

Catholic Social Services Australia highlights opportunity in Government's Defence Site Divestment to address housing crisis

4 February 2026

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) CEO Dr Jerry Nockles today emphasised the significant opportunity the Australian Government's announcement on the divestment of Defence land presents to advance safe, accessible, and affordable housing for Australians in need.

"This announcement aligns closely with a key recommendation from our recent pre-budget submission, where we urged the Government to leverage public assets to support social and affordable housing initiatives," Dr Nockles said.

"One of the most dramatic impacts of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis is the growing number of Australians struggling to meet mortgage or rental payments or facing homelessness altogether. Over 1.2 million low-income households now spend more than 30 per cent of their disposable income on housing, a burden that is simply unsustainable."

Safe, accessible, and affordable housing is not just an economic issue – it is an essential dignity owed to every person. Catholic Social Teaching affirms that every person possesses inherent dignity and is entitled to the basic needs of life, including secure housing.

"Catholic Social Services Australia's 42 member organisations provide vital housing services across the country, from long-term rentals and supported accommodation to crisis and short-term housing, alongside compassionate homelessness support for the most vulnerable," Dr Nockles said.

"The divestment of Defence land presents a unique and timely opportunity for the Government to invest in social infrastructure that can deliver meaningful, lasting housing solutions for those at risk."

Dr Nockles added, "We would also like to see further identification of land held by the Commonwealth and states and territories to determine whether parcels are surplus or underutilised and suitable for housing supply outcomes – including social and affordable housing. Where appropriate, we believe proceeds from such divestments should be directed towards expanding housing supply and social infrastructure to meet urgent community needs."

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He emphasised the importance that the divestment of assets be conducted with transparency and fiscal responsibility, ensuring that proceeds are directed towards sustainable, evidence-based social investments that uphold sound fiscal discipline.

“Now is the moment to act decisively. We urge the Government to prioritise housing as a cornerstone of social policy, recognising that a home is the foundation for health, wellbeing, and participation in society,” he said.

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CSSA's Pre-Budget Submission available here:
<https://cssa.org.au/resources/advocacy/>

About CSSA

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

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