

Launch of the 2009 Social Justice Statement at the Rerum Novarum Lecture
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World Youth Day 2008 transformed the imaginations of many in this country. Even sceptics were left open mouthed as the scale of the event impressed, yet the accompanying disruptions expected from any gathering of youth did not eventuate. When our young people take time to listen to the spirit of God, their spirituality is not only evident but impressive.

This year's Bishops Social Justice Statement expresses its admiration for the enthusiasm of youth, not just evident in their response to WYD but for their sensitivity to Social Justice.

Our young people stand now as the latest generation of Australians, heirs to the legacy of Mary MacKillop, Caroline Chisholm and Eileen O'Connor and other exemplary witnesses to that Catholic Faith which motivated their work for the underprivileged.

They are aware, in more ways than previous generations, thanks to the information super highway, about injustice in our world and especially in our country. Not only are they aware of this, but in many instances they are themselves vulnerable to injustice.

Youth employment, indigenous youth, mental health and the prevention of abuse are four Australian issues that this document addresses. It also looks at two issues of international concern, the care for the natural environment and the poverty, oppression and violence that is driving people as refugees from their homelands.

The active energy, faith and good will of our young people are vital ingredients in answering these concerns. The call, the invitation, the vocation to youth, does not come from the bishops or from the older generation. It is of the Holy Spirit. It resonates among their peers, it is their work and their response, but it does demand of us oldies our cooperation and wherever and however we can offer it, our assistance.