



Address to Unitarian Church, East Melbourne  
Sunday 6 September 2009

By  
Denis Fitzgerald  
Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria

## **A Catholic Perspective on Social Justice**

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this morning  
To reflect on a Catholic perspective on Social Justice.

### **Introduction**

Social justice is concerned with relations between groups of people, between structures in a society or nation.

John Rawls observed that the principles of social justice “provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society, and they define the appropriate distribution of benefits and burdens of social cooperation.”<sup>1</sup>

There is a particular Catholic perspective on social justice, for which Catholic social teaching sets out the principles.

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One of the benefits of meeting people from different faith standpoints and from different traditions is that it pushes one to take a step back, to look afresh at material and issues that are familiar from constant exposure and regular engagement.

Today is such an opportunity for me, for which I thank you. I hope that the remarks that follow are of interest, and I look forward to discussion following them.

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To begin by introducing myself:

I’m the Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Victoria:  
We are a peak body for Catholic social service agencies in Victoria, whose services range widely across the social services sector.

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<sup>1</sup> John Rawls *A Theory of Justice* Oxford University Press 1971, at page 4



Our member organisations are diverse in size, in scope of services, in geographical reach and in the ways that they relate to the structures of the Catholic Church. [a list of our members is attached to these notes.]

The services that our member agencies provide support the dignity and value of the members of our community, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. This is evident from a partial listing of these services, which are accompanied by advocacy for more just societal arrangements in the areas of care:

- Adoption and permanent/ foster care
- Aged care and support
- Care and support of the dying
- Disability care and support
- Drug and Alcohol counselling and support
- Employment services and support
- Family support case management
- Homelessness accommodation and support for adults and youth
- Indigenous support programs
- Marriage and relationship education
- Out of home care for children with special needs
- Parenting education (community and school-based)
- Pregnancy counselling
- Refugee and settlement services

As this range of areas of activity indicates, we work with member organisations, as part of the Catholic Church in Victoria, to fulfil the gospel imperatives to stand with and serve those who are poor, disadvantaged and marginalised, and to work for a just, equitable and compassionate society.

Our actual work as a peak body can be summarised as working with members and bringing members together to build up a community of common interest, to enable us to effectively undertake

Advocacy - working with our members to build on their experience in service delivery and from their dialogue with those in need to better impact on policy; to bring about a more just society

Member support – helping members work more closely and productively together; providing advice and identifying assistance to smaller members across a wide range of support areas;

Strengthening Catholic Identity - we are a link for our members with the broader Church, and can help them reflect on that Catholic identity, how it impacts on the services they provide and how they provide them.

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My own background includes

- Studies in philosophy, and, later in economics and accounting, and in public policy
- A career in international relations, mainly with the Australian Government. My work had a focus on the South Pacific, and on economic and development relations. I was Australian High Commissioner to Nauru in the 1990's.
- I then worked for ten years with the Victorian Government in policy and management roles, before moving to general management with Centacare Catholic Family Services, before moving to my current role.

As a Catholic, I've always been involved with my own worshipping community at each stage, involved in various ways in the service and justice activities of the Church.

- Homelessness
- Human rights
- Marriage education and support
- Commitment to a welcoming local community.

Issues of service and of social justice have also loomed large in my professional career: they dominated my work in international relations, and in areas of public administration such as taxation and consumer affairs.

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### **Scriptural beginnings**

The themes of justice and service develop through the course of the history of Israel, as the nation and its prophets reflect on how God calls his people to a life of loving service, and to build a just society:

#### **Psalm 14**

*Lord, who shall be admitted to your tent, and dwell on your holy mountain?*

*He who walks without fault  
Who acts with justice  
And speaks the truth from the heart.  
He who does not slander with his tongue.*

*He who does no wrong to his brother  
And casts no slur on his neighbour  
Who holds the godless in disdain  
But honours those who fear the Lord*

*He who keeps his pledge come what may  
who takes no interest on a loan.  
And accepts no bribes against the innocent  
Such a man will stand firm forever.*

#### **Micah 6: 8**

*"what does the LORD require of you?"*



- *To act justly and*
- *to love tenderly*
- *to walk humbly with your God.”*

Justice in these settings is primarily a matter of individual relations, and of relations between a ruler and his people – of giving each person their due.

But the concept is extended to take in broader relations:

**Psalm 84**, looks forward to the dawning of a new, redeemed era, when:

*Mercy and faithfulness have met  
Justice and peace have embraced  
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth  
And justice look down from heaven.*

And basis tenets of social justice are laid out by some of the prophets:

**Zechariah 7: 10**

*Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor.*

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Jesus further developed these themes by his life and his words:

He sought out the poor and the marginalised – he recruited fishermen; dined with tax collectors, approached lepers, spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well:

Indeed, Jesus was often criticized by self-righteous members of society for spending so much time with such people. “Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?”, they asked. He responded: “It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick ... I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners” (cf. *Mt 9:11-13*).

His mission was to those who were marginalised:

- he came to save sinners, not just the righteous
- he healed those in need
- he told us that It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven

His beatitudes overturned the established order:

- Blessed are those that mourn, they shall be comforted
  - Blessed are the meek, they shall inherit the earth
- etc

Jesus central message was that God is love, and that this creates an imperative to love our neighbour:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. — **Mar 12:30, 31**



Nor is our neighbour just the person next door, with whom we have an existing relationship. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10, 25-37), it was not the priest or the temple assistant, but the 'despised Samaritan' who felt compassion for the injured man:

"Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

"Now which of these three would you say was a neighbour to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

And Jesus taught us that this is not an optional extra: this is how we will be judged. In his parable of the last judgement, at Matthew 25:31-46, we are told:

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?'

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

This mission of service is also a mission of justice: Social and political norms are challenged, as relations of loving service are established – the two are inseparable.

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Justice and service were an integral part of the mission of the Church, from the earliest Christian communities.

The early apostolic communities were concerned with care for their weaker members, and they reached out to others.



Over the centuries, the various branches of the church, usually led or initiated by visionary reformers such as Benedict, Francis, Philip Neri, Martin de Porres, Frederick Ozanam and the founders of the various religious orders, focused on service in the areas of health care, of care for orphans; of relief for the poor, the provision of education.

These were works of direct service, but they were also works of justice. They challenged the social structures, and called for better treatment of those who were marginalised in society.

In parallel with this, there were gradual developments in the broader theory of societal relations – development of the just war theory, for example. This development was far from linear, and in was often overshadowed by the relationship between church and state. From an historical distance, it would seem that at times there was greater emphasis given to the preaching of the word of God over the following of his call to action, to service and justice. Nevertheless, ideas and actions developed.

Such thinking within the Church started to develop more systematically in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the term ‘social justice’ dates from that period.

100 years after the French Revolution Pope Leo XIII gave voice in his 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, to the principles that the role of the State is to promote social justice through the protection of rights, while the Church must speak out on social issues in order to teach correct social principles and ensure class harmony. He stressed the rights of workers, and the responsibilities of employers, He underlined that neither central control of the means of production, nor unfettered market forces, would deliver a society that had the interests of the urban workers at heart: social and economic forces must be tempered by moral considerations.

Subsequent theorists and popes followed in this tradition; reflecting over time on economic and political systems; on the pressing issues of international development; and, in an Encyclical from Pope Benedict XVI earlier this year, on globalisation and its impact on true human development – the risks that it introduces and the opportunities that it presents.

The body of teaching that emerged can be termed Catholic Social Teaching. This set of principles provides a framework for the analysis of issues, and for determining what might be done. The principles have been summarised by the US Bishops Conference in the following terms:<sup>2</sup>

### **1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching....

We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/excerpt.shtml>



## **2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined.

We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

## **3. Rights and Responsibilities**

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency.

Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

## **4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

## **5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

The economy must serve people, not the other way around.

Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

## **6. Solidarity**

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be.

Loving our neighbour has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. ... Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

## **7. Care for God's Creation**

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is ...a requirement of our faith.

We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.



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These are part of the teaching of the Church, and their imperatives are an integral part of the Church's mission.

A recent authoritative iteration of this core position is found in the 2005 Encyclical letter<sup>1</sup> of Pope Benedict XVI, entitled *God is Love*:

As the years went by and the Church spread further afield, the exercise of charity became established as one of her essential activities, along with the administration of the sacraments and the proclamation of the word: love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to her as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel. The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word...(Pope Benedict XVI, 1995, para 22)

The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*), and exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being. (Pope Benedict XVI, 1995, para 25)

As the Second Vatican Council put it:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

And in Charity in Truth, his most recent Encyclical, Pope Benedict XVI expanded on the intimate link between charity (or service) and justice:

...charity demands justice: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individual and peoples. It strives to build the earthly city according to law and justice. On the other hand, charity transcends justice and compels it on the logic of giving and forgiving (para 6)

So, this is no partisan frolic: service and the work for justice are central to the Church's teaching and its mission.

### **What's Catholic about all of that?**

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<sup>3</sup> Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World *Gaudium Et Spes* Promulgated By His Holiness, Pope Paul Vi On December 7, 1965, para 1, access on 4 Sept 09 at

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)



The organisational or institutional settings of our service and our work for justice are Catholic: they are inspired by the teachings of Christ, as reflected on by the Church. They build on Catholic social teaching.

- This doesn't mean that they come to different conclusions, or different priorities from everyone else. Far from it – the imperative of working for justice and providing loving service is a great bridge builder in our society, and across societies.
- But it does mean that we develop our own position, coming out of our heritage.
- It also means that we have particular emphases and priorities. Catholic social services, as a sector, tend to place more emphasis than do some others on areas such as support for the family; support for the value of life at all stages, workers rights, etc – these are all themes that have been a focus in the development of Catholic social teaching.

Another Catholic dimension is that there are Catholics involved in our work and our services. Again, this is far from exclusively so: many staff, and a number of leaders in our organisations are not Catholic.

- But the leaders of our services and programs support the work of the church in justice and service;
- And staff and volunteers need to be comfortable carrying out that mission in practice.
  - you don't have to be a Catholic to do that, but you have to commit to a professional approach to loving service, to a respect for the dignity of each person that we engage with.

In another sense, these works are Catholic in that they are carried out on behalf of the Church community – its from that broader community that they get their mandate and, often, their funding.

And they are Catholic in that they are carried out for the benefit of society as a whole, particularly those who are marginalised or disadvantaged. This too is a characteristic of Catholic service and work for justice.

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Another characteristic of Catholic work for justice and of Catholic service is our awareness of our own limitations.

As members of the Church we are painfully aware that we are flawed, as individuals and collectively. Not all of our endeavours have had positive outcomes, not all have helped others.

This awareness of imperfection, and efforts to address it, began with St Peter – it is not new. But, as with many other areas of life in the Church, the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's articulated this issue more clearly for the current time:

" the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal. ... By the



power of the risen Lord it is given strength that it might, in patience and in love, overcome its sorrows and its challenges, both within itself and from without, and that it might reveal to the world, faithfully though darkly, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it will be manifested in full light. "<sup>4</sup>.

The public acknowledgement of fault, and commitment to renewal, gained momentum under Pope John Paul II, Pope from 1978 – 2005.

In 1994, when calling on the Church to prepare for the millennial year 2000, marking two thousand years of Christianity, one of the points that he stressed was

“it is appropriate that, as the Second Millennium of Christianity draws to a close, the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly *forms of counter-witness and scandal*<sup>5</sup> – para 33

One of the main reasons this is necessary is to enable us to do better in the future:

“ Acknowledging the weaknesses of the past is an act of honesty and courage which helps us to strengthen our faith, which alerts us to face today's temptations and challenges and prepares us to meet them

“Christians need to place themselves humbly before the Lord and examine themselves on *the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our day*. The present age in fact, together with much light, also presents not a few shadows” (para 36)

There were “no less than ninety-four instances where John Paul II himself ...acknowledged the mistakes and sins of Christians in connection with, among other things,

- the Crusades,
- the Inquisition,
- persecution of the Jews,
- religious wars,
- *in re* Galileo, and
- the treatment of women.<sup>6</sup>”

Pope Benedict XVI, in Sydney in 2008 for World Youth Day, developed this theme in relation to sexual abuse within the church

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<sup>4</sup> Dogmatic Constitution On The Church *Lumen Gentium*, Solemnly Promulgated By His Holiness Pope Paul Vi On November 21, 1964, para 8, accessed 4 Sept 09  
[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)

<sup>5</sup> Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* Of His Holiness Pope John Paul II On Preparation For The Jubilee Of The Year 2000, 10 November 1994, Para 33, accessed 4 Sept 09 from  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_10111994\\_tertio-millennio-adveniente\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente_en.html)

<sup>6</sup> Mary Anne Glendon ‘Public Acts Of Contrition In The Age Of Spin Control’ accessed 4 September 2009 from [http://www.vatican.va/jubilee\\_2000/magazine/documents/ju\\_mag\\_01071997\\_p-26\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01071997_p-26_en.html)



In a homily to Bishops, priests and seminarians, he said:

Here I would like to pause to acknowledge the shame which we have all felt as a result of the sexual abuse of minors by some clergy and religious in this country.

Indeed, I am deeply sorry for the pain and suffering the victims have endured, and I assure them that, as their Pastor, I too share in their suffering.

These misdeeds, which constitute so grave a betrayal of trust, deserve unequivocal condemnation. They have caused great pain and have damaged the Church's witness.

He called for a forward program of redress and improvement

- I ask all of you to support and assist your Bishops, and to work together with them in combating this evil.
- Victims should receive compassion and care, and those responsible for these evils must be brought to justice.
- It is an urgent priority to promote a safer and more wholesome environment, especially for young people. ... <sup>7</sup>

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Social justice is concerned with right relations within a society, and the world. It is about shaping the world.

For the Catholic Church, this involves awareness, repentance and improvement, among the other principles of Catholic social teaching.

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Of paramount importance is the need to move forward on the issues of justice and service that so starkly challenge us, and shame us, today.

I'd like to outline three current developments that have inspired me:

The first relates to empowerment and consultation.

Social justice requires consultation, working in solidarity with those we want to help.

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at Eucharistic Celebration with Bishops, Seminarians And Novices, Saint Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, Saturday, 19 July 2008, accessed 4 Sept 09 at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2008/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20080719\\_cathedral\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20080719_cathedral_en.html)



As part of the implementation of the recent Commonwealth White Paper on homelessness, the House of Representatives is currently conducting an enquiry into the development of a New National Homelessness Act, to govern Commonwealth-funded programs to help people who are homeless.

Last week, one of our members, McAuley Community Services for Women, a program of the Sisters of Mercy, asked women residing in a supported environment, Regina Coeli in North Melbourne, if they would like to input to a submission. Ten of them did. These women come within the definition of homeless as now used by Government.

Their input was gathered by asking them for comment on each paragraph of the current Act. Their comments were quite focused, and practical in impact:

- The Act should provide access to: *safe, affordable, suitable, long-term housing*
- The Preamble should be adjusted to reflect the need for lasting solutions:  
“Australia has acted to protect the rights of all of its citizens, including people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, by recognising **and abiding by** international standards.....”
- Accommodation and support should be: *not time limited/ flexible to include more or less intensity (including case management)*
- The Act should concentrate *equally* on access to housing and access to support (support that includes: medical, dental and other: hairdressing)
- In the aim of the Act (3b) the word ‘helping’ should be replaced by: Ensure (or Guarantee) access ...to accommodation and support.
- Rent increases shouldn’t happen in supported housing ( there is not enough income to live off)
- Act should include earlier access to support (in order to prevent homelessness)
- The Act should consider women specifically in relation to the law and safety

This process was impressive. You can’t just walk in off the street and gather views from people who have been alienated from many of the structure of society. You need to build up trust, to build up confidence and self esteem, which can only be done over time.

Our housing discourse will now be the richer for this small development. More just structures are more likely to emerge.

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My second example is a program entitled “A Journey To Social Inclusion”

Sacred Heart Mission in St Kilda is piloting a groundbreaking service delivery model, *A Journey to Social Inclusion* that tackles chronic homelessness, one of society’s seemingly intractable social issues.

The program addresses the underlying causes of a person’s homelessness and equips them with the skills to reconnect to the mainstream community and build social networks outside of the homeless subculture.

The pilot will involve 40 participants and run for three years. It is expensive - \$30,000 per participant per year. But current programs are also very expensive: The crisis-



oriented homeless service system currently results in a fragmented approach for people who are chronically homeless. Its estimated cost is \$30,000 - \$35,000 per person per year, and it rarely assists people to break the cycle. Overtime, this pilot project offers the prospect of being cost effective as well as promoting true human dignity.

The program involves:

*Intensive Assistance and Co-ordination* - Each participant is allocated a key worker who is responsible for coordinating the full response provided to that individual. The key worker is the client's "anchor" during the process – being available for intensive practical and emotional support for the equivalent of one day per week for 3 years. This partnership will involve coaching a client through their journey to social inclusion and is central to its success.

*Therapeutic Intervention* - this will primarily involve one-on-one sessions with sessional psychologists or counsellors and may also involve group work. It will focus on developing an understanding of the underlying causes of a person's homelessness, resolving the trauma experienced prior to and during their homelessness and the stigma associated with an individual's identification with the homeless sub-culture.

*Building Up and Developing Skills* - participants will be equipped with life skills - such as interpersonal skills, numeracy and literacy, practical living skills, assertiveness, house tenancy skills and job readiness – via a program of group work and one-on-one sessions. Participants will also develop their own social networks within the mainstream and connection to the community by involvement in recreational activities and participation in volunteer work, training and/or employment.

Participants will also be able to access existing SHM services and specialist providers with whom we work to meet their health, housing, mental health and drug and alcohol needs.

The various service delivery elements all work towards the same goals from a different perspective, reinforcing and building on the outcomes achieved in each of the other areas.

The intended result for participants is social inclusion and an end to their chronic homelessness.

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The third current example concerns electricity bills.

Last week, and again today, the Sunday Age ran articles analysing the impact that the new 'smart meters' will have on power bills.

This built on research conducted by the St Vincent De Paul Society over the past year. They undertook this research because of their awareness of the impact of utility costs on poor people, and their understanding of the potential negative consequences of changes in the structure of Victorian power bills.

As the Sunday Age reported:

HOUSEHOLDS face an average \$263-a-year leap in electricity bills with the installation of new smart meters that begins in 10 days' time.



average bills will rise by 35 per cent, but for pensioners, the percentage increase will be even bigger - 42 per cent, or an extra \$254 a year.

Electricity is most expensive during the day from Monday to Friday, households comprising people that are at work during the day are most likely to benefit. On the other hand, households with young children at home, the unemployed and age pensioners [those at home during the day] are most likely to be financially worse off."

St Vincent de Paul is concerned that suppliers could misuse the meters' capacity to turn off power, and even turn off individual appliances.

Although consumers could be offered discounts in exchange for allowing the supplier to switch off appliances such as air conditioners, the report says retailers could use it to intimidate late-paying customers, effectively "putting a choker on a household's energy supply".

I'm proud to be associated with such work. It is not itself changing the world, but it is an element in a process of change that, we intend, will prevent further marginalisation of those that are poor in our society. It embodies the sort of thing we aspire to do.

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Let me conclude with those examples of current work for justice, linked with service.

Thank you again for the opportunity to engage with you on a Catholic perspective on social justice.



Attachment:

**Members of Catholic Social Services Victoria**

Bethlehem Community  
Catholic Chaplains Association for Health Care  
Catholic Homes  
Catholic Solo Parents  
Centacare Ballarat  
Centacare Catholic Family Services  
Centacare Gippsland  
CentaCare Sandhurst  
Corazon  
Corpus Christi Community  
Don Bosco Youth Centre and Hostel  
Early Education Program for Hearing Impaired Children  
Edmund Rice Camps  
Frankston Pregnancy Support  
Good Shepherd Aged Services  
Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services  
Jesuit Social Services  
John Pierce Centre for Deaf Ministry  
Justice and Peace Unit, Archdiocese of Melbourne  
Kewn Kreestha - Rest Home for Mothers  
Keysborough Learning Centre  
Larmenier  
MacKillop Family Services  
Marillac  
McAuley Community Services for Women  
Mercy Health and Aged Care  
Mother Romana Home  
Nazareth House  
Project Dreaming Tracks  
Sacred Heart Mission  
Shekinah Homeless Services  
Sisters of Charity Community Care  
Society of St Vincent de Paul  
Southern Cross Care (Vic)  
St Mary's House of Welcome  
St Vincent's Health  
Villa Maria