

MEDIA RELEASE

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Acknowledging the reach and impact of Catholic social service: Social Services Sunday, 17 September 2023

Sunday 17 September 2023 marks Social Services Sunday within the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. The day is an opportunity to keep in our thoughts and prayers the dedicated staff and volunteers of organisations working to stand with and serve the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised.

In this time of increasing costs of living, housing stress and crisis, and profound social challenge, the Gospel message of radical welcome, love, and care is needed more than ever. Catholic social services have long held a unique position in the social service sector because they are a part of the enactment of the social mission of the Church — one expression of an established, connected community of people working to live in fidelity to the Gospel.

Social services often work with people when they are experiencing immense challenge or crisis — and additionally are moved to advocate for structural changes so that all might flourish in our families, communities and society. Catholic Social Service Victoria's (CSSV) 40 member organisations provide critical services ranging from early intervention and prevention work to crisis response — across every age.

Preliminary findings from CSSV's research mapping the work of members indicate that in 2021-2022, 8,000 staff and 17,000 volunteers supported at least 211,000 people in need. The full report, including a detailed breakdown of the data and finalised analysis, will be released later this year.

Catholic social services make up just 0.3% of Victorian charities, however they provide direct support to over 3% of the Victorian population. CSSV's initial findings see revenue for this work coming from a wide range of sources – with 73% of total revenue coming from Government. Members provide these services and support from over 150 sites across Victoria.

Josh Lourensz, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Victoria, said: "In the face of a housing and cost of living crisis, we are grateful for the unity of our dedicated members and their 8,000 staff and 17,000 volunteers who work to reach and serve a wide range of people. This collaborative work to me is an inspiring example of the Church at work in the world."

Fr Joe Caddy, Episcopal Vicar for Social Services, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, reflected on the work of our members: "Our Catholic social services sector is a living reminder of the practical and all-embracing response that we are called to in our living out of the Gospel values of truth and justice."

CSSV are deeply grateful for our 40 member organisations and all who work to support them. It is critical to understand and acknowledge the reach and contribution of our members so that we can better work together to fulfil the gospel imperatives to stand with and serve the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised.

For enquiries and further comment please contact:

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