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New place-based centre for research and action will support marginalised communities to flourish: Jesuit Social Services

Putting local communities at the heart of decision making, and empowering communities to give them the resources they need to reach their potential, will be key focus areas of Jesuit Social Services' place-based centre for research and action, which will launch in early 2021.

"The place-based centre for research and action will be a new national research, advocacy and capacity-building centre into place-based approaches to ensure all Australian communities have opportunities to flourish. The place-based centre will lift up communities that have experienced entrenched disadvantage often over many years," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

The place-based centre will draw on Jesuit Social Services' research into locational disadvantage, which includes five reports conducted over more than 20 years. The centre will produce another major *Dropping off the Edge* report, to map disadvantage in each state and territory, in 2021.

Previous *Dropping off the Edge* reports have identified that a small number of communities across the country experience persistent disadvantage that limits outcomes and opportunities. Research for the next report is currently underway with the University of Canberra as Jesuit Social Services' research partner.

"Our previous *Dropping off the Edge* reports have focused on indicators demonstrating social wellbeing and disadvantage, including long-term unemployment, child maltreatment, criminal convictions and family violence. The next report will also include environmental indicators measuring green space, heat vulnerability and air quality," says Ms Edwards.

"The interconnected nature of social and environmental justice will allow the next report to illustrate a more complete picture of disadvantage than we have been able to achieve before."

Dr Susie Moloney will join the place-based centre for research and action as its inaugural Executive Director in January 2021. Dr Moloney, a co-founder of The Climate Change Exchange, is currently an Associate Professor in Sustainability and Urban Planning in the School of Global Urban and Social Studies and a member of the Centre for Urban Research, RMIT University.

Jesuit Social Services is establishing the place-based centre with the support of multi-year funding from Gandel Philanthropy and the Victorian Government.

"One of Gandel Philanthropy's key areas of interest is addressing poverty and disadvantage. With the recent devastating bushfires and COVID-19 crises, building a better and deeper knowledge of the drivers of disadvantage and discovering and sharing best-practice place-based programs appear more pertinent than ever before. The place-based centre for research and action will implement innovative new initiatives at a national level, paving the way for improved outcomes for individuals and communities," says Gandel Philanthropy CEO Vedran Drakulic OAM.

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