

## ACU funds projects for Catholic non-profits to empower Australians who experience vulnerability

Australian Catholic University (ACU) will fund three new community-initiated research projects that seek to improve the lives of young mothers with complex needs, refugees, and young people at risk.

ACU's Stakeholder Engaged Scholarship Unit (SESU) will fund three successful projects commencing before the end of 2022 that focus on improving services offered by four Catholic not-for-profit organisations.

SESU Advisory Group chair Br David Hall fms said the successful community projects all sought to improve the lives of Australian citizens experiencing the most disadvantage and marginalisation.

“As a Catholic university striving to support and advocate for people experiencing marginalisation, the SESU Advisory Group is pleased to announce CatholicCare Sydney, CatholicCare Victoria and St John of God Health Care, and Edmund Rice Education Australia as the successful recipients of the 2022 SESU funding,” Br Hall said.

“At a time of global financial unrest and uncertainty, we are conscious that research projects with a commitment to those experiencing the most vulnerability should be prioritised.”

Since commencing in 2020, the SESU has connected ACU experts and academics with organisations who support communities experiencing disadvantage. A total of 17 projects, including a report into the impact of the pandemic on social service provides in Victoria, have been funded.

### FULL LIST OF THE SUCCESSFUL 2022 SESU RESEARCH PROJECTS:

#### **HOPE Program Evaluation**

CatholicCare Sydney is seeking an external evaluation to determine if the HOPE Program is well-placed to deliver important outcomes with young mothers (pregnant or with small children) at risk of homelessness, mental ill-health or domestic violence. The evaluation will seek to align the program with the outcomes prioritised by Government, while seeking to understand from the mothers themselves what difference the program has made for them.

The project will be led by:

Dr Amy McPherson, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, ACU

Mr David Stefanoff, Director Funding, Property & Contracts, CatholicCare Sydney

Ms Emma Neill, Program Manager, CatholicCare Sydney

#### **Asylum Seeker Support Program: The value of Catholic Agencies Working Together to Deliver a Transitional Housing and Support Program for Asylum Seekers in Victoria**

Together with CatholicCare Victoria and St John of God Health Care, the project will evaluate the Asylum Seeker Support Program which provides transitional accommodation and other support to families and individuals seeking asylum in Melbourne, Victoria. The evaluation will help inform future program growth, sustainable partnerships between Catholic health, social service agencies and local parishes, and we believe will become an important advocacy tool for social services campaigning for fairer social and economic policies for people who are seeking asylum.

The project will be led by:

Dr Haydn Aarons, Senior Lecturer, School of Arts, ACU

Dr Jen Couch, Senior Lecturer, School of Arts, ACU

Mr Denis Byrne, Group Manager, Mission Integration (East), St John of God Health Care

Mr Chris McNamara, General Manager, Community Participation, CatholicCare Victoria

#### **The Religious Identity of Flexi Schools**

Edmund Rice Education Australia's project will identify the implicit elements of the identity of Flexi Schools that make them uniquely Catholic. Flexi Schools provide education to young people disengaged with formal schooling and, to ensure inclusivity, do not have the traditional identifying markers of a Catholic school. The project will make a unique contribution to the international dialogue on the topic of the identity of Catholic schools.

The project will be led by:

Associate Professor Robyn Horner, School of Theology, ACU

Dr Teresa Brown, Lecturer, School of Theology, ACU

Dr Adam Taylor, National Director School Engagement, Edmund Rice Education Australia

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