

MEDIA RELEASE

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What kind of Victoria can we hope for? Catholic Social Services Victoria launches 2026 Victorian Election Statement *Dignity, hope and drawing closer to the margins*

“God has a special place in his heart for those who are discriminated against and oppressed, and he asks us, his Church, to make a decisive and radical choice in favour of the weakest.” Pope Leo, *Dilexi Te*, 16.

Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV) has launched its 2026 Victoria Election Statement, [*Dignity, hope and drawing closer to the margins*](#), inviting political leaders, candidates, people of goodwill, and those who will form the 61st Parliament to work in a spirit of constructive partnership for those disadvantaged and doing it toughest in our state.

Grounded in Catholic social tradition and the experience and expertise of services working alongside Victorians every day, the statement calls for practical policy and budget reforms that would make a meaningful difference for those made disadvantaged in our society.

The statement has been formally endorsed by more than thirty Catholic organisations across social services, education and health, reflecting a shared commitment to policies that address the failures of our current systems, uphold human dignity and support those experiencing disadvantage for a real chance to flourish.

The launch gathered people from across Catholic organisations, parishes, volunteers and others interested in the work of justice. The Hon. Bronwyn Pike AM, Dr Dalal Smiley and Dr Paul Smyth together considered the questions: What is the positive vision can we hold to in this moment, and how do we invigorate work towards that vision? The panel encouraged attentiveness to those who are in need of social supports, but also to broader questions of wealth distribution and issues associated with economic inequality as key to a well functioning society where social services can play their role. Each affirmed the gift of living in a multicultural Victoria and our roles as Catholic organisations to stand in solidarity and point to the dignity of each human person, and not to let economic rationalism or racism determine the value of any person.

As the peak body for the state’s Catholic social and community services, whose member organisations together serve over 300,000 Victorians each year, CSSV identified four pillars that our sector have discerned as ways forward towards a society that is more equitable, just and compassionate:

- Flourishing Families and Communities – We believe that every person is capable of growth and contribution, and by choosing early support, participation and care for those most at risk, we can build a safer, more hope-filled community.
- Houses as Homes – We want housing treated as the foundation of a flourishing life, not as a commodity, and special attention to providing for those in need.
- Reconciliation – We must share in the responsibility of Reconciliation with First Peoples at the state level, working together to heal broken relationships and past and present injustices.
- Women and Children Free from Violence – We want faith communities and services to keep playing a part in responding to gender-based violence and changing attitudes and behaviours, and a Parliament that recognises and supports their work.

The statement contains fourteen social policy asks across these pillars, while also pointing to the shared vision behind the statement – not only a Victoria where no one is left behind, but rather a Victoria where all policy decisions are made for the common good.

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CSSV Executive Director, Josh Lourensz, says “We want candidates, politicians, and all Victorians to consider the society we want to be part of. This statement offers a clear, values-based platform for people of goodwill to stand behind — one that reflects our common concern for the dignity of every person.”

“We are at a difficult moment, living through global and national crises, with inequality and disenfranchisement increasingly extreme. The next Parliament of Victoria has an important role to play in addressing these structural challenges while also responding to the social issues of this moment. Social policy settings, legislation and ongoing government spending must listen to those on the margins, draw on the wisdom of those working alongside them, and invest in ways of working that allow people to flourish. And we all must work to hold our elected representatives to account.”

“CSSV is encouraging political parties, candidates, organisations and individuals to read the statement, engage with the questions it asks of us, and commit to placing the dignity of the most vulnerable Victorians at the centre of Victoria’s future.”

Dr Edward Simons, Executive Director of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools, said “The statement serves as an important reminder that the measure of a society is reflected in how it supports those who are most vulnerable. Its focus on compassion, justice and shared responsibility reflects values that are central to Catholic social teaching, Catholic schools — and to the mission of all Catholic organisations across Victoria.”

You can read CSSV’s Election Statement [here](#). We have also developed a [printable pamphlet](#) for communities wanting to know more about how they can consider the most vulnerable Victorians in this election period and beyond.

For enquiries and further comment please contact:

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