



## **Federal Pre-Budget Submission 2023-24**

January 2023



**Jesuit  
Social Services**  
Building a Just Society

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*We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which Jesuit Social Services operates and pay respect to their Elders past and present. We express our gratitude for First Nations people's love and care of people, community, land and all life.*

## Jesuit Social Services: Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services has been working for 45 years delivering support and advocating for improved policies, legislation and resources to achieve strong, cohesive and vibrant communities where every individual can play their role and flourish.

We are a social change organisation working with some of the most marginalised individuals, families and communities, often experiencing multiple and complex challenges. Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where we have the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference. Our services span Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

Our services and advocacy focus on these areas:

- **Place-based approaches and ecological justice** – advocacy and research around the systemic change needed to achieve a ‘just transition’ towards a sustainable future, and supporting community members to lead more sustainable lives through place-based approaches to social and ecological problems.
- **Justice and crime prevention** – people involved with the justice system.
- **Education, training and employment** – people with barriers to education and sustainable employment.
- **Mental health and wellbeing** – people with multiple and complex needs including mental illness, trauma, homelessness and bereavement.
- **Gender Justice** – leadership on the reduction of violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe.
- **Settlement and community building** – recently arrived immigrants and refugees, and communities experiencing disadvantage.

Research, advocacy and policy are coordinated across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services. Our advocacy is grounded in the knowledge, expertise and experiences of program staff and participants, and academic research and evidence. We seek to influence policies, practices, legislation and budget investment to positively influence people’s lives and improve approaches to address long-term social challenges.

We do this by working collaboratively with governments, businesses, the community sector, and communities themselves to build coalitions and alliances around key issues, and building strong relationships with key decision-makers and the community.

## Introduction

Jesuit Social Services' vision is to build a just society. We believe everyone must have access to the opportunities and resources they need to flourish. The Federal election result in May last year showed that people living in Australia share our desire to see political leaders commit to policies and investments that build a more compassionate Australia.

This election came at a critical point in our history. Our [Dropping off the Edge research](#), released in 2021, found that disproportionate levels of unemployment, housing stress and young people not engaged in education or employment, among a series of other indicators for disadvantage, continue to be concentrated in a small number of communities across Australia.

This disadvantage is persistent and multilayered. For example, the 10 most disadvantaged communities in Victoria, and nine of the 10 most disadvantaged communities in New South Wales, were also ranked as highly disadvantaged in the 2015 report (see [here](#) for an overview of the latest report). The web of challenges present in these communities unfairly limits life opportunities for people, and also has a significant social and economic cost to the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified many of these pre-existing social and economic issues, from housing stress, to poverty, family violence, and insecure employment. As an organisation working with some of the most disadvantaged members of the community, we have witnessed firsthand the disproportionate impact of this crisis on already marginalised people and communities.

Much like COVID-19, climate change is disproportionately impacting marginalised people and communities, including the people we work with. Our participants are more at risk of bearing the brunt of the current and long-term impacts of climate change because of where they live, their income, age, health conditions, disabilities, or where they work.

**The 2023-24 Federal Budget presents a critical opportunity for the Federal Government to ensure that those on the margins of society are no longer overlooked, and that all Australians are supported to reach their full potential.**

Drawing on 45 years of advocacy and action, this pre-budget submission provides recommendations across a range of interconnected social policy areas. Jesuit Social Services calls on the Government to devote resources towards reducing inequity, prejudice and exclusion, and ensuring people on the margins are given every opportunity to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

## Key recommendations

- Identify locations of complex disadvantage and **resource long-term, place-based approaches** in these locations that centre community decision making and address factors that lead to inequity and disadvantage.
- Build broader **community resilience to climate change** by resourcing the establishment and coordination of place-based, cross-sector resilience coalitions to work in partnership with local governments and the community sector to strengthen adaptation planning and policies.
- Continue to progress the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people articulated in the **Uluru Statement from the Heart**.
- Invest in a coordinated approach to **raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14** across all states and territories and fund **restorative justice, family-centred and therapeutic approaches** to respond to children under 14 who come into contact with police.
- Increase the base-rate of **JobSeeker** and related payments to at least \$73 per day, as outlined by ACOSS in its Raise the Rate for Good campaign.
- Develop a **Youth Job Guarantee** that would ensure all young people are supported into secure employment, education or training that is aligned with their interests and goals within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.
- Invest in and call on public service agencies and corporate organisations to consider shared social impact initiatives to **support under and unemployed skilled professionals from migrant and refugee backgrounds into employment**.
- Implement a **Federal Social Procurement Policy** that includes clear and ambitious targets for creating meaningful employment opportunities for people experiencing disadvantage and addresses cultural issues related to the safety of women and other minority groups in male-dominated industries.
- Invest in workforce capacity building across organisations to support people who work with boys and men to **challenge harmful stereotypes and promote respect and equality**.
- Fund Stop it Now! and broader **child sexual abuse prevention** efforts that focus on people concerned about their thoughts and behaviours as well as young people at risk of harmful sexual behaviour.
- Prioritise **investment in new social housing** as part of the National Housing Accord, with a particular focus on increasing the stock of safe, sustainable and energy-efficient public housing.
- Continue funding the **NDIS** to ensure it can engage highly skilled staff to provide quality, intensive support to meet the diverse range of participants supported by the scheme.
- Provide direct, long-term funding for a comprehensive and evidence-based model of **suicide postvention support** in every state and territory that encompasses specialist suicide bereavement counselling, support groups and tailored assistance.
- End indefinite and arbitrary immigration detention in Australia, abolish TPVs and SHEVs, and provide pathways for **people seeking asylum and refugees to permanently resettle** in the community.
- Expand funding of **Settlement Engagement and Transition Support program** providers so that a greater number of newly arrived refugees and migrants can access dedicated, holistic and ongoing support.

## 1. Place-based approaches to build thriving and resilient communities

Jesuit Social Services' [Dropping off the Edge 2021](#) is the fifth instalment in our research series, clearly showing that complex and entrenched disadvantage is experienced by a small but persistent number of locations in each state and territory across Australia. As a society we cannot, and should not, turn away from the challenge of persistent and entrenched locational disadvantage, no matter how difficult it may be to solve the problem.

We believe that change can be achieved when the interrelated root causes of disadvantage are understood and place-based solutions are properly resourced. Jesuit Social Services understands place-based approaches as innovative ways to address disadvantage and inequity, strengthen resilience to crises in place, and build thriving and resilient communities. In line with this, we established our [Centre for Just Places](#) in 2021, with significant seed funding from Gandel Foundation and the Victorian Government, to support and enable place-based approaches to social and ecological justice through research, collaboration, engagement and knowledge exchange.

In 2021-22, Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places led a consortium of research partners examining literature, evidence and practice to understand what features enable the success of place-based approaches and how to best support them – information essential to improving the wellbeing of communities into the future. These reports, [What works for place-based approaches in Victoria](#), will inform the continued paradigm shift across government, funders, organisations and innovators working to address inequities and build the capacities of communities. A key finding relevant to the Federal Government was that sustainable, flexible and adequate resourcing is a critical enabler of effective place-based approaches.

Jesuit Social Services calls on the Federal Government to identify locations of complex disadvantage, through Dropping off the Edge research, and adequately resource long-term, place-based approaches in these locations that centre community decision-making and address the factors that lead to inequity and disadvantage.

### 1.1 Enabling ecological and social justice

Recognising that environmental challenges pose particular risks to the communities that Jesuit Social Services works with, for over a decade we have been bringing an ecological perspective to our practice, advocacy and organisational identity. Jesuit Social Services has embraced social and ecological justice, encompassing both human and environmental equity. In 2021, for the first time, our *Dropping off the Edge* research included environmental indicators alongside social, economic, education and health measures. The findings show that communities that experience persistent disadvantage often also experience disproportionate environmental injustice, represented through such factors as higher levels of air pollution,<sup>1</sup> exposure to heat stress,<sup>2</sup> and poorer access to green open spaces.<sup>3</sup>

While we know that extreme weather caused by climate change often affects people already experiencing disadvantage first and hardest, community service organisations (CSOs) are often not well prepared to support those most in need during extreme weather events. In fact, many small and

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<sup>1</sup> Tanton, R., Dare, L., Miranti, R., Vidyattama, Y., Yule, A. and McCabe, M. (2021), *Dropping Off the Edge 2021: Persistent and multilayered disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services: Melbourne. Indicator 32. Pg 236.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Indicator 34. Pg 236.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Indicators 33 and 35. Pg 236.

medium-sized organisations face the risk of permanent closure or service disruption as a result of major damage to physical infrastructure and disruptions to critical services during extreme weather events.

In recognising the urgent need to support CSOs to build resilience to climate change, Jesuit Social Services' [Centre for Just Places](#) has been delivering a range of climate adaptation and resilience initiatives and workshops across metropolitan Melbourne (see for example our [Collaborative Action Plan for climate justice in Melbourne's west](#)). In doing so, the Centre aims to build place-based climate resilience coalitions and strengthen collaboration between CSOs and local governments to build resilience to extreme weather and protect the health and wellbeing of those most at-risk.

We call on the Federal Government to further resource place-based, cross-sector coalitions to enable a shared understanding of how social and climate justice issues intersect and help drive adaptation planning and policy development to build broader community resilience.

## **Recommendations**

- Identify locations of complex disadvantage, through Dropping off the Edge research, and resource long-term, place-based approaches in these locations that centre community decision making and address factors that lead to inequity and disadvantage.
- Fund further research into entrenched and persistent disadvantage that builds on existing work, seeks to understand broader aspects of health and wellbeing, and supports social infrastructure.
- Build broader community resilience to climate change by resourcing the establishment and coordination of place-based, cross-sector, resilience coalitions to work in partnership with local governments and the community sector to strengthen adaptation planning and policies.
- Increase funding and resources for organisations and communities seeking to trial, test and implement climate change adaptation, mitigation and transformation activities.

## **2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination**

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* was issued to the Australian people in 2017. It calls for a constitutionally enshrined First Nations Voice to Parliament, and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission that would take active steps for truth-telling about our history and lay the foundation for agreement-making (treaties) between Federal, state and territory governments and First Nations peoples. We call on the Federal Government to continue progressing the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people outlined in the Uluru Statement, including by taking steps toward truth-telling as well as a Voice.

### **2.1 The new National Agreement on Closing the Gap**

Data released in 2022 by the Productivity Commission monitoring progress under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap shows that significant work is still needed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>4</sup> Just four out of the 17 Closing the Gap targets are on track to be met, and the gap is widening in a number of significant areas including adult incarceration rates, deaths by suicide and the rates of children in out-of-home care. It is clear that more work needs to be

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/annual-data-report/report>

done to improve life outcomes and opportunities for current and future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

To achieve this, we know that the self-determination of First Nations people is the best path. One way we have seen this is through the work of the Coalition of Peaks, the collective voice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, in co-designing the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap which was launched in 2020.<sup>5</sup> It is crucial for the Commonwealth to continue its investment in implementing the National Agreement, and for funding to be directed to communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) to design self-determined systems.

## Recommendations

- Continue to progress the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people articulated in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
- Continue investment in implementing the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and resource Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to design, lead and deliver services and programs as they are best placed to meet the needs of their communities.

### 3. Safe and respectful adult and youth justice systems

Jesuit Social Services is deeply concerned about the growing rates of imprisonment across Australia disproportionately impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Urgent measures are needed to significantly reduce the number of people in prison and reserve prison as a last resort. On this basis, we call on the Federal Government to ensure the following issues in relation to our adult and youth justice systems are addressed in the next Budget as a priority.

#### 3.1 Raise the age of criminal responsibility

A small number of children experiencing vulnerability enter the criminal justice system at a very young age. We know this group is among the most vulnerable in our community and that children detained between the ages of 10 and 14 are more likely, compared to those at older ages, to have sustained and frequent contact with the criminal justice system throughout their life.<sup>6</sup> Child offending experts, psychologists and other health experts agree that younger children have rarely developed the social, emotional and intellectual maturity necessary for legal responsibility before the age of 14 years, and lack the capacity to properly engage with the justice system.

The current age of criminal responsibility disproportionately impacts children from vulnerable backgrounds, particularly Aboriginal children who are overrepresented in the number of children involved with the justice system under 14 years. In line with international standards embodied in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and enacted in many overseas jurisdictions<sup>7</sup>, we

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<sup>5</sup> Coalition of Peaks (2022). New National Agreement on Closing the Gap. ([Weblink](#))

<sup>6</sup> Jesuit Social Services (2013). Thinking Outside: Alternatives to remand for children ([Weblink](#)); Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2013). Young people aged 10–14 in the youth justice system 2011–2012 ([Weblink](#))

<sup>7</sup> Child Rights International Network (2016) Minimum ages of criminal responsibility around the world. ([Weblink](#))

call on the Federal Government to work with states and territories to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years.

**Table:** Age of criminal responsibility: international comparison<sup>8</sup>

AUS	USA	FRA	SWE	NED	JPN
10	6-12	13	15	12	14

Our paper, [Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility: There is a Better Way](#), shows that this is clearly better for the children in question and for society as a whole. Funding for restorative justice, family-centred and therapeutic approaches to respond to children under 14 who come into contact with police is also required. We need responses that take account of their broader family and social circumstances, work with the child to help them to understand the impact of their behaviour and equip them with the tools to take a different path and prevent contact with the justice system.

### **3.2 Establish a National First-Nations led Justice Reinvestment Body**

Jesuit Social Services is deeply concerned about the significantly higher rates at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are incarcerated. The impacts of colonisation, racism and dispossession continue to be felt by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities across Australia today, and over-representation in the justice system must be understood as a result of this. In 2022, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults were almost 12 times more likely to be imprisoned than adults in the general population.<sup>9</sup> Aboriginal children were also nine times more likely to be in custody than their non-Aboriginal counterparts.<sup>10</sup>

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the inclusion of justice targets as part of the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap which seek to reduce incarceration rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and young people. However, it is critical that the adoption of justice targets is accompanied by community-driven solutions to address disadvantage, with justice reinvestment adopted as a key approach. Jesuit Social Services therefore supports the call for a National Justice Reinvestment Body as recommended by the Australian Law Reform Commission's landmark *Pathways to Justice Report* and supported by Change the Record.<sup>11</sup> The establishment of a national Justice Reinvestment Body that embodies Aboriginal leadership and expertise at all levels would make a real impact on the lives of First Nations peoples and communities.

### **3.3 Fair and equal access to health care**

People in prison experience higher rates of mental health conditions, chronic physical disease, communicable disease, tobacco smoking, high-risk alcohol consumption and problematic substance use than the general population.<sup>12</sup> Aboriginal people who come into contact with the justice system are more likely to have worse physical and mental health than their non-Indigenous counterparts, including

<sup>8</sup> Hazel, N. (2008). Cross-national comparison of youth justice. London: Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

<sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (Australian Government) (2021). Corrective Services March 2022. ([Weblink](#))

<sup>10</sup> Commission for Children and Young People (2021). Our youth, our way: inquiry into the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the Victorian youth justice system. ([Weblink](#))

<sup>11</sup> Change the Record. (2021). Election Platform. ([Weblink](#))

<sup>12</sup> AIHW. (2022). Health of prisoners. ([Weblink](#))

cognitive disability and learning difficulties, hearing loss, and specific health problems including hepatitis B.<sup>13</sup> Prison health services are required to meet the widely recognised 1982 UN resolution that the standard and amount of healthcare provided in prisons should be equivalent to that provided to the wider community.<sup>14</sup> However, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the Medicare Benefit Scheme (MBS) currently do not cover people in prisons across Australia.

We advocate that the Federal Government should partner with state and territory corrections services to ensure all people in prison can receive the health care they need. Ensuring access to these health schemes would supplement current services available in prison and would be a critical enabler of continuity of care for people entering and exiting custody.

### **3.4 Implement the Optional Protocol on the Convention against Torture**

In discussing conditions of imprisonment, there is widespread recognition that effective implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) in Australia would help prevent mistreatment in detention, improve oversight and accountability, and enable better detention practices. Ratified by the Australian Government in December 2017, implementation of OPCAT requires the Commonwealth and each state and territory government to designate and establish National Preventative Mechanisms (NPM) to undertake monitoring and allowing for inspections by a UN committee.<sup>15</sup>

The Commonwealth and each state and territory government was required to nominate an NPM by 20 January 2023 to provide independent oversight of places of detention. At the time of writing, the Commonwealth and states and territories are yet to meet their obligations. The Federal Government must urgently act to support states and territories and ensure OPCAT is fully implemented in order to help protect the dignity and safety of people in places of detention and to meet its international obligations.

## **Recommendations**

- Invest in a coordinated approach to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 across all states and territories.
- Resource a National Justice Reinvestment Body with Aboriginal leadership and expertise to divert funds away from the justice system towards community-led and evidence-based solutions as recommended by Change the Record.
- Work with state and territory corrections systems to extend access to the Medicare Benefit Scheme (MBS) and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to incarcerated Australians.
- In accordance with the Optional Protocol Against Torture (OPCAT), fund the establishment of National Protective Mechanisms in each state and territory to provide independent oversight of places of detention.

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<sup>13</sup> AIHW. (2022). Health of prisoners. ([Weblink](#))

<sup>14</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 1982, resolution 37/194. Principle of medical ethics.

<sup>15</sup> As outlined in Jesuit Social Services' [submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission's OPCAT in Australia consultation](#), the NPMs must protect the rights of, and ensure supports are in place for, vulnerable cohorts in places of detention, including Aboriginal people, individuals with ABI and cognitive impairment, young adults, transgender and gender diverse people, and children. NPMs must also prioritise the prevention of the use of isolation and other methods of physical and chemical restraints in prisons.

## 4. A fair social security system

In an economic downturn that has multiplied challenges for many, the Federal Government must focus on how best it can support people on the margins. We need a fair system of social and employment support that empowers people to reach their full potential.

### 4.1 Income support

Jesuit Social Services commends the Federal Government's announcement of an Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee to review and publicly report on the adequacy of income support before every federal budget. However, we support ACOSS' calls for the legislated Committee to have a transparent process for the selection of members, its terms of reference as well as its deliberations.

Further, the current rate of JobSeeker remains not enough to live on. We cannot expect a person to find and secure a job when they are struggling to survive – when they are forced to skip meals, forgo healthcare and heating in winter because their income is so low.<sup>16</sup> The temporary increase to JobSeeker through the Coronavirus Supplement showed how an increase in income support can drastically improve circumstances for people. With this increase, people were able to access rental accommodation, to afford medication or purchase items as simple, but essential, as warm clothes. Among people in households on the JobSeeker Payment, poverty fell from 76 per cent in 2019 to 15 per cent in June 2020.<sup>17</sup>

#### CASE STUDY: Emma\*

In a session with her Jesuit Social Services worker, Emma disclosed that once her Centrelink payment increased due to the Coronavirus Supplement, she was able to replace her underwear and obtain a proper winter jacket. This was something she could not previously afford. The increased payment also meant she did not have to decide between buying groceries or the medication she is on for depression and anxiety.

*\*Participant's names has been changed to protect privacy*

Concerningly, research from ACOSS and UNSW shows that once the income supports in place were withdrawn during early 2021, income inequality and poverty increased above pre-pandemic levels.<sup>18</sup>

Jesuit Social Services strongly supports ACOSS' [Raise the Rate for Good campaign](#) to increase the base rate of JobSeeker and related payments from \$44 per day to at least \$73.<sup>19</sup> Further to this, we would like to see safety nets that accompany JobSeeker such as healthcare cards and rent assistance remain in place until a person has achieved sustained employment. This would enable people to afford essentials such as food, housing, transportation and healthcare as they transition to employment and remove the disincentive to employment caused by the premature loss of other support measures.

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<sup>16</sup> ACOSS, "I regularly don't eat at all": Trying to get by on Newstart (July 2019) ([Weblink](#))

<sup>17</sup> Davidson, P., (2022) A tale of two pandemics: COVID, inequality and poverty in 2020 and 2021 ACOSS/UNSW Sydney Poverty and Inequality Partnership, Build Back Fairer Series, Report No. 3, Sydney

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> See: [Raise the Rate For Good](#)

## 4.2 Person-centred employment services

In addition to ensuring an adequate level of income support, we call on the Federal Government to fund a person-centred employment service system. Weight of evidence clearly shows that the Federal employment services system, with its focus on compliance and meeting narrowly prescribed outcomes, is failing people experiencing disadvantage who are looking to secure work. Australia's new employment service for people who are unemployed – Workforce Australia<sup>20</sup> – remains heavily focused on compliance rather than providing practical support for people that makes a difference, such as wage subsidies for employers and training that is relevant to career aspirations and employment opportunities.<sup>21</sup> Some argue that the privatisation of employment services has “failed to prepare many disadvantaged jobseekers for work and made others less employable by demeaning them”.<sup>22</sup>

Jesuit Social Services believes that the employment services system must be non-compulsory, that it not be the policing arm of the welfare system, and that it be delivered by community and not-for-profit providers. The shortcomings of contracting out employment services to for-profit organisations have been evident since its establishment. Further, it must enable the time and resources to be invested in those who are most disadvantaged.<sup>23</sup> The most effective support for people experiencing disadvantage occurs through building a relationship with a person and taking the time to understand their strengths, hopes and aspirations. The Victorian Government Jobs Victoria Employment Services (JVES) provides a model of employment service able to support people who face significant barriers, including past justice involvement, mental-ill health or other complex needs, into jobs. JVES, with its focus on supporting the most disadvantaged, stands as an example of an employment services scheme that is largely working well.

## Recommendations

- Increase the base-rate of JobSeeker and related payments to at least \$73 per day, as outlined by ACOSS in its Raise the Rate for Good campaign.
- Extend eligibility for JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and related payments to people on bridging visas and other temporary visa holders.
- Replace the compliance-focused Jobactive system, including inflexible mutual obligation requirements, with a new model that is flexible, person-centred, voluntary, and is delivered by community sector and not-for-profit organisations.

## 5. Pathways to education, training and employment

Jesuit Social Services commends the Federal Government's development of an Employment White Paper to provide a roadmap for Australia to boost incomes and living standards and create more opportunities for more Australians. We welcomed the opportunity to contribute a submission to inform the White Paper (available [here](#)). We know that when people are able to fully access education, training

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<sup>20</sup> In July 2022, jobactive was the main employment service for people who are unemployed. It has been replaced by a new system called Workforce Australia.

<sup>21</sup> ACOSS. (2022). Restoring full employment: Policies for the Jobs and Skills Summit. ([Weblink](#))

<sup>22</sup> Henriques-Gomes, L. (2022). Chair of Australia's job services inquiry questions privatisation, likens compliance to Squid Game. *The Guardian*. ([Weblink](#))

<sup>23</sup> Jesuit Social Services. (2019). Submission to the Senate Education and Employment References Committee's inquiry into jobactive. ([Weblink](#))

and employment, this has significant benefits for their own wellbeing, their family's wellbeing and the wellbeing of communities.<sup>24</sup>

### **5.1 Social inclusion fund and strategy**

There can be no one-size-fits-all approach to working towards full employment<sup>25</sup> in locations with multiple disadvantage. Each community has its own specific strengths and challenges, and what may improve education, training and employment outcomes for an urban community in Victoria will be different to what helps a regional community in Queensland.

Jesuit Social Services therefore calls on the Federal Government to introduce a Social Inclusion Fund resourced at the same level as the \$15 billion National Reconstruction Fund<sup>26</sup> to create local opportunities for people who have had limited opportunities to learn, study or work, particularly in locations of complex disadvantage as identified in the [Dropping off the Edge \(DOTE\) research](#). Social inclusion Boards should be established to centre community decision-making and to identify local priorities and opportunities for increased jobs in the care, community service and environment sectors. The fund would be used to create local jobs to meet these local needs.

To achieve intergenerational change, we call on the Federal Government to commit to a 10 to 20-year comprehensive Social Inclusion Strategy to address the persistent disadvantage experienced by the most disadvantaged communities in Australia as identified through DOTE.

### **5.2 Pre-accredited training opportunities**

Pre-accredited training provides an important stepping stone into employment for people with low-level educational attainment or people who have been out of the workplace or education for some time. Access to pre-accredited training provides an opportunity to successfully engage or re-engage in education and enhance skills and work readiness. For some people, this is the first such opportunity in many years. Through pre-accredited training provided by Jesuit Social Services, participants gain the essential vocational and personal skills they need to make a successful transition to formal accredited training and employment.

We call on the Federal Government to invest in pre-accredited training programs to support people to enter or re-enter education and training to obtain employment. Further, we support [Per Capita's](#) recommendation for the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to undertake a broad evaluation of pre-employment programs in Australia which with input from community sector representative groups and employers.<sup>27</sup>

### **5.3 Youth transitions to education, training and employment**

Engaging in education or commencing work after finishing secondary school allows young people to grow their skills and abilities, and builds a socially cohesive and inclusive society.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, an

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<sup>24</sup> Cole, K., Daly, A., & Mak, A. (2009). Good for the soul: The relationship between work, wellbeing and psychological capital. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 38(3), 464-474.

<sup>25</sup> Full employment – where all people who want to work are able to and there is no involuntary unemployment – is the single most powerful mechanism to improve the wellbeing of everyone in society.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.industry.gov.au/news/national-reconstruction-fund-diversifying-and-transforming-australias-industry-and-economy>

<sup>27</sup> [https://percapita.org.au/our\\_work/submission-to-the-workforce-australia-inquiry-pre-employment-programs-and-parentsnext/](https://percapita.org.au/our_work/submission-to-the-workforce-australia-inquiry-pre-employment-programs-and-parentsnext/)

<sup>28</sup> AIHW. (2021). Australia's youth: Engagement in education or employment. ([Weblink](#))

absence of education or employment after completion of high school can lead to future unemployment, lower incomes and employment insecurity.<sup>29</sup>

Where a young person lives impacts their vulnerability to becoming disengaged from education, training and/or employment after secondary schooling. In May 2020, the proportion of young people who were not in employment, education or training was more than twice as high for those living in the lowest socioeconomic areas as for those in the highest.<sup>30</sup>

Jesuit Social Services calls for a Youth Job Guarantee that would ensure all young people are supported into secure employment, education or training that is aligned with their interests and goals, within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. Further, we recommend that local jobs and skills opportunities are created through the introduction of the Social Inclusion Fund to meet local care, community and environmental service needs, for young people who might otherwise be left behind.

#### **5.4 Supporting people from migrant and refugee backgrounds into employment**

The importance of meaningful work for newly arrived people is significant. Employment fosters broader participation in society, provides a sense of purpose, and creates opportunities for migrants to become contributing members of the community. Unfortunately, many people from migrant and refugee backgrounds face unemployment and underemployment – with their skills underutilised.

Evidence increasingly suggests that a significant number of migrants and refugees with overseas-obtained post-school qualifications are working in lower skilled jobs, due to a lack of recognition of overseas obtained qualifications and skills.<sup>31</sup> This has significant economic and social costs.<sup>32</sup> Jesuit Social Services believes that the role of business as an enabler of social inclusion should be more actively explored and promoted. This requires moving away from a transactional relationship between business and marginalised people to one grounded in an understanding of the capacity of business to work with organisations and the community.

Jesuit Social Services has a long history of working in partnership with companies to support people from diverse backgrounds to move into work aligned to their skills and qualifications. Effective models already exist and can be built upon, including the African Australian Inclusion Program (AAIP), and Jesuit Social Services' Corporate Diversity Programs.

#### **5.6 Making a 'just transition' to green jobs**

As mentioned above, Jesuit Social Services brings an ecological perspective to our practice, policy and organisational identity in recognition of the particular risks that climate change poses to the communities we work with. To minimise the unfairness inherent in climate change and environmental degradation, increasing attention has been given to the idea of a 'just transition' to a zero carbon future. A just transition has transformative potential for Australians experiencing disadvantage. Jesuit Social

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<sup>29</sup> de Fontenay C, Lampe B, Nugent J & Jomini P 2020. Climbing the jobs ladder slower: young people in a weak labour market: Working paper. Canberra: Productivity Commission; Pech J, McNevin A & Nelms L 2009. Young people with poor labour force attachment: a survey of concepts, data and previous research. Canberra: Australian Fair Pay Commission.

<sup>30</sup> AIHW. (2021). Australia's youth: Engagement in education or employment. [\(Weblink\)](#)

<sup>31</sup> Productivity Commission. (2016). Migrant Intake into Australia Inquiry report. [\(Weblink\)](#)

<sup>32</sup> Deloitte. (2018). Seizing the opportunity: Making the most of the skills and experience of migrants and refugees. [\(Weblink\)](#)

Services' paper, '[Just transitions – Expanding the conversation](#)', highlights that a just transition must ensure disadvantaged communities receive the help they need to adapt and build resilience, and should also achieve transformational change by addressing the underlying and interrelated drivers of social and ecological vulnerability.

A just transition calls on the Federal Government to increase training and education pathways into employment in clean energy, land care and management, and other regenerative and sustainable industries: activities that reduce our climate risk and build the economy of the future. Clear parameters are required by government to ensure this transition does not replicate the harmful power structures that drive existing inequality, but rather harnesses the potential for transformational change. For example, in the Northern Territory, there is growing interest in the economic opportunities presented by renewables; without clear parameters set by government, there is a risk that new solar projects could perpetuate the pattern of old industries – extracting value from Aboriginal land without the participation or benefit of traditional owners and local communities. Proactive policy responses, genuine community involvement and carefully targeted social protection will be crucial to the transition.

### **5.7 Digital equity**

The impact of digital inequity and digital literacy are issues that demand more policy attention as online tools and platforms become increasingly central to work, education and other services. Throughout the pandemic, Jesuit Social Services has witnessed the impact of digital exclusion on many of the people we work with.

Jesuit Social Services plays a leadership role in [Wester'ly](#); a place-based campaign in Western Sydney that has formed around the issue of digital inclusion, especially in relation to education. Wester'ly first formed in 2020 in response to digital exclusion challenges faced by Western Sydney community members during lockdown measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.<sup>33</sup>

The Federal Government should consider subsidising affordable access to home internet, data and technology for people experiencing disadvantage to ensure no Australian is excluded from broader social and economic participation. A flexible response is required that takes account of different needs, such as people experiencing homelessness. For low-income households, the No Australian Left Offline campaign for affordable broadband offers a potential model that would see the NBN Co offer a 50 mbps unlimited broadband service at a wholesale price of \$20 per month to households receiving government financial support.<sup>34</sup> This proposal should be strongly considered by the Government.

### **Recommendations**

- Invest in a Social Inclusion Fund and an accompanying Social Inclusion Strategy to create new opportunities for employment, particularly in areas of persistent disadvantage.
- Invest in pre-accredited training programs to support people to enter or re-enter education and training as a pathway to employment.
- Develop a Youth Job Guarantee that would ensure all young people are supported into secure employment, education or training that is aligned with their interests and goals, within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

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<sup>33</sup> According to the 2016 Census, 30 to 40 per cent of people in Mt Druitt do not have access to the internet. (Note: the 2021 Census did not collect data in relation to digital inclusion).

<sup>34</sup> <http://accan.org.au/no-australian-left-offline>

- Invest in and call on public service agencies and corporate organisations to consider shared social impact initiatives to support under and unemployed skilled professionals from migrant and refugee backgrounds into employment, such as the Corporate Diversity Partnerships program.
- Prioritise investment in programs of ecological literacy, skills training and employment in regenerative and sustainable industries in marginalised communities and those living within degraded and at-risk ecosystems.
- Consider subsidising affordable access to home internet, data and associated technology for low-income households to ensure no Australian is excluded from broader social and economic participation.

## 6. Engaging men and boys to prevent family violence

Jesuit Social Services has worked with men and boys for 45 years. We know that too many men and boys are in trouble and causing trouble. As a society we have begun to acknowledge the significant problem of violence against women and children. The focus has been, as it should be, on supporting the victims of this violence. But we need to do much more. That's why, in 2017, Jesuit Social Services established [The Men's Project](#). The Men's Project focuses on supporting boys and men to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives, where they are able to develop loving relationships free from violence and contribute to safe and equal communities.

Through our work, we know that there is a compelling need to address the root causes of harmful behaviours in the workplace such as violence, gendered violence, sexism and sexual harassment. The best available evidence suggests a key way to achieve this is through primary prevention efforts that promote cultural and attitudinal change related to masculinities and gender.

### 6.1 The Man Box

Through The Men's Project, Jesuit Social Services has taken steps to better understand and respond to male violence and other harmful behaviours. Our research, *The Man Box: A study on being a young man in Australia*, focused on the attitudes to manhood and the behaviours of young Australian men aged 18 to 30. It involved an online survey of a representative sample of 1,000 young men from across the country, as well as focus group discussions with two groups of young men. Our findings reflected those of other research, showing that men who rigidly conform to dominant masculine norms (that men should be tough, stoic, dominant and in control) are more likely to self-report the use of violence and sexual harassment, suffer poor mental health, engage in risky behaviours such as binge drinking and less likely to engage in health promotion behaviours.<sup>35</sup>

More recently we have developed and are in the early stages of piloting our Adolescent Man Box survey. The Adolescent Man Box is the first study that focuses on the attitudes to manhood (endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms) and the association between these and a range of harmful behaviours.

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<sup>35</sup> Our Watch., (2019). Men in focus: unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women, Our Watch: Melbourne, Australia.; The Men's Project & Flood, M., (2018). The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in Australia. Jesuit Social Services: Melbourne.

The survey, subject to funding to support this work, also has the potential to serve as an important longitudinal evaluation tool to inform the roll-out of respectful relationships curriculums.<sup>36</sup>

## **6.2 Prevention education**

Adequately funded prevention education fosters safe and respectful relationships, and ultimately supports the goal of ending violence against women. We welcome the inclusion of consent education in the new national curriculum as a critical step in empowering and supporting young people to understand gendered stereotypes, coercion and power imbalances. In addition to consent education, Jesuit Social Services advocates for respectful relationships education to also be prioritised in the national curriculum and provided in all Australian schools. This must be complemented by equipping teachers, sports coaches, youth workers and other community leaders with the language and skills they need to create positive change around issues of respect.

The Men's Project is currently supporting the implementation of the Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) curriculum in Victoria. Too often, teachers report a need for greater knowledge, skills and confidence in order to teach topics such as gendered violence, gender norms, power and privilege. In response, through a partnership with the Victorian Department of Education, we are engaging school leadership, teachers and other staff in capacity building programs to support more effective delivery of the RRRR curriculum and enable school staff to embed a whole of school approach. We expect the evaluation of the work will have implications for the Federal Government as well as other states and territories.

## **6.3 Intervening earlier to prevent child sexual abuse**

In addition to our research and primary intervention work, The Men's Project is designing, piloting and evaluating program models that intervene earlier. An area of particular focus, with relevance to the Federal Government, is preventing child sexual abuse. In September 2021, our new child sexual abuse prevention program, Stop It Now! launched its anonymous helpline. This followed the 2017 report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse which identified a gap in preventative interventions for potential perpetrators. And in 2021, the National Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Strategy highlighted Stop It Now! as a potential model for the funding commitment for an offender prevention service.

The phone line and instant chat service is staffed by skilled practitioners who speak with people worried about their own, or someone else's, sexual thoughts, feelings and behaviour towards children – working to prevent child sexual abuse. This pilot is in line with Jesuit Social Services' ethos to not shy away from the difficult and complex work that is needed to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential. While the service is anonymous and confidential, it will adhere to mandatory reporting requirements relevant to laws in each Australian jurisdiction. We recommend that the Federal Government fund Stop it Now! and broader child sexual abuse prevention efforts that focus on people concerned about their thoughts and behaviours as well as young people at risk of harmful sexual behaviour. In line with the approach in other jurisdictions, this service should also work with families, friends and professionals who come across child sexual abuse.

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<sup>36</sup> This work is directly relevant to the Federal Government's recent \$5 million commitment to develop a survey of secondary school-age students on issues related to consent. We would welcome the opportunity to partner on this work drawing on the lessons and insights from our work to date examining the underlying attitudes which are tightly associated with violence and sexual harassment.

## **6.4 Workforce capacity building**

The Men's Project has developed workforce capacity-building projects for people working with men and boys to engage them on issues related to stereotypical constructions of masculinity (a key driver of violence). Modelling Respect and Equality supports participants to develop greater self-awareness, learn how to model and promote positive change, and recognise and challenge problematic attitudes and behaviours. Our Unpacking the Man Box workshops provide a range of participants (social workers, well-being staff, teachers, students, early childhood educators, faith leaders and parents) with awareness of the negative consequences associated with outdated forms of masculinity and tools/resources to foster healthier forms of masculinity.

Internal evaluations of both programs found participants report significant improvements in their knowledge and understanding of stereotypical constructions of masculinity, and in their confidence and motivation to affect change. We call on the Federal Government to invest in workforce capacity building to support people who work with boys and men to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote respect and equality.

## **6.5 A federal social procurement policy**

A further critical step towards gender equality is the use of social procurement frameworks to set and deliver on gender equality targets. The capacity for Federal Government procurement spending to contribute social value should be meaningfully pursued, including in relation to creating sustainable job opportunities for women. The size of government procurement contracts underlines the significant potential for a proportion of this spending to be targeted to achieve greater gender equity as well as driving recruitment of people who are long-term unemployed, have low skill levels and who live in areas of high social disadvantage. While Commonwealth Procurement Rules include reference to considerations such as environmental sustainability, decision-makers should also be required to consider social value and impact as part of procurement processes. The [Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework](#) is a promising example that could be drawn upon that is resulting in significant early progress related to cultural change on work sites in order to meet female workforce participation targets.

## **Recommendations**

- Provide coordinated, centralised and long-term investment for primary prevention education in schools across states/territories. This could include:
  - Expanding the Rights Resilience and Respectful Relationships Curriculum so it is delivered nation-wide.
  - Partnering with Jesuit Social Services to develop a survey of secondary school-aged students on issues related to consent drawing on the work completed to date through our Adolescent Man Box survey.
  - Engaging Jesuit Social Services to facilitate knowledge sharing across state and territories based on our experience supporting the implementation of RRRR in Victoria.
- Invest in national coordinated data collection, research and evaluations to address the complex causes of family violence and inform evidence-based interventions, such as providing funding for the national roll-out of Jesuit Social Services' Adolescent Man Box Survey.

- Invest in workforce capacity building across organisations, based on our Man Box research, Modelling Respect and Equality program, and Unpacking the Man Box workshops, to support people who work with boys and men to challenge harmful stereotypes and promote respect and equality.
- Fund Stop it Now! and broader child sexual abuse prevention efforts that focus on people concerned about their thoughts and behaviours as well as young people at risk of harmful sexual behaviour.
- Implement a Federal Social Procurement Policy that includes clear and ambitious targets for creating meaningful employment opportunities for people experiencing disadvantage and addresses cultural issues related to the safety of women and other minority groups in male-dominated industries.

## 7. Safe, affordable and sustainable housing

Every person has the right to an adequate standard of living, which includes the right to adequate housing. Jesuit Social Services works with many people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness, inappropriate or unsafe housing, housing instability and stress, and other forms of disadvantage in their lives. We know that safe and affordable housing options are crucial in enabling people to get their lives back on track and pursue aspirations such as engaging in education, and finding and retaining employment. However, access to safe, affordable and sustainable housing continues to be a key issue for all Australians, particularly those on low-incomes and in disadvantaged areas.

There is significant evidence, compiled by bodies such as the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), economists, community organisations and others that the private property and rental markets do not work effectively for people on the margins – or indeed anyone on a low income. Jesuit Social Services has long called for more innovative responses to improving Australia’s affordable and social housing systems, including subsidised and supported housing models. This includes public housing owned and managed by respective State or Territory Governments and community housing managed by not-for-profit agencies.

### **7.1 Increase the stock of social and supported housing options**

Numerous research reports<sup>37</sup> indicate that there has been a significant and growing undersupply of social housing dwellings across Australia. The share of social housing households as a percentage of all Australian households has fallen sharply from 4.8 per cent in 2011 to 4.2 per cent in 2020.<sup>38</sup> Jesuit Social Services welcomes the recent Federal Budget announcement of a National Housing Accord which includes \$350 million to build 10,000 affordable homes over five years from 2024, in addition to the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund which will build 30,000 new social and affordable housing properties.<sup>39</sup> Importantly, it also includes a target to build one million well-located and energy-efficient homes over the same period.

We call for a particular focus on increasing the stock of good-quality public housing, noting that it is unrealistic and unviable to rely too heavily on the private and community housing markets to rapidly expand and adequately provide for the diverse range of needs of those who require social and affordable

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<sup>37</sup> For example: Compass Housing Services (2019). Estimating Current and Future Demand for Housing Assistance: A discussion paper. Hamilton, NSW; Daley, J., Coates, B., & Wiltshire, T. (2018). Housing affordability: Reimagining the Australian dream. Grattan Institute; Parkinson, S., Batterham, D., Reynolds, M., & Wood, G. (2019). The changing geography of homelessness: A spatial analysis from 2001 to 2016, AHURI Final Report. Melbourne: Australia Housing & Urban Research Institute; and Powell, A., Meltzer, A., Martin, C., et al. (2019). The construction of social housing pathways across Australia. Melbourne: Australian Housing & Urban Research Institute

<sup>38</sup> AIHW, (2021). Housing Assistance Australia - (Supplementary Data Table 1). ([Weblink](#))

<sup>39</sup> <https://budget.gov.au/2022-23-october/content/bp2/index.htm>

housing.<sup>40</sup> In our experience, a complexity of unaddressed needs can often mean people cannot afford and are unable to secure community housing. Therefore, the construction of adequate public housing to meet current and future demand should be prioritised. This must be coupled with investment in supported housing, including assertive outreach and wrap around supports, that enable people with complex needs to stabilise their lives and pursue aspirations such as engaging in education, and finding and retaining employment.

## **7.2 Ensure housing is ecologically sustainable**

Additionally, Jesuit Social Services is concerned to ensure that pre-existing inequities in housing in Australia are not exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. According to research undertaken by Mallee Family Care and the University of Sydney in the Victorian town of Mildura, public housing is commonly “substandard and unsafe and poorly adapted to high temperatures.”<sup>41</sup> These added stressors increase incidents of family violence, substance misuse and significantly impact on the mental health of tenants. We therefore advocate for the Government to partner with state and territory governments to retrofit all existing social housing with energy efficient upgrades. Further, we emphasise the need for effective implementation of climate safe and energy efficient design in the planning and construction of all new public and community housing, and for this to be enshrined in legislation.

## **Recommendations**

- Prioritise investment in new social housing as part of the National Housing Accord, with a particular focus on increasing the stock of safe, sustainable and energy-efficient public housing, and partner with State and Territory governments to retrofit all existing social housing with energy efficiency upgrades.
- Commit funding to State and Territory governments to increase the range and availability of supported housing options for different groups of people with multiple and complex needs – including specific initiatives for young people, single people, women, people with experience of trauma, people exiting prison, and people with mental ill-health.
- Increase funding to State and Territory Governments to invest in housing and homelessness services to close the gap in the rates of homelessness and overcrowding experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## **8. Supporting Australians with disability, mental ill-health and complex needs**

Jesuit Social Services works with and advocates for people with multiple and complex needs. Many face a range of co-occurring and interrelated issues, such as homelessness, disability, substance misuse, mental and primary health problems, and involvement in the child protection and criminal justice systems. These overlapping issues often mean that recovery is harder to achieve and sustain, with people often experiencing inter-generational cycles of entrenched disadvantage.

While our social, welfare and justice systems are able to meet the needs of the majority of Australians, they are often not adapted to cater for people experiencing vulnerability. For people with multiple and complex needs, a coordinated whole-of-person approach is critical in addressing the unique mix of intersecting and overlapping issues that each individual face.

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<sup>40</sup> <https://jss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022-Election-Platform-Final-1.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Lander, J., Breth-Petersen, M., Moait, R., Forbes, C. and Stephens, L., Dickson, M. (2019). Extreme heat driven by the climate emergency: Impacts on the health and wellbeing of public housing tenants in Mildura, Victoria ([Weblink](#))

### ***8.1 An NDIS that supports people with multiple and complex needs***

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the Federal Government's review of the NDIS. We support the focus of the review on making sure our national safety net is strong and always keeps people with disability at its heart.

The participants we work with often require long-term support to navigate relevant service systems and are eligible to receive a combination of federal and state government financial support packages. In Victoria, we offer Specialist Support Coordination where we work actively with NDIS participants, their care teams, service providers, and support networks to achieve their personal goals, support them to understand and navigate the NDIS, increase their independence, and reduce barriers to accessing supports. Many of the people we support have complex needs and are working with other service providers, including justice and youth services. We also provide supported housing (Perry House) for justice system-involved young people with an intellectual disability who are at risk of, or are experiencing, homelessness.

Through delivering these programs, Jesuit Social Services has observed increasing shortages of disability support staff as well as limited understanding of the multiple and complex needs of our participants. We urge the Federal Government to ensure that NDIS pricing supports fair wages, good working conditions, job security and access to professional development to grow and maintain the NDIS workforce.

### ***8.2 Long-term funding for dual diagnosis services***

It is crucial that the co-occurring issues experienced by some people are not treated in isolation. In particular, specialist expertise and integrated care (often through multi-disciplinary teams) are needed to concurrently address both mental health and alcohol and drug misuse, in recognition of how the co-occurrence of these issues can impact upon a person's health.

Jesuit Social Services' Connexions program started in 1996 as Victoria's first dual diagnosis service working exclusively with young people dealing with concurrent issues of mental illness and substance abuse. Connexions offers a relationship-based approach to intake and assessment, and uses assertive outreach where workers follow up with disadvantaged and hard to engage young people who have been identified as needing support. Specialist assertive outreach focuses initially on developing a relationship of trust to create a foundation that enables discussion of mental health issues.

We strongly support further development of integrated support and care for people with co-occurring issues, such as Connexions, as recommended by the Productivity Commission into Mental Health in Australia Final Report. Further, we note that providing integrated treatment and care is included as a recommendation in Australia's Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan. In line with this, we call on the Federal Government to provide long-term, sustainable funding to dual diagnosis services. This will allow for a consistent approach and enable us to continue delivering vital support to our participants.

### **8.3 Specialist suicide postvention services**

Evidence shows that people bereaved by suicide are themselves at a higher risk of suicide.<sup>42</sup> However, we know from our experience that postvention support delivered by experienced practitioners reduces this risk.

Jesuit Social Services has delivered Support After Suicide throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria for almost 20 years. In 2021, Support After Suicide expanded its grief counselling service into New South Wales. The program provides critical supports to people after a death of a loved one to suicide through specialist counselling, group programs and online support to people bereaved by suicide (including children and young people), and secondary consultation to professional education and other professional organisations working with people bereaved by suicide. For further details of our model of postvention support, please see the Appendix.

Our Victorian Support After Suicide has contractual arrangements with four Primary Health Networks. This is administratively burdensome and time consuming in terms of contract management and reporting. Further, there is a lack of certainty, with current funding due to expire in June 2023.

In contrast to this, funding for our NSW postvention service is provided directly by the Ministry of Health and reporting is also directly to the Ministry, not through the Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The major advantage of direct funding and reporting to the Ministry is that it ensures comprehensive and cohesive service provision, through a planned and coordinated approach led by the respective Health Department. In addition, program responses can still be tailored for local communities, and the considerable administrative burden and complexity associated with reporting to a range of funding bodies is minimised.

Jesuit Social Services calls on the Commonwealth Government to partner with state and territory governments to provide direct, long-term funding for a comprehensive and evidence-based model of suicide postvention support that encompasses specialist suicide bereavement counselling, support groups and tailored assistance designed to meet the needs of people navigating a complex and distressing experience. It is critical that this support extends to people in rural, regional and remote areas of across Australia.

### **Recommendations**

- Continue funding the NDIS to ensure it can engage highly skilled staff to provide quality, intensive support to people with multiple and complex needs supported by the scheme.
- Extend drug and alcohol treatment Primary Health Network funding periods for dual-diagnosis programs like Connexions and increase allocated funding to enable people to address complex and co-occurring issues.
- Provide direct, long-term funding for a comprehensive and evidence-based model of suicide postvention support that encompasses specialist suicide bereavement counselling, support groups and tailored assistance designed to meet the needs of people navigating a complex and distressing experience.

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<sup>42</sup> <https://finalreport.rcvmhs.vic.gov.au/>

## 9. A humane immigration system

The [Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum](#) (CAPSA) is a national initiative that advocates for a just and humane processing system in Australia, in which we welcome people seeking asylum. Formed in 2014, CAPSA is co-convened by Jesuit Social Services and Jesuit Refugee Services Australia and is supported by an advisory group of national representatives from Catholic peak bodies and organisations across the pastoral, education, social and health sectors. The following recommendations are based on insights gained through this initiative.

### 9.1 End indefinite and arbitrary detention

Jesuit Social Services is deeply concerned at the ongoing indefinite and arbitrary detention of asylum seekers both in Australia and overseas at the hands of Australia's immigration system. The average length of time a person spends in immigration detention is just under 700 days.<sup>43</sup> However, many people have been detained for much longer; 117 people have been detained for over five years and eight people have been detained for more than ten years.<sup>44</sup> Experts in law, health, psychology, social work and human rights have expressed their well-founded and ongoing concerns for the wellbeing of refugees and people seeking asylum held in indefinite detention by the Australian Government.<sup>45</sup> In addition to the significant human cost, indefinite offshore detention does not make economic sense given the cost of holding a single refugee on Nauru has escalated tenfold to more than \$350,000 every month, or \$4.3m per year, since 2016.<sup>46</sup>

It has been almost ten years since the start Australia's offshore processing of asylum and refugee claims. We urge the Federal Government end the punitive approach toward people seeking asylum by ending offshore processing and ensuring against prolonged and arbitrary detention.

### 9.2 Abolish temporary protection and provide pathways to permanency

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the Federal Government's recent announcement that more than 19,000 refugees will finally be able to qualify for permanent residency after a decade on temporary visas.<sup>47</sup> People seeking asylum and refugees living in the community also face major challenges, often living below the poverty line, without access to Government support, away from loved ones and with the uncertainty of three-year Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and five-year Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs). The COVID-19 pandemic magnified these challenges. In addition to showing basic respect for human dignity, health and wellbeing, research has found that giving refugees on TPVs and SHEVs permanency is likely to generate approximately \$6.75 billion for the Australian economy over a five-year period.<sup>48</sup> We call on the Government to abolish TPVs and SHEVs, and provide pathways for people seeking asylum and refugees to permanently resettle in the community.

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<sup>43</sup> Department of Home Affairs. Immigration Detention and Community Statistics Summary. 30 September 2021. ([Weblink](#))

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee's inquiry into *The serious allegations of abuse, self-harm and neglect of asylum seekers in relation to the Nauru Regional Processing Centre, and any like allegations in relation to the Manus Regional Processing Centre* (2017), Submissions.

<sup>46</sup> Catholic Social Services Australia. (2022). Nauru offshore detention company making \$500,000 profit a year for each detainee. Media Release. ([Weblink](#))

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/i-can-see-my-family-again-more-than-19-000-refugees-to-qualify-for-permanent-residency-20221216-p5c6wr.html>

<sup>48</sup> Van Kooy, J. (2021). Supporting economic growth in uncertain times: Permanent pathways for Temporary Protection visa and Safe Enterprise Haven visa holders. Policy options paper. ([Weblink](#))

### **9.3 Expand Australia's annual humanitarian intake**

Since 2018-19, Australia's yearly humanitarian intake has decreased annually.<sup>49</sup> This is despite the fact that globally, conflict and persecution continue to uproot the lives of millions worldwide. Recent examples of this upheaval can be seen in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and Ukraine. Over 100,000 people have applied for Humanitarian Visas in Australia since the fall of Kabul in August 2021. At the time of writing, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that approximately 10 million Ukrainian refugees have been displaced by the escalating conflict brought on by the Russian invasion at the end of February last year.<sup>50</sup>

Ukraine and Afghanistan are only two examples. Conflict continues to forcibly displace civilians across the world, and Australia must do more in supporting those who seek safety. In response to the growing number of people displaced around the world, the Government should increase its Humanitarian Program to 30,000. Besides the clear moral imperative to offer people experiencing vulnerability a chance to rebuild their lives, the case to pursue a more generous humanitarian program makes economic sense.<sup>51</sup> As Deloitte Access Economics and Oxfam Australia have shown, an increase to at least 30,000 humanitarian places (over the next five years) could create, on average, 35,000 additional jobs every year for the next 50 years.<sup>52</sup>

### **9.4 Prioritise family reunification for those already in Australia**

When people seek asylum, they very often leave family and loved ones behind. This means that for many, their loved ones remain in danger, and contact with them can be impossible, intermittent or unsafe.<sup>53</sup> Further, being separated from family makes settling into a new country all the more difficult. The process for applying for visas for family members is difficult and costly, and therefore is beyond the reach of many people.<sup>54</sup> We therefore strongly support the Refugee Council of Australia's calls for the Federal Government to enhance access to family reunions for refugees and humanitarian entrants.<sup>55</sup>

### **9.5 Expand SRSS funding and provide adequate support**

The Federal Government's changes to the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) have reduced the number of people eligible for this vital support, placing people seeking asylum at risk of destitution and increasing demands on the community services they turn to for support. Currently, only five per cent of people seeking asylum in the community are estimated to have access to SRSS.<sup>56</sup> As the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre notes, changes to SRSS eligibility have "increased the need for people seeking asylum to find work (any work) without adequate support to develop their capacity to do so, or adequate guards

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49 Refugee Council of Australia (11 May 2021), 'The Federal Budget: What it means for refugees and people seeking humanitarian protection', Refugee and Humanitarian Program ([Weblink](#))

50 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [2020]. Situation Ukraine Refugees - Operational data portal. ([Weblink](#))

51 Deloitte Access Economics and Oxfam Australia (August 2019) Economic and social impact of increasing Australia's humanitarian intake, ([Weblink](#))

52 Deloitte Access Economics and Oxfam Australia (August 2019) Economic and social impact of increasing Australia's humanitarian intake ([Weblink](#))

53 Suárez-Orozco, C., Bang, H. J., & Kim, H. Y. (2011). I felt like my heart was staying behind: Psychological implications of family separations & reunifications for immigrant youth. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 26(2), 222-257.

54 Wilmsen, B. (2011). Family separation: The policies, procedures, and consequences for refugee background families. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 30(1), 44-64.

55 Refugee Council of Australia. (2021) Family separation and family reunion for refugees: The issues. March 2021. ([Weblink](#))

56 Jesuit Refugee Service Australia and St Vincent de Paul Society. (2021). Access to a safety net for all people seeking asylum in Australia. ([Weblink](#))

against their exploitation in the local labour market.”<sup>57</sup> The tightening of eligibility requirements for the SRSS program should be reversed to ensure that people experiencing vulnerability can access this vital social support.

## **Recommendations**

- End indefinite and arbitrary immigration detention in Australia, abolish TPVs and SHEVs, and provide pathways for people seeking asylum and refugees to permanently resettle in the community.
- Expand Australia’s Humanitarian Program to at least 30,000 places annually in response to growing global protection needs and ensure the program remains non-discriminatory and prioritises the resettlement of those most in need.
- Enhance access to family reunions for refugee and humanitarian entrants, including considering the Refugee Council of Australia’s recommendation to develop a humanitarian family reunion program of 10,000 places annually, outside of the Humanitarian Program, in consultation with refugee community members and organisations and other relevant bodies.
- Increase Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) funding and expand eligibility requirements to ensure that more people who seek asylum in Australia have access to adequate financial and service supports.

## **10. Settlement services for newly arrived people**

In the western suburbs of Melbourne, Jesuit Social Services’ Settlement Program works to develop people’s ability and confidence to access support services, facilitate independence, enhance living skills and promote meaningful community engagement. With more than a quarter of Australians born overseas, diversity is a central pillar of our national identity that should be recognised, welcomed and celebrated.

### ***10.1 Expand settlement support beyond five-year eligibility***

Many newly arrived people experience non-linear journeys towards successful resettlement. It is therefore important that the settlement supports are based on each person’s unique needs. Further, we believe that services funded under the SETS Program, such as Jesuit Social Services’ Settlement Program, should be able to respond to the settlement needs of migrants beyond the current post-arrival five-year period of eligibility. This is crucial to ensure that people who may be experiencing disadvantage, social isolation or other longer-term issues are able to continue accessing support.

### ***10.2 Provide secure and sustainable housing***

Safe and secure housing is a foundational for the successful settlement and integration of newly arrived migrants and refugees. However, those who are supported under the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) are only provided rental accommodation and utilities for 28 days post-settlement in the Australian community. Following this time, and in spite of the many compounding issues they may be facing, migrants and refugees under the HSP must themselves pay for the rental property and all associated costs.

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<sup>57</sup> Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. (2019). Towards an optimal employment strategy for people seeking asylum in Victoria. [\(Weblink\)](#)

As previously mentioned, it is well established that there is a severe housing shortage, both social housing and private rentals, across Australia. The combination of this short supply of housing, limited financial means upon arrival and backgrounds of trauma, means that newly arrived refugees and migrants are vulnerable to housing stress, housing insecurity and ultimately homelessness upon resettlement in Australia.<sup>58</sup> Jesuit Social Services' Settlement staff estimate that they spend 70 to 80 per cent of their time assisting participants in housing-related matters. We urge the Federal Government to extend settlement housing support beyond the initial 28-day period and to upscale the funding and development of sustainable, supportive housing for newly arrived migrants and refugees.

## **Recommendations**

- Enable services funded under the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program (SETS) to respond to the settlement needs of newly arrived people beyond the current five-year period of eligibility.
- Expand funding of SETS providers so that a greater number of newly arrived refugees and migrants can access dedicated, holistic and ongoing support.
- Increase investment in interpreter services for SETS services and reinstate a dedicated funding stream to complement settlement service contracts.
- Extend settlement housing support under the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) beyond the initial 28-day period and upscale the funding and development of sustainable, supportive housing for newly arrived migrants and refugees.

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<sup>58</sup> Flatau, P., Smith, J., Carson, G., Miller, J., Burvill, A. and Brand, R. (2015) The housing and homelessness journeys of refugees in Australia, AHURI Final Report No.256. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited. ([Weblink](#))

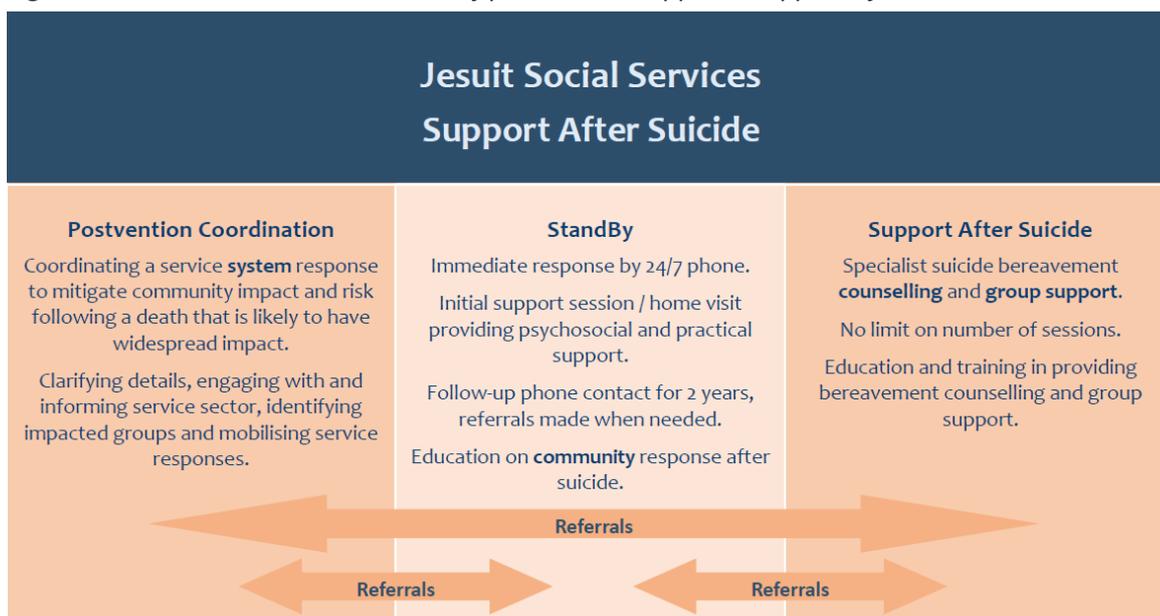
## Appendix

### Jesuit Social Services' model of postvention: Support After Suicide

Jesuit Social Services offers people bereaved by suicide a multifaceted approach to healing and recovery. We have developed a model of support based on *Our Way of Working* practice framework, which underpins all the work we do with individuals and communities (for further details, please see the Appendix). Critically, the Support After Suicide postvention model was developed based on research and consideration of best practice counselling approaches to reduce the suicide risk and improve the mental health and wellbeing of people bereaved by suicide. The development of the program has been informed by those with lived experience; a thriving volunteer peer support has ensured that new activities and resources are developed by people with lived experience of suicide bereavement.

Jesuit Social Services' model of suicide bereavement support encompasses three postvention support programs. Implementing these three components of postvention support is providing a unique opportunity to develop a coordinated response. From a systemic perspective, working collectively and strategically to provide a response is reducing the risk of fragmentation, siloing of services and duplication.

**Figure 2:** Jesuit Social Services' model of postvention support - Support After Suicide



The three postvention programs are:

- **Postvention Coordination.** This program involves coordinating a service system response after a suicide with the aim of mitigating community impact and reducing the risk of suicide following a death that is likely to have widespread impact. More specifically, it involves, clarifying the details of who is involved and what has occurred, then engaging with and informing the service sector. It also involves identifying any impacted groups, particularly young people and mobilising service responses.

Postvention coordination is governed by a documented protocol that guides communication, privacy and confidentiality. The agencies and organisations that may be engaged in this service

system response include mental health services, headspace, headspace BeYou, local councils, education department, Support After Suicide and StandBy.

This program is operating in southern Melbourne (City of Greater Dandenong, City of Casey, Shire of Cardinia) and Frankston Mornington Peninsula and will soon be set up across Gippsland.

- **StandBy** provides an immediate response with a 24/7 phone line. An initial support session / home visit is provided which offers psychosocial and practical support. Follow-up phone contact is made at specific intervals for 2 years and if any needs are identified, referrals to appropriate services and organisations are made, including to counselling and group support with Support After Suicide. Education to community on how to respond after a suicide is also provided. This program is operating across Victoria; the areas covered by Jesuit Social Services are metropolitan Melbourne and Gippsland.
- **Support After Suicide** which offers specialist suicide bereavement counselling and group support. In this program there is no limit on the number of sessions. The program also provides education and training in how to provide bereavement counselling and group support. Support After Suicide provides services to north western Melbourne, south eastern Melbourne, Gippsland and Western Victoria.

Referrals are made between each of the three programs, for example, StandBy and Support After Suicide regularly refer individuals and families to the other program. Support After Suicide may notify the Postvention Coordinator of a death by suicide that may need a service system response.