

## ACU and Order of Malta to partner with community for the common good

Australian Catholic University (ACU) and the Order of Malta, a Catholic lay religious order, have signed a memorandum of understanding that details partnering on a range of life-changing engagement initiatives that work with groups who experience disadvantage and marginalisation.

Through the alliance, ACU students will have expanded community engagement placement opportunities with a range of Order of Malta programs, including Community Care Vans for people experiencing homelessness, the Coats for the Homeless initiative and camps for people with a disability.

Order of Malta volunteers will also have the opportunity to participate in ACU-led community engagement initiatives. The Order of Malta and ACU are planning to collaborate on a co-led community hub that connects ACU staff, students, and Order of Malta members to engagement where it is most needed.

“The Order of Malta’s mission to alleviate the suffering of the poor and sick, without judgment, distinction of religion, race or political persuasion is in perfect alignment with our own mission,” ACU National Community Engagement Manager Dr Matthew Pink said.

“This is just the beginning. It’s exciting to imagine what impact this partnership can have working with those in the community who’ve experienced disadvantage and social injustice.”

ACU is committed to the pursuit of knowledge, the dignity of the human person and the common good. Community engagement activities that build capacity and affirm human dignity are considered central to the mission and identity of ACU. This translates to over 20 discipline-specific community engagement units of study, stakeholder engaged scholarship with community partners, and staff directly engaged with community via time-

release opportunities. The Order of Malta also furthers its mission through the distribution of COVID-19 hygiene packs to assist rough sleepers, charitable works for disaster relief, and palliative care throughout Australia. The MOU sets the framework for co-supporting The Order of Malta and ACU's 'missions-in-action'.

Order of Malta's President the Hon James Douglas said, "By combining the efforts, enthusiasm and expertise of our two organisations there is a wonderful opportunity to provide sustainable initiatives and emergency response activities that will make a tangible difference to the lives of those in need."

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Zlatko Skrbis said, "The partnership between the Order of Malta and ACU is an acknowledgement and affirmation of their shared departure point in faith tradition and commitment to improving the lives of those who need it most."

The MOU steering group will begin meeting from September 2021 to formally begin the partnership's work.

**Dr Matthew Pink is available for interview.**

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