

7. AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

"You are only 2 or 3 pay-cheques away from being on the street. And that's for real."

– Ozanam Community Centre participant, VincentCare

Almost 25,000 Victorians experience homelessness. Older women are the fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness. This reflects a failure of systems and a shortage of housing options.

Government action

- Advocate to the Commonwealth Government to ensure adequate funding for homelessness services.
- Substantially increase the supply of affordable social housing stock across Victoria.

8. BUILDING COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROMOTING ADULT AND YOUTH JUSTICE

There was a 9.9 per cent drop in crime in 2017, yet people feel less safe in their homes. We need a society that brings restoration for victims and addresses the causes of disadvantage that contribute to offending.

Government action

- Expand prevention and early intervention programs that address the causes of offending, ensure adequate diversion, rehabilitation services within prisons and increase post release support for community reintegration.
- Strengthen support for victims of crime and provide adequate legal support to ensure just outcomes.

9. SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

"There are so many more people worse off than me. I'm grateful that I am still here and I am gradually becoming healthier."

– Resident, Sacred Heart Mission

People living with mental illness want a life that builds hope, resilience and recovery. Victoria has the lowest per capita expenditure on mental health, at 13 per cent below the national average.

Government action

- Fund adequate mental health services for the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

10. SUPPORTING NEWLY ARRIVED COMMUNITIES

Embracing diversity means building inclusion and acceptance. Many refugees and people seeking asylum face challenges accessing employment, housing, education, health services and income support.

Government action

- Invest in culturally specific programs and services for domestic violence, parenting in Australia, legal assistance, youth employment and health services for young people.
- Invest in support services for women in forced marriage arrangements.

11. DIGNITY AND SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE AT THEIR MOST VULNERABLE

Vulnerable older Victorians need support to maintain health, connection to friends and family and to participate in their community. As a society we must value and support all Victorians, particularly those facing terminal or painful conditions.

Government action

- Ensure affordable and secure housing for older Victorians and sustainable aged care support.
- Adequately resource palliative care to ensure everyone has access to high-quality end of life care.
- Repeal the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017* to ensure protection for vulnerable people who are more at risk of any adverse impacts associated with the legislation.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can have a role in holding candidates and government accountable on how they will address the issues highlighted in this brochure.

You can:

- distribute this brochure in your parish and to friends to promote discussion
- write to or meet with your local member and local candidates to discuss issues in the brochure
- write to local, regional and national newspaper editors expressing your views on key issues
- reflect, consider, discern and pray.

Show our parliamentary candidates what kind of society we want to live in, today and in the future.

Authorised by Denis Fitzgerald, 383 Albert St, East Melbourne, 3002
Printed by Doran Printing Pty Ltd



**2018 Victorian Election
Building a fairer
Victoria where
everyone flourishes**

Catholic Social Services Victoria
is the peak body for Catholic social services: working for a just, equitable and compassionate Victoria.
See www.css.org.au/members for links to our member organisations.
T: 03 9287 5566



2018 VICTORIAN ELECTION BUILDING A FAIRER VICTORIA WHERE EVERYONE FLOURISHES

This brochure provides information to assist dialogue with candidates in the 2018 Victorian general election.

Catholic Social Services Victoria highlights the issues for those most in need and seeks to build communities that are safe, equitable and compassionate: where all Victorians share in the State's prosperity. Inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus, we focus on the dignity of each person, and work for the common good. Catholic social services assist over 200,000 Victorians each year. Their voices, through the agencies that work with them, have been used to compile this brochure.

Priority areas include: increasing affordable, secure housing; addressing domestic violence; youth justice; alternatives to prison, particularly for young people; increasing services in regional, rural and outer suburban areas, and easing the cost of living pressures.

WHAT MAKES FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT?

We all want to build a flourishing society, where everyone has opportunities to be happy, healthy, capable and engaged. But there are many Victorians who find themselves on the margins. Governments at all levels have a key role to play, but they can only be effective as part of a wide-spread community commitment. All of us, as individuals, within families and collectively in communities, enterprises and other associations have a responsibility in creating the kind of society we want to live in.

In this context, State Government policies and measures need to:

- address the sources of disadvantage such as the lack of jobs, affordable housing and access to education and health services
- ensure that services and funding meet the rights and needs of the vulnerable, disadvantaged or marginalised
- meet Victoria's diverse infrastructure needs, including access for vulnerable Victorians
- ensure just social, judicial and economic structures.

Now is the time to tell our candidates the actions we seek from them.

OUR PRIORITIES

1. CLOSING THE GAP FOR ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS

"New approaches and solutions that support, not punish children are the best way we can address the shocking over-representation of young ATSI people in the justice system."

– Jesuit Social Services

Aboriginal Victorians continue to be overrepresented on almost every indicator of disadvantage. Progressing Aboriginal self-determination and reconciliation must remain key priorities.

Government action

- Pursue self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians through the Victorian Treaty advancement process.
- Recommit to Closing the Gap and the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework and fund programs to achieve equality and equity in health status and life expectancy by 2030.

2. ADDRESSING ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG DEPENDENCE

Problematic drug and alcohol use has a significant cost to the community and devastating impacts on individuals and families.

Government action

- Increase investment and access to drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation services.

3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THRIVING

"Leaving care can be a really hard time for young people. It's so important that they feel empowered and confident to be a part of any decisions that affect their life."

– Young person, MacKillop Family Services

All children have the right to be safe, to receive loving care and support and live in an environment that enables them to grow and flourish into adulthood. Protecting children is everyone's business.

Government action

- Ensure children in out-of-home care receive therapeutic services and are supported until they become independent.
- Ensure that parent payments for public education remains affordable for all.

4. EASING THE COST OF LIVING PRESSURES

"Winter is much less forgiving than the warmer months. Power bills are higher, winter clothes are more expensive, and the physical implications of sleeping rough are much, much worse."

– St Vincent de Paul Society

Cost of living pressures have increased significantly in Victoria. Energy, digital access and high housing and transport costs have a disproportionate impact on low income and disadvantaged households.

Government action

- Invest in and regulate fairer energy markets.
- Provide greater access to digital and internet services in regional, rural and outer suburban areas.

5. SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Victorians with a disability have the right to participate in society and to have the support they need to live a fulfilling life.

Government action

- Commit funding for necessary disability services that are outside the scope of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and ensure agencies receive adequate funding to provide support for transition to the NDIS.

6. ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

"I realise just how close I came to losing my family... it's so important to me that my children don't grow up thinking this behaviour is normal, like I did."

– Counselling recipient, CatholicCare

Victoria Police respond to a family incident every 7 minutes. Domestic violence is not acceptable in any community or culture.

Government action

- Adequately fund domestic violence support services and fund flexible and culturally-sensitive support programs.
- Invest in legal processes and programs that respond to domestic violence and address the causes of violent behaviour.