



PURSUIT OF COMMON GOOD MUST DRIVE ECONOMIC RECOVERY

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The solidarity that inspired the national effort to suppress the health effects of COVID-19 must also shape Australia's economic recovery, a new Catholic Social Services Australia report argues.

The national peak body for Catholic social service agencies today published *Strong Economy, Stronger Australia – Building Our Prosperity to Serve the Common Good*. The report outlines the detrimental effects of the pandemic, including those felt by some of the country's most vulnerable workers, and offers a series of strategies to support a person-centred economy.

"The loss of 909 lives to the pandemic is rightly a source of sadness, even if those numbers pale in comparison with some other countries, but the behaviour of Australians to limit the spread of COVID-19 shows a genuine concern for our fellow citizens," CSSA chief executive officer Ursula Stephens said.

"The benefits of those efforts have been observed nationwide, and it is critical that the financial rebound that we need also benefits the entire country."

Dr Stephens said the behaviour demonstrated during the pandemic has been in pursuit of the common good – a principle firmly embedded in Catholic social teaching.

"While others may choose words like 'mateship' or 'community', we used words like the 'common good' or solidarity," she said.

"Catholic social teaching is embedded in much of our society, even if people might not recognise the Church as the origin of those principles."

Dr Stephens pointed to the Catholic understanding of the dignity of work, aligned with the provision of a social safety net, as underpinning the Australian recovery.

"The seminal Catholic document on the dignity of work and on social teaching was written in the 1890s, but its relevance today could not be clearer," she explained.

"The value – financial and psychological – of people having a job, when appropriate, was outlined in *Rerum Novarum* 130 years ago. It continues to be affirmed in studies across various disciplines today."

The CSSA report summarises a number of the key challenges that faced the Australian economy and workforce before the pandemic, including underemployment, instability of work, slow wages growth and some immoral behaviour by employers.

It says that rather than the recovery seeking to restore what existed before the pandemic, a new, more equitable economy should emerge.

"Many people are speaking of a 'bounceback', but we are focused on seeing this renewed sense of communal interdependence demonstrated over the past 12 months drive a modified, better situation for all Australians," Dr Stephens said.

Download the full *Strong Economy, Stronger Australia* report at www.cssa.org.au

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The national network of Catholic social services