



AUSTRALIAN
CATHOLIC BISHOPS
CONFERENCE

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Signs of hope in social justice statement

The experience of people living with the challenges of homelessness and mental ill-health has been highlighted in the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's 2025 Social Justice Statement.

Each year since 1940, the Conference has released a statement for reflection and discussion ahead of Social Justice Sunday on a key issue in Australian society.

This year's statement is *Signs of Hope on the Edge: Serving Homeless People with Mental Ill-Health*.

Conference President, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, says in the foreword to the statement that homelessness and mental health services are stretched and under-resourced, making it harder to provide adequate support for those who need it.

The solution lies in Australians offering loving friendship to those in need.

"Many Australians find it embarrassing, uncomfortable or even confronting to see homeless people on the streets," Archbishop Costelloe writes.

"But we encourage all who are baptised to, instead, offer loving friendship to people on the edge of society.

"Instead of walking by and not noticing the plight of our neighbours, pay attention to them and their plight, listen to their stories, and serve them with the love we learn from Jesus."

The statement includes first-hand accounts of people struggling with mental-ill health and homelessness.

Tasmanian dad Michael turned his life around with the help of the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

“My family couldn’t cope with my drug abuse, and I landed up on the streets. I slept wherever I could find a place. It was tough, scary and very lonely,” Michael recounted.

“My life has turned around ... I wake up every morning with a smile on my face. My daughter says that I am shining!”

An estimated 280,000 people access homelessness services each year, with one in three having a current mental health issue.

The statement lists some of the ways that Catholic entities are engaging with the crisis.

Australians are encouraged to act, such as working with local government councils on ways to address homelessness and mental health, helping street van ministries and advocating to state and federal MPs about better policies.

Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service chair, Bishop Tim Harris, said there was a clear message in the statement.

“We want to encourage Australians to notice homeless people in their communities, to take every chance to listen to their stories and understand what their lives are like,” Bishop Harris said.

“To listen to their hopes and dreams, and to truly serve them with love and humility.”

Social Justice Sunday will be marked across the country on August 31.

The statement and related resources (including an audio version) will be made available from August 13 for download at socialjustice.catholic.org.au

(Note: Figures come from ‘Homelessness services’ section of [Homelessness and homelessness services - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#) . Further information on specialist homelessness services, including state by state data released in March 2025, can be found at [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2023–24, About - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#))