

## CSSA Welcomes Productive Dialogue with Treasury on Tackling Housing and Homelessness

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Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) CEO Dr Jerry Nockles has met with Mr Ben Rimmer, Director-General of the Housing Group in the Federal Department of Treasury, to advance critical discussions on addressing Australia's housing and homelessness crisis.

Mr Rimmer's appointment to this role on 2 September 2025 signals government's serious commitment to this portfolio. His transition from Deputy Secretary with the Department of Education coupled with prior roles in the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, brings extensive experience and genuine commitment to this critical challenge. Dr Nockles presented the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference 2025–26 Social Justice Statement, *Signs of Hope on the Edge: Serving those living in homelessness and with mental ill-health* to Mr Rimmer.

"I am genuinely excited and ambitious about future opportunities to support Ben and the Treasury team," Dr Nockles said. "This meeting represents a real opportunity to advance meaningful change on one of Australia's most pressing social challenges. We share a common understanding that housing and homelessness is a crisis that demands urgent action."

"There is genuine alignment between CSSA and Treasury on the scale and urgency of Australia's housing and homelessness challenge," Dr Nockles said. "Ben and his team recognise that current approaches must be strengthened and that collaborative solutions are essential. That shared understanding is what gives me confidence we can drive meaningful progress together."

CSSA brings a network of forty-one member agencies delivering sixty-eight different housing and homelessness services across the country, supporting people experiencing family and domestic violence, young people leaving care, people exiting correctional institutions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and older Australians facing housing insecurity. This extensive reach positions CSSA as a critical partner in scaling solutions.

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"Our member agencies go where others don't or will not," Dr Nockles said. "They work with people with complex needs. This is the reality on the ground, and it demands that government understands and responds to it."

A key focus of the meeting was government land assets as a significant untapped opportunity for housing development. The conversation revealed that asset management practices – including the tendency to hold land at inflated valuations rather than releasing it at realistic market rates – create barriers to development.

"Just as the Church has demonstrated through projects like *Yes, In Faith's Backyard* that we can repurpose our own land for housing, government has the opportunity to do the same," Dr Nockles said. "We need to see government land released at realistic valuations so that developers and community housing providers can build the homes Australians desperately need."

Both parties recognised that creative solutions are needed to unlock housing supply and affordability.

A critical priority emerged around preventing people from becoming homeless when they exit institutions – hospitals, mental health facilities, and correctional settings.

"We need a national strategy that ensures no one exits a hospital, a mental health facility, or a prison into homelessness," Dr Nockles said. "We have the expertise and the networks to help design and deliver such a strategy. What we need is government commitment and resources."

A key outcome was Treasury's commitment to ongoing engagement with CSSA. Mr Rimmer expressed openness to site visits and involvement in Treasury roundtables to deepen understanding of the work being done by Catholic social service providers.

"It is critical that government officials see firsthand the work being done by our member agencies," Dr Nockles said. "We have extended a standing invitation for Treasury officials to visit Catholic social service providers across the country. Government needs to see this reality and understand the potential for partnership in addressing these challenges."

"This meeting is the beginning of a genuine dialogue," Dr Nockles said. "We are committed to working with Ben, Treasury, and across government to drive real solutions to housing and homelessness. We will continue to advocate for policies that protect the dignity and rights of people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, and we will offer our expertise, our networks, and our on-the-ground knowledge in service of addressing these challenges."

**ENDS**

The national network of Catholic social services

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## About CSSA

Catholic Social Services Australia is the national peak body for Catholic social service providers. CSSA's network of forty-one member agencies operates across all Australian States and Territories with a combined total of over seven hundred sites, delivering essential services to vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians.

## Supporting Information

### The Scale of the Challenge

In 2024–25, almost 289,000 clients were assisted by specialist homelessness services—up from 236,000 in 2011–12. Over 40 per cent of all clients were people impacted by family and domestic violence, which remains a leading cause of homelessness. Around 31 per cent of all clients supported had a current mental health issue, with this cohort growing faster than the overall client population.

Despite government commitments, the need for accommodation remains unmet. Approximately one in three specialist homelessness service clients had unmet needs for short-term or emergency accommodation.

### About the Meeting

The meeting brought together Dr Jerry Nockles, CEO of CSSA, Ms Carmel Sefian, Director of Policy and Advocacy at CSSA, and Mr James Kemp, Director of the Homelessness and Rental Policy Unit at Treasury, with Ben Rimmer, Director General of the Housing Group. The discussion focused on CSSA's advocacy priorities outlined in the Bishops' Social Justice Statement and opportunities for collaborative engagement between CSSA's member agencies and Treasury on housing and homelessness policy.

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*Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) advocates for the Church's social service ministry. It is the national peak body for Catholic social service providers. The CSSA's network operates across all Australian States and Territories and has a combined total of over seven hundred sites.*

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