

POPE LEO XIV GRANTS SIGNIFICANT RECOGNITION TO CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA ON 70TH ANNIVERSARY

05 August 2026

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) is profoundly honoured to receive a significant and heartfelt message of recognition from His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, marking the organisation's 70th anniversary year of 2026.

This rare and distinguished acknowledgment from the Holy Father underscores CSSA's enduring witness to the Gospel and its vital contribution to Australian society over seven decades.

Central to the Pope's message is the Gospel passage from Matthew 25:40: "*as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.*" This scripture lies at the heart of CSSA's mission.

CSSA Chief Executive Officer, Dr Jerry Nockles, said, "it is CSSA's Gospel theme that calls, guides, and encourages our work every day. Receiving this message from Pope Leo XIV is a momentous honour and a significant recognition of the work our community does."

Dr Nockles reflected on the Pope's powerful words that "*the moral greatness of a nation is manifested, above all, in its capacity to accompany, protect and love those lives that are most fragile.*" He said, "in these challenging times of change and division in Australia, the Holy Father's teaching is a timely and critical reminder.

"Pope Leo is the global statesman the world so desperately needs today. His voice is urgently needed to inspire nations to uphold dignity and solidarity with those most in need.

"This call to walk with the most vulnerable is just as urgent here in Australia," Dr Nockles added.

The message to CSSA reinforces the call to action laid out in the Holy Father's Encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*.

"The Holy Father calls us to '*get our hands dirty in the construction zone of our time*' – a vivid call to active involvement and practical engagement in our communities. This is a powerful invitation to move beyond words and take real, hands-on action to build a more just and compassionate society," Dr Nockles added.

The anniversary year will be commemorated with a Gala Dinner at the Australian Parliament House in Canberra on the evening of 12 August 2026 to celebrate CSSA's enduring legacy and future mission.

The message from Pope Leo XIV encourages CSSA's staff, volunteers, and supporters to continue advocating for those without a voice and to embody the love and justice central to the Gospel. It is a profound source of inspiration as CSSA looks to the future.

Dr Nockles said, "In a time when Australia grapples with social and political challenges, the Holy Father's teaching offers a beacon of hope and a call to action. It reminds us that true progress and greatness is measured by how we care for the most vulnerable among us."

CSSA gratefully acknowledges the Apostolic Blessing imparted by His Holiness Pope Leo XIV as a sign of joy and hope in the Lord.

"The anniversary offers us an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to serving the Australian community with faith, compassion, and justice," Dr Nockles concluded.

Bookings for the Gala Dinner can be made at:
<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1593059>

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About CSSA

CSSA 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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The national network of Catholic social services