a low-carbon future.

Meeting the challenges of climate change requires leadership by Governments of all levels. That is why we recommend that Governments establish coordinating bodies that facilitate cross-sector collaboration to work towards a just transition.

Engagement and collaboration with industry, researchers and technical experts, environmental organisations, the community services sector and communities themselves is also crucial.

We also highlight the need for increased funding and resources for organisations and communities alike who seek to trial, test and implement climate change adaptation, mitigation and transformation activities.

Download a copy of *Ecological justice – Expanding the Conversation* at bit.ly/expanding-the-conversation

Alice Springs forum highlights climate solutions for Territory communities

Jesuit Social Services recently partnered with the Northern Territory Council of Social Service, Environment Centre NT, Arid Lands Environment Centre and Central Land Council to host a two day climate justice workshop in Alice Springs.

The event, held in early March, was an opportunity for organisations and community members to come together to build connections, share knowledge, skills and stories and generate just solutions to the climate challenges facing communities across the Northern Territory.

It followed the inaugural NT climate justice workshop, held in Darwin last September, which was attended by 60 participants representing community service providers, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, land councils, local Government, the Northern Territory Government, industry experts and environmental organisations.

Key themes that emerged from the Darwin workshop included the importance of strengthening cross-sector relationships, the urgent need for regional adaptation planning in the NT (prioritising remote communities), community-owned clean energy, and listening to Aboriginal people for Aboriginal-led solutions.

In November, the emerging alliance of organisations focused on climate justice in the Territory, including Jesuit Social Services, also issued a joint statement responding to the Northern Territory Government's draft *Climate Change Response: Towards 2050* document.

The statement called on the Northern Territory Government to commit to a comprehensive, long-term plan to reduce emissions and avoid the worst climate impacts, support people to adapt, build community resilience, and ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the transition to a clean energy future.



Jesuit Social Services' Dr. Bronwyn Lay presenting at the Alice Springs Climate Justice forum.

Place-based social change on the agenda in Western Sydney

ChangeFest is a national celebration of place-based social change – which empowers and supports local communities to identify, plan, fund and evaluate the services they need.

In November 2019, the three-day event was held in Mount Druitt, Western Sydney, where we have worked with and alongside the community for 12 years. Our work in the area helps Western Sydney communities break out of cycles of disadvantage by developing local answers to local problems.

Our organisation was a local host of *ChangeFest 19*, which was attended by more than 500 people and focused on themes including climate change, justice reinvestment, the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians and improving early childhood outcomes in Western Sydney.

Ecological Justice Officer Bronwyn Lay joined other experts from Deakin University, Doctors for the Environment and Council of the Future for a discussion about place-based change and the climate emergency, focusing on the urgent need to work differently to protect the natural world and the opportunities for place-based systems change.

We also facilitated an Aboriginal astrology workshop at Willmot Community Hub, led by Aunty Sandra Hickey.

The next *ChangeFest* will be held in the Northern Territory, and we look forward to again being involved in learning, planning, collaborating and progressing an agenda for change.



Attendees at the *ChangeFest* Aboriginal astrology workshop

Ecological justice focus in next *Dropping off the Edge* report

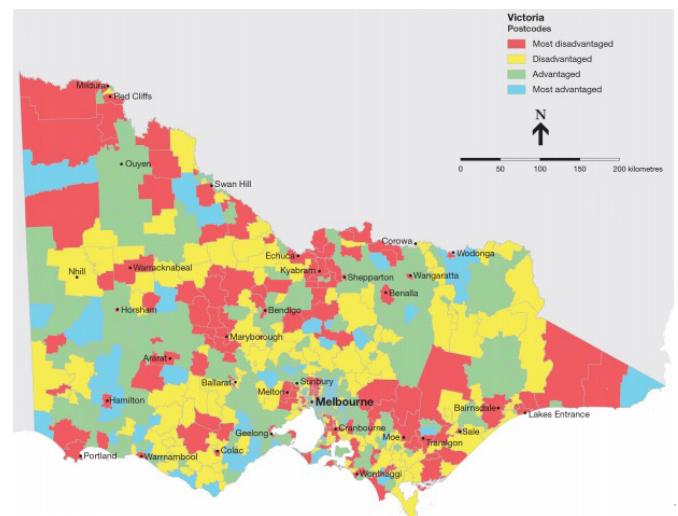
We are pleased to announce that we will embark on a new version of our landmark *Dropping off the Edge* research this year.

This research into locational disadvantage, which has included four major reports over the past 20 years, shows the stubborn and entrenched nature of disadvantage in a small number of communities across Australia. This web-like disadvantage limits outcomes and opportunities for people, and requires a coordinated approach from community, business and all levels of governments to address.

In line with our commitment to ecological justice, the next *Dropping off the Edge* report will feature environmental indicators to show the overlapping nature of social and environmental disadvantage.

This follows locational research we have previously conducted into green canopy and food security.

We look forward to sharing updates with you as this research progresses.



Victoria's most disadvantaged postcodes as represented in the 2015 *Dropping off the Edge* report

Bushfires expose the human reality of being stripped of home and family history - Andy Hamilton SJ

The recent fires were more than localised events. They made widespread changes to things that we take for granted: the light of the sun, transparency of the air, colour of beaches and the arrival of birds driven outside their normal habitat. The fires also affected social relationships. Communications in the form both of movement of people and goods and of electronic contact with families, medical centres and fire authorities, were disrupted. So was the commercial activity so important to the livelihood of coastal towns along the coast.

At the same time, however, the immediate response to the fires deepened people's relationships to one another and to the natural world. People distant from the fires came to see their destructive violence, the heroism of those fighting the fires, the human reality of being stripped of home and family history. The ABC News channel became a gateway to empathy with people in their grief and courage. The fires also elicited a generous response as distant farmers brought feed to farms and a host of appeals began for donations to support people in their recovery. The fires also brought home to Australians the wider connections between the fires, high temperature and drought in which fire flourished, and the necessity to address climate change seriously and to deal with its effects.

That was the first phase. As the initial shock was handled, this breadth of vision and unity in responding to the fires has been put at risk. Things that belonged together were separated and presented as competitive. Responsibility for the fires was variously assigned to climate change, drought, arson, and the neglect of preventative burning of forests as if these were disconnected and unrelated.

When these things are seen in isolation and as competitive and not as part of a map whose complex hierarchy of relationships needs to be recognised, they will not address the factors that lead to fires. Preventative burning may help reduce the effects of future fires but it must be consistent with nurturing the diversity of flora and fauna. And, like all other partial steps, it will be affected by the effects of climate change and must be set within a comprehensive plan to address and minimise them. The location of houses, the allocation of water, protection of river systems, the support given to particular forms of farming, must all be reviewed in the light of the effects of climate change.

All this requires a reflective and universal view in a political world that thinks in terms of small actions to defend small territories. The Prime Minister's emphasis on resilience and adaptation is not encouraging in that light. Both qualities are important, particularly in caring for people during a time of change. But as a response to the world revealed in the fires, they represent business as usual at a time when the ineffectuality of that business has been exposed.



Finn Burns escaping the Mallecoota fires with his family (Photo credit: Allison Burns)

Monthly contributions made by our Community Partners are the only regular, independent source of income for our work. These contributions sustain our work and allow us to confidently work towards a more just future.

Will you become a Community Partner by giving a monthly gift?

If you are unable to commit to a monthly gift, a single donation at this time will still have a great impact.



Partner with us to help build a just society where everyone can live to their full potential

Want to help Jesuit Social Services?

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

I would like to make an ongoing monthly gift of:

\$ _____ (Please specify amount)

I would like to make a one-off donation of:

\$75 **\$150**

\$500 **\$1000**

\$

Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will.

Contact and payment details

Surname _____

First name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Cheque enclosed OR VISA Mastercard

Card number _____

Expiry _____

Signature _____