

POPE LEO XIV MESSAGE HIGHLIGHTS MORAL GREATNESS AND CALLS FOR ACTION AMID AUSTRALIA'S CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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"The moral greatness of a nation is shown by how it protects and loves its most fragile members."

This striking message from His Holiness Pope Leo XIV forms the foundation of a special message he has sent to Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) on the occasion of its 70th anniversary year.

Dr Jerry Nockles, CEO of CSSA, said this call was timely and important.

"In a time of division and uncertainty, Pope Leo XIV's message is a powerful reminder that Australia's true strength is measured by how we protect and love the most vulnerable."

"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.

In his message, the Pope warmly acknowledges CSSA's long-standing commitment to living out the Gospel through service to Australia's most vulnerable and marginalised. His words offer encouragement and spiritual support as CSSA reflects on seven decades of compassionate work and looks ahead to the challenges of today.

Australia is currently experiencing significant political and social change, with new and restless voices reshaping the national conversation.

Dr Nockles reflected, "This is a moment for honest, respectful engagement with all Australians, especially those restless yet legitimate voices who have created space for this new political landscape. At the same time, we must never lose sight of the inherent dignity of every person, particularly those who are vulnerable or left behind."

Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*, reinforces this call. The Holy Father urges everyone to "get our hands dirty in the construction zone of our time" – a vivid call to practical, hands-on involvement in building a more just and compassionate society.

The Australian Catholic Bishops' recent Social Justice Statement on social cohesion echoes these themes, emphasising the urgent need for unity, respect, and care across Australia's diverse communities. CSSA believes that faith-based values offer a vital and positive contribution to this national moment.

Dr Nockles said, "Winning elections must never be the end goal. Politics should be the means by which good policy is devised and implemented, not policy being the slave of politics. The common good demands policies and leadership that prioritise the wellbeing, dignity, and flourishing of all Australians, especially the most vulnerable."

He continued, "We need a 'Common Good Accord' – a commitment from all political actors to move beyond adversarial politics and sectional interests, and to collaborate in devising policies that serve the long-term interests of the entire community."

"This moment calls for leadership that embraces collaborative governance – where government, business, civil society, and communities work in good faith to tackle issues too complex for any one sector alone. It demands a rejection of zero-sum thinking in favour of solutions where economic success and social wellbeing reinforce each other," Dr Nockles said.

CSSA will mark its 70th anniversary with a Gala Dinner at the Australian Parliament House in Canberra on 12 August 2026. Former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull will deliver the keynote address, in what promises to be an important contribution to political discourse in the country at this pivotal time.

Looking ahead, CSSA will be leaning into the upcoming Victorian and New South Wales state elections, advocating for policies and conversations that uphold human dignity and social cohesion.

CSSA gratefully acknowledges the Apostolic Blessing from Pope Leo XIV, a sign of joy and hope for the future. The organisation remains steadfast in its commitment to serve Australians with faith, compassion, and justice.

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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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