

## Regional, Young, and Vulnerable South Australians Need More Than Promises This Election

16 March 2026

Catholic social services agencies are calling on all parties to commit to genuine investment in regional communities and the services that support South Australia's most vulnerable people in the lead-up to the 21 March state election.

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA), Centacare Catholic Country SA, and Centacare Catholic Community Services join together in highlighting critical gaps in funding, housing, and support for families and children across South Australia.

The agencies, which collectively support thousands of South Australians every day, are backing calls from the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS), Child and Family Focus SA (CAFFSA) and other peak bodies for urgent action on community service funding, housing availability, and extended support for young people leaving care.

"Our frontline carers see every day the impact of inadequate funding and the growing gap between what communities need and what they're receiving" said Dr Jerry Nockles, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services Australia.

"We're calling on all parties to commit to further action in the following key areas: genuine progress on Closing the Gap outcomes and targets, urgent action on housing and homelessness, strengthened family support including for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence, improving child reunification rates and extending support to 21 years for residential care leavers in South Australia."

SACOSS's *Indexation for the SA Not-for-Profit Sector* report revealed that South Australia's 2.5 per cent indexation rate is the second-lowest in the country and has failed to keep pace with rising wage, superannuation, and service delivery costs.

Regional communities face additional costs and challenges in accessing services, yet funding hasn't kept pace with rising costs. An immediate funding boost to cover cost increases over the past year, and adoption of a new indexation formula would adequately cover future cost increases.

Michele Wachla, Chief Executive Officer of Centacare Catholic Country SA, said regional South Australians were being left behind.

"In regional areas, we have proportionately fewer public houses than metropolitan Adelaide, rental prices are rising faster, and there's a chronic lack of emergency housing" Ms Wachla said.

For regional South Australia, investment in early intervention and supports that strengthen families is critical. We are also calling for a greater investment in early intervention and prevention for improved reunification outcomes, so children can remain connected to family, culture and community, rather than relying on crisis-driven responses.

Leanne Haddad, Executive Director of Centacare Catholic Community Services, emphasised the need for extended support for young people living in residential care beyond 18 years.

"We strongly support extending post care services for residential care leavers beyond 18 years" Ms Haddad said.

"Young people leaving care need continued support as they transition to independence. We know from evidence that extending this support leads to better outcomes in education, employment, housing stability, and overall wellbeing for the young person. It also saves the government money when the longer-term benefits are factored in."

"This election is an opportunity for all parties to show they understand the challenges facing regional South Australia and are willing to invest in the services and supports that make a real difference."

Dr Nockles closed by saying, "the outstanding work of Centacare Catholic Country SA and Centacare Catholic Community Services are of profound importance to South Australia's 280,000 Catholics, and we will be closely monitoring policy announcements in the final week of the campaign."

**ENDS**

## About CSSA

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

# MEDIA RELEASE



## About Centacare Catholic Country SA (CCCSA)

Centacare Catholic Country SA delivers essential community and social services across regional, rural and remote South Australia, spanning Port Pirie to Ceduna and including Port Augusta, Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Kadina, Coober Pedy, Streaky Bay and surrounding areas. Through a diverse suite of programs, such as counselling, family support, financial capability, mediation, homelessness services, domestic and family violence support, low-intensity mental health services and community development initiatives, CCCSA supports children, young people, individuals, families and communities to thrive.

## About Centacare Catholic Community Services

Centacare provides a wide range of community services to over 20,000 South Australians from 36 sites across metropolitan Adelaide and regional South Australia. This includes family and relationship counselling, family and domestic violence support, disability services including NDIS services, and programs supporting children, young people and families across South Australia.

Media Contact | Carmel Sefian | 02 6285 1366 | [carmel.sefian@cssa.org.au](mailto:carmel.sefian@cssa.org.au)