

Towards 75: Building for the Common Good

CSSA's Strategic Plan 2026–2031

"For the least of these" - **MATTHEW 25:40**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

03

Catholic Social Services Australia acknowledges the **Traditional Custodians** of the many lands and waters across this vast continent on which we live, work, and serve. We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present, and we recognise the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country, culture, and community.

We honour their enduring spiritual relationship with the Creator which is woven through their stories of our sacred land, and tells of a relationship that has nurtured wisdom, belonging, and care for creation across countless generations.

Inspired by the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, we commit ourselves to **walk together in truth and justice** by listening, learning, and standing in solidarity with First Nations peoples as we seek reconciliation and healing.

May our shared journey reflect the love of God, who calls us to right relationship with one another and with the earth, our common home.



A PIVOTAL MOMENT

FOREWORD

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As we approach the significant milestones of our 70th and 75th anniversaries, Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) stands at a **pivotal moment**.

Our mission remains as vital as ever: to support and empower Catholic social service providers to serve vulnerable Australians with compassion, justice, and dignity. This Strategic Plan sets **a clear and focused path forward**, grounded in our enduring values and Catholic Social Teaching, to deliver meaningful impact, drive systemic change, and build sector capacity. It is **a call to action** for all of us to work collaboratively, adaptively, and purposefully to shape a more just and inclusive society.

WHO WE ARE

Catholic Social Services Australia is the **national peak body** representing Catholic social service providers across Australia. We advocate for policies and practices that **uphold the dignity of every person**, especially those experiencing disadvantage. Rooted in Catholic Social Teaching, we unite our members through collaboration, advocacy, and capacity building to strengthen the social services sector and advance the common good.



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OUR VISION

*A just, inclusive, and compassionate Australia where every person's **dignity is respected** and their wellbeing supported.*

OUR MISSION

To empower and support Catholic social service providers in delivering compassionate, just, and effective services that **uphold the dignity and wellbeing of vulnerable Australians** through advocacy, collaboration, and capacity building grounded in Catholic Social Teaching.



OUR GOSPEL PRAYER

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“Whatever you did for one of the least of these”

— MATTHEW 25:40

‘For the least of these’

Also offered as the concise alternative:

A powerful Gospel mandate to serve the most vulnerable as if serving Christ himself.

This phrase encapsulates Catholic Social Teaching’s preferential option for the poor and CSSA’s commitment to ensuring the respect and dignity of all people.

WHAT GUIDES US

OUR VALUES

07

1

CONNECT:

We build strong partnerships within the Church, with governments and with the broader community to amplify our impact.

2

INNOVATE:

We embrace new ideas and approaches to meet emerging challenges and opportunities, and are thought leaders on key issues where we can speak with authority through the experience and wisdom of Catholic Social Teaching.

3

CELEBRATE

We celebrate our members and the Good News lived through our work and impact, including in the face of adversity. We acknowledge, elevate, and share the work of our members.

“For the least of these”

MATTHEW 25:40

WHERE WE WILL FOCUS

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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1 To advocate with a distinctive Catholic voice for our Member Agencies that provide services to communities in need across Australia by:

- Influencing public policy and legislation through engagement with decision-makers using sound evidence based in research and the lived experience of Catholic social service providers.
- Drawing on Catholic Social Teaching principles to frame and guide our work.

Our measures of success will be the extent to which our policy recommendations influence legislation and public policy, and the increased recognition of Catholic social service perspectives in decision-making forums.

2 To develop and strengthen the Catholic social services sector in Australia through:

- Supporting the sustainability of Member Agencies by fostering a network-wide culture of collaboration, connectedness, mutual support and trust.
- Facilitating opportunities for member engagement in relevant national policy, research and practice developments.

Our measures of success will be improved member engagement and satisfaction, increased collaboration among agencies, and enhanced sector sustainability demonstrated through shared resources and capacity-building outcomes.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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3 To deepen partnerships that reflect the Catholic Church's mission and the Gospel's call for social justice by:

- Fostering Catholic identity and mission among Member Agencies.
- Ensuring constructive links with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia and other organisations of the Catholic Church.
- Developing alliances and partnerships with other agencies to further our social service ministries.

Our measures of success will be the strengthened Catholic identity within member agencies, increased partnerships with Church bodies, and expanded alliances that advance social justice initiatives.

4 Ensuring the capacity and sustainability of Catholic Social Services Australia to deliver the strategic priorities through:

- Provision of a sound funding base.
- Skilled and mission-focused Board and staff.
- Effective administration and communications strategies and systems.

Our measures of success will be stable and diversified funding, a skilled and mission-aligned Board and staff, and efficient operational and communication systems supporting strategic goals.

OUR IMPACT PRIORITIES

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1 Commitment to Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets:

Support and advocate for improved outcomes and **self-determination** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, reflecting the vital work of CSSA members in First Nations communities.

Our impact will be measured by *increased engagement in policy, advocacy and service delivery activities focused on supporting First Nations voices and aspirations toward self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, supported by our members.*

2 Housing and Homelessness:

Advocate for **accessible, affordable, and safe housing** alongside compassionate and effective responses to homelessness for the most vulnerable and at-risk in our communities, including for those living with mental ill-health.

Our impact will be measured by *increased engagement with governments in advocating for adequate, accessible, affordable and safe housing options and reduced rates of homelessness among vulnerable populations, including those with mental ill-health.*

OUR IMPACT PRIORITIES

3 Family Support including for Family and Domestic Violence (FDV):

Promote and strengthen **family wellbeing** through advocacy for frameworks, plans, funding and services that support vulnerable families, prevent family breakdown, and address family violence.

Our impact will be measured by *enhanced advocacy for family support and specialist FDV services as a national priority and where there is greatest need.*

4 Disability and Dignity:

Advance the **rights, inclusion, and dignity** of people with disability, including mental ill-health, ensuring they have full participation in community life and access to quality support services.

Our impact will be measured by *embedding consideration of disability rights, inclusiveness, and justice as an intersectional priority cutting across all areas of CSSA social policy, advocacy, and support services.*

WOVEN THROUGH EVERYTHING

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

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Supporting the Impact Priorities for 2026-31 are three cross-cutting themes:

01

THE COMMON GOOD ACCORD:

Lead and promote the development of a national accord narrative uniting government, business, and civil society around shared social policy goals that prioritise the common good and social justice.

02

VOICE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE AND AGENCY:

Ensure people experiencing disadvantage have meaningful involvement in shaping policies and services that affect them.

03

ASSURANCE:

Ensure robust governance, compliance, and continuous evaluation across CSSA and its members to enhance impact, effectiveness, and safeguard the wellbeing and dignity of those served.

HOW WE WORK: OUR THREE KEY THEMES

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We draw upon the expertise and lived experience of our network and sector research to advocate for public policy that will facilitate and enhance the delivery of social services to vulnerable Australians. We foster connectedness between Catholic social service providers and create forums for them to share their expertise and innovations.

Catholic Social Teaching underpins our work and informs our advocacy and the support we provide to our network.

The unique way we work is distilled into three key areas:

A INTEGRITY AND IMPACT-ORIENTATION:

- We act with honesty, transparency, and accountability in all work.
- We focus on outcomes that make a real difference in people's lives, not just activities.
- We support and develop evidence-based policy ideas grounded in our advocacy in robust research and the lived experience of those we serve.
- We conduct and commission strategic research to fill knowledge gaps to inform innovative policy and practice solutions.
- We are committed to enabling and amplifying the voices of people affected by disadvantage to participate in decision-making and public discourse.

HOW WE WORK: OUR THREE KEY THEMES

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B STRATEGIC ALLIANCES AND COLLABORATIONS:

- We activate diverse partnerships to advance shared goals and systemic reform.
- We actively seek and nurture partnerships, valuing diverse perspectives and shared goals.
- We mobilise membership to better enable sector-wide advocacy and collaboration to amplify collective impact.
- We prioritise enabling members, communities, and partners to lead and succeed.

C SOLUTIONS PARTNERS IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE:

- We advocate to Government: Build trusted, honest, constructive relationships with decision-makers to influence policy and funding.
- Adaptability: Respond flexibly and creatively to changing social and political environments and emerging challenges.
- We leverage media and the digital environment, and our public profile, to shape public debate and increase awareness of social justice issues.

OUR POLICY AND ADVOCACY FOUR-PILLAR FRAMEWORK

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Our Policy and Advocacy approach is underpinned by a Four-Pillar Framework to ensure we are focused on strategies that best enhance CSSA resources and influence policy and practice discussions through a **Catholic Social Teaching lens**. Our advocacy efforts continue to support "little-A advocacy" focused on members' needs and "big-A advocacy" addressing systemic and structural issues. The Four-Pillar Framework comprises:

01 UNDERSTAND:

Comprehending the current public policy landscape.

02 ANTICIPATE:

Predicting future policy developments and trends. Building relationships with key government contacts, policy and decision-makers before they are needed.

03 INFLUENCE:

Shaping public policy decisions and outcomes.

04 ILLUMINATE:

Focusing on shedding light on policy issues through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching.

CSSA will position its advocacy efforts where our legitimacy, authority and authenticity can be demonstrated:

LEGITIMACY

through the understanding and lessons derived from CSSA members' frontline service delivery that can influence policy decisions.

AUTHORITY

through our record and scale of Catholic social service delivery across Australia.

AUTHENTICITY

through our mission, which is underpinned by Catholic Social Teaching.



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For the least of these

— Matthew 25:40

Catholic Social Services Australia

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026–31

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