

MEDIA RELEASE

19 March 2024

Report Launch: *Faith, Hope and Love: Mapping and Contextualising the Contributions of Victoria's Catholic Social Service Sector*

Tuesday 19 March marks World Social Work Day. This year's theme 'Buen Vivir: Shared Future for Transformative Change', speaks to the important role of social work in both meeting the needs of individual persons as well as the importance of this work positively changing society and systems so that all may flourish.

Catholic Social Services Victoria's report released today maps out the work of its 40 member organisations in communities across Victoria and beyond, and discusses the importance of participative approaches, the vital role for cross-sector and values-based approaches, and the need for community/place-based service provision and empowerment.

The report finds that Victoria's Catholic social service organisations supported at least 302,550 people - more than 4.5% of Victoria's population, through the efforts of 7,510 staff and more than 15,800 volunteers. These organisations provided services in over 30 different areas of work: from early intervention and prevention to crisis response.

The State and Federal Governments provided almost 67% of total revenue across organisations, with creative resourcing strategies, including community donations and the effective integration of volunteer support, also contributing substantially to organisational operational and financial sustainability.

While the variety and scale of offerings in support and programs have grown over the past few years as Catholic providers work to help meet the needs of our society, the sheer increasing number of people in need of services and support is not to be celebrated. Pressures of costs of living, including a crisis in safe, secure and affordable housing, growing inequality and more profound complexity and disadvantage presents immense challenge to governments, organisations and persons who see inequality as a core barrier to a just and compassionate society.

Smaller organisations seem to be undervalued by governments in funding decisions and corresponding policy and regulation frameworks, despite their intimate relationship with local community members.

Josh Lourensz, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Victoria, stated that

"Catholic social services are a part of the enactment of the social mission of the Church — they are a vital expression of an established, connected community of people working to live in fidelity to the Gospel. Their unique and important contributions to our social fabric traverse

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being both responsive and charitable and simultaneously being committed to reform and justice over the long term.

“Good work doesn’t come from nowhere. Having expertise to walk with and accompany people with complex social needs requires investment. Good administrative and compliance processes evolve over time. Our member organisations, often in close collaboration with their founding congregations, parishes, diocese and schools, are reaching out to and supporting a very diverse range of people. This is the Church at work in the world.”

CSSV are deeply grateful for our 40 member organisations and all who work to support them. By understanding and acknowledging their reach and contributions Governments, the social service sector and the community more broadly can be better positioned to work together to stand with and serve the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised in our state and country.

[Read the full report here.](#)

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