



‘WE ARE ONLY AS STRONG AS OUR WEAKEST LINKS’, BISHOP VINCENT LONG VAN NGUYEN OFM CONV

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‘It is in the interest of our health and our future to ensure that everyone’s wellbeing is safeguarded,’ according to Catholic Bishop of Parramatta, Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv. ‘It is also in the interest of a better society and a better world that the human and social infrastructure of the “care economy” be prioritised more than profit and success.’ Bishop Long has expressed these words in the lead up to the 2024 national Catholic Social Services Conference in Melbourne from 21-23 February.

Bishop Long joins an esteemed list of keynote speakers at the conference, including Dr Julie Edwards OAM, CEO of Jesuit Social Services, Prof. Mark Considine AM, a leading public policy specialist and author of *The Careless State—Reforming Australia’s Social Services*, and Claire Victory, former national president of St Vincent de Paul Society. Under the theme, ‘Commons, Commonality, Common Good,’ this event aims to bring together people of good will, particularly staff, leadership, volunteers in Catholic social services, health, education, parish communities, and individuals in faith and values-based organisations from across the country, and to inspire important conversations and positive action for the common good.

Bishop Long will open the conference, fostering thought and discussion on the topic ‘What makes us human? What is essential to flourish?’ He said, ‘I believe that what makes us human is the conviction that we are created in God’s image. As such, flourishing in the most profound sense entails communion with God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

‘At the conference, I’ll be exploring Pope Francis’ call to rebuild and revitalise the Church with a synodal vision rooted in unity in diversity, subsidiarity in solidarity and personal agency in communion that leads us to being a model society and an effective vehicle of the Good News for the disadvantaged, the planet and all of God’s creation.

‘Addressing inequity and caring for the poor and vulnerable are not optional extras. We are only as strong as our weakest links.’

Monique Earsman, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Australia, emphasises the conference as a unique opportunity to unite, exchange ideas, and collaborate on practical solutions, addressing the challenges of high living costs and a demanding housing market. She also said, ‘Our national conference themed “Commons, Commonality, Common Good” is not just a place for conversation, but a platform for meaningful action. Inspired by the teachings in [Laudato Si](#) and supported by [Laudate Deum](#), we acknowledge that those who are already struggling with the cost of living are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. Together, we will seek out sustainable solutions that honour our environment and provide real support to the most vulnerable among us.’

Josh Lourensz, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Victoria, invites individuals passionate about social justice, social change, and best practice service delivery to attend. He said, ‘The conference provides a distinct opportunity for diverse experiences, including organisational leadership, volunteering, pastoral care, social work, or parish ministry, to learn and engage in meaningful conversations about social issues we hold in common.’

An open invitation is extended to all people of good will, particularly those working in Catholic social services and health, education, parish communities, and individuals in faith and values-based organisations to attend this important event. ‘Our strength lies in collaboration and cooperation in working toward a just and equitable society, where all can flourish,’ said Josh.

For more information about the conference, and to register, click [here](#).

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