

Summer News

January 2026



INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT AUSTRALIA

Mike's journey to a new beginning

After a long time in prison and with a limited work history, Mike was referred to Jesuit Social Services before his release date was even confirmed.

One of our workers met with him to reassure him he wouldn't need to face this transition alone. They worked together to find the pathway that would support his employment journey and best suit his needs.

Knowing Mike's early parole obligations could impact his ability to transition to employment, we reached out to his parole officer to advocate for adjustments that would make it easier for him to start work. Our role is to look at the whole picture and walk alongside people like Mike as they navigate the obstacles to finding the right job for their needs.

We introduced Mike to one of our employer partners and worked closely with everyone involved to bridge the gap between his parole requirements and a workplace ready to give him a fair chance.

"When I got out, I knew finding a job was my priority, but I didn't know how to even start. I was worried about my record, my parole conditions and starting all over again.

"Jesuit Social Services didn't just help me to fill out a resume and wish me luck," Mike says.

Recently, Mike had to go to court over his suspended driver's licence. Jesuit Social Services provided a letter of support, urging the court to reinstate his licence so he could get to and from work. The court lifted the suspension, giving Mike a real chance to drive to work and make a new start.

"That letter made a difference. My worker's been with me every step of the way, and I'm now focused on my future," Mike says.

By removing barriers, we clear the path for people leaving prison to focus on what's important: rebuilding their lives and careers.

"I got the job, and they helped me get what I needed to start, like work gear, training and transportation."

- Mike, Inclusive Employment Australia participant

*Mike's name has been changed to protect his identity.

Inclusive Employment Australia is a new service operating across 5 metropolitan areas in Melbourne – Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Epping, Fitzroy and Sunshine. It's the only specialist employment provider that works specifically with people living with a disability who've also had contact with the justice system.

If you own a business in these areas and are looking for staff, we can connect you with work-ready employees and support you and the employee to ensure a positive outcome.

Visit ieajss.org.au or call **1800 432 577** to find out more.



Jesuit
Social Services
Building a Just Society

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Your support offers hope as we start a new year



For nearly 50 years, Jesuit Social Services has stood in solidarity with some of the most marginalised people in our

community. Your support helps us go where the need is greatest and where we know we can make the most impact.

I'm grateful that you share our vision of building a just society. Last financial year, we worked with more than 10,000 participants, giving them a real chance to harness their full potential.

The new year is a time of hope and new beginnings, and I am delighted to have recently launched our new Inclusive Employment Australia program, featured on our cover. We'll connect people who have both justice system involvement and a disability to employment. By working with participants and employers, we aim to foster positive and sustainable relationships that benefit both parties as well as the broader community.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will read about our landmark Adolescent Man Box report, the impact our Homework Club program has on children and volunteers alike, and how one of our supporters shared his late brother's legacy with Jesuit Social Services to help others.

I look forward to your continued support in 2026 and hope to see many of you at our Annual Dinner at the iconic MCG on February 21.

Julie M. Edwards

Julie Edwards
CEO, Jesuit Social Services

HOMEWORK CLUB

Volunteers learn with kids



For more than 20 years, our Homework Club has supported the education of children with migrant and refugee backgrounds living in and near the Flemington public housing estate in Melbourne.

It's rewarding for both students and volunteers.

Volunteer tutors support primary school children with homework. This helps children and their families overcome language barriers, build literacy, and navigate the education system, while strengthening community connection.

Retiree David volunteered wanting to do something meaningful. Although his school days are well behind him, he found past lessons – like his times tables – came back!

"I'm loving it. You develop relationships with the kids, who are joyous and receptive and fun to be around."

VCE student Alex volunteered to support community connection. She says the children aren't the only ones learning. "I've learnt about Somalian and Eritrean culture, Islamic practices, and how languages, community and shared beliefs bring people together."

Homework Club reminds us how powerful shared learning can be.

THE MEN'S PROJECT

Supporting the next generation of young men

17-year-old Casper thinks boys need clear, positive examples.

"We need to completely wipe away all our gendered expectations and pressures for everyone. Create your own definition of masculine, but be kind and don't force anyone to act a certain way."

His views are backed by our Australian-first research, the Adolescent Man Box report, which shone a light on being a teenage boy in Australia.

Remembering John with a gift of hope

When Steve's brother John passed away from cancer and left a small estate, Steve and his family wanted to donate some money to help others who faced similar challenges to John.

Steve says that John had a record before he had a chance. At 4½ years, with no family support, he and his siblings became wards of the State and were moved to orphanages.

"John had a horrible childhood," says Steve. "We were traumatised, and it was worse for John because he was gay."

John was very bright. He excelled at school, was brilliant at history and English, and could recite poetry. He finished his Leaving Certificate (year 11), — rare for boys from the orphanage — before getting a job in a bank. Then, living in private boarding houses, John got in with the wrong crowd. He became involved in art theft and he first went to jail when he was about 20.

"When you come out of an orphanage, you're freed from absolute regimentation in everything you do, into a life without control," says Steve. "I'm not surprised he landed where he did."

Volatile because of his upbringing, John spent 30 years in and out of prison, estranged from his siblings, and unable to keep a job.

We looked at how much Australian adolescents perceive and endorse rigid masculine norms, and how that affects their behaviour. Over 1,400 adolescents took part, revealing promising signs among the majority, but critical challenges for some if they are to lead fulfilling lives, free from violence.

Challenging attitudes included pressures to appear tough, homophobic and transphobic beliefs, watching violent pornography, and not seeking mental health support. A small number of boys holding these beliefs had engaged in violence, sexual harassment or bullying.

Matt Tyler, Executive Director of The Men's Project says, "We know that everybody including

"The first time somebody said something he didn't like he would fly into a rage. That's why he went from one job to another," says Steve.

"But in later jobs, they seemed to understand him a bit more. I don't know if they'd worked with an organisation like Jesuit Social Services, but I often wondered how he held those jobs down. And when he did, it was the best thing that ever happened to him."

John stayed out of jail for over 20 years. He reconnected with his brothers and said he wished he'd done so years before.

Steve's wish is that through this gift, John's legacy will help others in the justice system address trauma and reconnect with family and community earlier than John could.

"If you just look at society with all the violence we're seeing, and you want to see a better society, it requires investment in young lives before they become derailed and entrenched in crime."

- Steve, who donated in his brother's memory

"Donating provides a great sense of satisfaction when you see young people that started with little hope trying hard to turn their lives around, and many of them actually achieving it. We would like to think John has helped them as well."



Discussion panel at the Adolescent Man Box launch

adolescents, parents, educators and the broader community can play a role in helping young people to break free of the harms of the Adolescent Man Box giving our young people the support they need to flourish."

Your support allows us to continue this vital work with young people across Australia.

Want to help Jesuit Social Services?

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

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> \$ _____ (Other amount)

Contact and payment details:

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Participants at the Support After Suicide community day

SUPPORT AFTER SUICIDE

Finding community after suicide loss

More than 90 people who've lost a loved one to suicide gathered at Yarra Bend Park recently to mark International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day, a reflective event filled with connection and community.

This was our first ever Support After Suicide community day – a beautiful gathering giving people bereaved by suicide an opportunity to connect through nurturing and engaging activities.

“This is the club that no one wants to join, but I am indeed grateful to have found such a club.”

– Heathclyff, participant and volunteer

Guest speaker, GP Dr Nick Carr, spoke about his sister Sally's suicide and the impact it had on him.

A highlight was the “Show me Love” exhibition, created by volunteer Carmen, who shared photos of people in places where they feel close to the loved ones they've lost to suicide.

As one participant said, “It was such a beautiful event, so comforting to be in nature surrounded by so many lovely people.”

Thanks to our community, we can continue creating spaces where healing, connection and hope can grow for people bereaved by suicide.