

## Catholic Social Services Australia's 2025 Parliamentary Advocacy Summit: Advancing the Common Good at Parliament House

28 Oct 2025

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) convened its Annual Parliamentary Advocacy Summit on 28–29 October 2025 at Parliament House, Canberra, uniting over 50 representatives from the social service sector, faith leaders, and parliamentarians to address critical social challenges facing Australia.

The Summit was officially opened by The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, setting the tone for a powerful and collaborative event.

A highlight of the Summit was the formal presentation of the 2025–26 Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Statement, *Signs of Hope on the Edge: Serving People Living in Homelessness and Mental Ill-Health*, by Bishop Tim Harris, Chair of the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service (BCSJMS), to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Milton Dick MP. This moment underscored a shared commitment to justice, equity, and collective action for vulnerable Australians.

Bishop Tim Harris reflected on the moral urgency:

*“The Social Justice Statement calls all Australians to recognise the dignity and humanity of those living with homelessness and mental ill-health. It challenges us to move beyond indifference and become builders of hope within our communities.”*

Peter Monaghan, CSSA Chair, highlighted the power of partnership:

*“This Summit demonstrated the vital collaboration between the Church, social service providers, and government. Together, we advance the common good by advocating for policies that uphold human dignity, provide sustainable support, and foster hope for those on society’s margins.”*

Dr Jerry Nockles, CEO of CSSA, emphasised the Summit’s significance:

*“Our gathering is a call to action. Presenting the Social Justice Statement to Parliament marks a pivotal step in raising awareness and galvanising sustained commitment to end homelessness and support those living with mental ill-health. These intertwined issues demand a holistic, compassionate, and urgent response.”*

The Summit featured dynamic panel discussions, including “Faith in the Public Square,” where parliamentarians such as the Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, Senator Deborah O’Neill, Senator the Hon Matthew Canavan, and David Smith MP shared insights on authentically living faith in public life. The dialogue reinforced faith as a vital force for justice, compassion, and the common good beyond church walls.

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Another key session, “Real Costs, Real Impacts,” explored the true costs of delivering essential social services and the deepening financial fragility faced by Catholic social service providers nationwide. The discussion highlighted the implications for social service sustainability and the need to ensure adequate, sustainable and compassionate support to ensure the most vulnerable do not become ‘shock-absorbers’ of an underfunded system.

The Summit also launched the art exhibition *Journeys of Belonging*, which powerfully brings to life the stories of people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. The exhibition deepens public understanding and compassion by showcasing lived experiences with dignity and respect.

Dr Nockles concluded:

*“Our mission transcends policy; it is about people. This Summit has strengthened our resolve to serve with love and humility, advocate boldly, and walk alongside those in need as pilgrims of hope.”*

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The national network of Catholic social services

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Panels were expertly facilitated by renowned political commentator Paul Bongiorno, whose skilled moderation enriched discussions on faith, social justice, and the sustainability of social services. The 2025 Summit featured participation from a distinguished group of parliamentarians including:

- The Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives
- The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP
- Senator Deborah O’Neill
- Senator the Hon Matthew Canavan
- David Smith MP
- The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence
- Senator Tammy Tyrrell
- Phillip Thompson OAM MP
- Madonna Jarrett MP
- Senator Andrew Bragg, Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness
- Senator David Pocock
- Senator the Hon Anne Ruston
- Senator Kerry Liddle
- Luke Gosling OAM MP

**ENDS**

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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 700 sites.*

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