# Ecological justice: Expanding the Conversation.

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Jesuit
**Social Services**
Building a Just Society

# Contents

# Executive Summary

For more than forty years Jesuit Social Services has been committed to building a just society and in 2008 we commenced the journey into understanding the relevance of ecology for the organisation. This paper explores the relevancy and application of ecological justice as a holistic paradigm inclusive of social and environmental justice and seeks to invite further conversations within the community services sector and beyond.

In an increasingly complex era of climate crisis, environmental degradation and rising social inequity, new challenges towards building a just society are appearing. Jesuit Social Services, as part of the community services sector, works with the most marginalised and vulnerable. These populations are often the least responsible for ecological risks and threats but are the most affected by their emergence. "Expanding the conversation" seeks to define the nuances and developments of these elements of ecological justice and articulates how we can achieve a just society that contributes to restoring healthy ecological relationships.

We address the application of ecological justice, beginning with the vital role of organisational change and leadership. Deepening the influential Dropping off the Edge Report of 2015, the terrain of mapping the locational determinants of justice and inequity, asks for the inclusion of the distribution of ecological risks and benefits. Ecological justice, expressing the unity of social and environmental factors, provides an expansive lens to relevant contemporary issues. These include the importance of infrastructure for communities of justice and the impacts upon human livelihoods and habitat in essential areas such as energy, housing and food security. It allows an illumination of choices made at the hard end of social justice between punitive and restorative environments for the incarcerated and those exiting prison. It asks important questions about the influence of design and habitat upon human communities and individual behaviour. At the wider level of national and international concern, carbon responsibility is an urgent demand of our time. The role of justice in mining and within business processes contributes to expanding the conversation of ecological justice to the impacts of climate change not only within Australia, but beyond into populations more vulnerable to rising climate threats and hazards.

Ultimately this paper seeks to re-examine and invite further conversations about how a new paradigm of justice, ecological justice, contributes to building a just society. It invites discussion on what practices, policies and actions can be taken by individuals, organisations and the community services sector within Australia, to build an ecologically just society.

# Ecological Justice – Definitions, global context and relevance for community sector

## Introduction

"Today we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor." (Pope Francis: Laudato Si)

We are entering a new paradigm of justice. On a global level humanity faces increasing challenges, highlighting the need for reconciliation in its relationship with the environment. Scientists, world leaders, activists and academics warn that the transformation of our relations with climate and earth needs to occur immediately and collectively. This transition will affect economic systems, land costs and distribution, energy availability, and community and governance capacities. In essence the new paradigm of justice requires us to confront the reality that the causes and effects of injustice we have traditionally seen and defined as separate, local and with identifiable causes and effects, are now infinitely more complex and both local and global in their generation and impacts.

As human communities and eco-systems face degradation and depletion, the pursuit of ecological justice encourages us to consider how people are affected by this and to work in support of them, seeking to reconcile the broken relationship between humanity and the environment. Such reconciliation involves a multi stakeholder approach inclusive of governance, business and community engagement. It also involves ethical transformation where healthy relationships become a central principle of pursuing justice.

Jesuit Social Services has a vision of building a just society, but a changing world and the increasingly harmful effects of humans on our planet mean we must revisit what we mean by a "just society" Jesuit Social Services *understands justice as ecological.* Justice is holistic; it is relational. Justice, when viewed in an ecological sense, includes both social and environmental justice. Because, as Pope Francis emphasised in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, the social and environmental are inextricably linked. That is, ecological justice represents both a historical understanding and an emerging perspective of the forces which shape our world.

Jesuit Social Services' understanding of justice is influenced by its respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Their culture rests on an understanding of the relationships between land, ecosystems and human communities and has informed their care of the land over thousands of years. Justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culture and land must be the foundation of any commitment to ecological justice in Australia.

## Key Terms

In this paper we use the following terms which form the foundational elements of a new paradigm of justice.

### 1. Social justice

Social justice rests on equity and fairness, recognises the worth of all people, and requires that all people are afforded the opportunity to live fulfilling lives, regardless of race, gender, nationality, religion or other differentiating factors. Jesuit Social Services' vision of social justice requires that the dignity of all peoples is recognised, and those who are vulnerable are cared for. Four fundamental principles inform our efforts to build a just society: human dignity, the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity.

### 2. Environmental justice

Over the past 30 years, an environmental justice movement has developed, particularly in the United States of America (US), that advocates for equality and fairness in the distribution of environmental harms and benefits (distributive justice), and for the rights of affected communities to participate in decision-making regarding these distributions (procedural or participatory justice). Environmental justice can be defined as involving four aspects in relation to the built and organic environments:

1. the fair distribution of environmental goods and harm
2. the recognition of human and non-human interests in decision-making and distribution
3. the existence of deliberative and democratic participation
4. the building of capabilities among individuals, groups and non-human parts of nature[1]

Environmental injustices are produced through various mechanisms, such as government planning and regulation and private interests that exploit specific areas and locales. Environmental justice issues in Australian cities include:

- the disproportionate impact of climate change (e.g. heatwaves, flooding) on marginalised communities

- food waste, scarcity and security

- energy vulnerability

- limited service provision and substandard infrastructure in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and towns

- access to green and/or public space

- exposure to pollution such as particulates from extractive industries and mining, persistent organic industrial pollutants, and heavy vehicle arteries

- exportation of environmental hazards into the locales of marginalised communities either within or outside Australian borders

- the positioning and unsustainability of landfill

- the precarity of the vital biodiversity in the Great Barrier Reef and other areas of national biosecurity importance.

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[1] David Schlosberg, 2007, Defining environmental justice: theories, movements and nature. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

## 3. Ecological justice

Ecological justice is both social and environmental justice. Ecological justice rests on the principle that 'everything is interrelated', and that ethical action in the environmental sphere is central to equity at a social level. This is in keeping with Jesuit Social Service's ongoing commitment to relational ways of working as demonstrated in our service delivery models, our advocacy and with the ecology journey our organisation has been on since 2008.[2] Due to its relational foundations and priority of reconciliation, ecological justice is based upon the principles and practices of restorative justice. This relational approach is relevant for both social justice between humans, such as restorative justice in the criminal justice system, but also extends into practice and conceptions of justice for the healing and respect for the common home of humanity. Jesuit Social services believes a cultural shift in our relationships is required for humanity and eco-systems to flourish, for healthy and respectful governance and in order to build communities of justice.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' law and cultures are the oldest in the world and are inextricably linked to relationship with land as familial bonds. The dispossession of ancestral lands and cultural genocide has had devastating intergenerational social consequences. Viewing the circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through an ecological lens highlights how social disadvantage and marginalisation are caused by the loss of relationships with country. The forced severing of healthy familial relationships with land has had a clearly negative impact on the wellbeing of indigenous peoples, resulting in disadvantage and marginalisation that is reflected in disproportionately high incarceration rates, deaths in custody, low health indicators, low education rates, poverty and intergenerational trauma. Ecological justice in Australia, and within the community sector, requires recognition of this violence upon a people whose system of law and life was inherently ecological: where social and environmental relationships were balanced. In Australia, reconciliation needs to be with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but also with the land of Australia that was taken from its original owners, and suffered from ecological distress as a result. Reconciliation with creation calls all Australians to heal the ecological injustices of the past, that impact upon the present, so we can care for our common home together.

## Global Context

Climate change and accelerated environmental degradation reduce human security. National military and security bodies, such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), are increasingly emphasising the need for governments and communities to focus their attention on climate risks as a major contemporary challenge for human livelihoods. A marked increase in vulnerable populations throughout the world has been predicted as a major consequence of climate change and environmental degradation. In many regions there is rising scarcity of energy resources, reduced food and water security, and population pressures which lead to land degradation. Equally, the devastation of extreme weather events results in mass migration and increased civil and trans-border conflict.

Australia is not sheltered from the consequences: rising sea levels, energy crisis, land degradation, a negative legacy of extractive industries, heightened migratory pressures, extreme weather events, increased toxicity in food and supply chains and surging living costs due to agricultural and energy uncertainty all affect Australia. Further, as a major consumer and exporter of carbon, Australia has an ethical

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[2] Jesuit Task Force on Ecology, *Healing a Broken World,* Promotio Justitiae 106 (2011).  See also Jesuit Social Services, "An Environmental Way of Proceeding" (2012) at
http://www.jss.org.au/files/Docs/About%20Us/Eco/JSS_An_Environmental_Way_of_Proceeding_Final_draft_Jun_2012_3_3.pdf.

obligation to those outside its borders, and humanitarian obligations to those displaced from the consequences of the climate crisis.

In an age of international political, economic, technological and ecological interdependence, the failure of any element of the global system will trigger significant social injustices. Additionally, we are in an age of rapidification, or accelerated change. Speed combines with technology and interdependence to make decision-making multifactorial. Thus justice issues become complex as speed and the confluence of many multipliers confront human security and ecological livelihoods.

In this new paradigm of justice human security and flourishing environments are intertwined with ethical obligations. From a Jesuit perspective, the pursuit of justice is tied to the pursuit of the common good. In the influential encyclical *Laudato Si,* released in 2015, Pope Francis defined *the commons* as the sum of those conditions of social and material life that allow social groups and their individual members to thoroughly and readily access their own fulfilment.[3] The commons also refers to those collective goods we hold on trust to care for each other, the earth and future generations: such as air, water, soil, public space and biodiversity. The commons are central to human security and the common good is a central and unifying principle of social ethics and the protection of the commons.

Interconnectedness means that "environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources which provide local communities with their livelihood, but also undo the social structures which, for a long time, shaped cultural identity and their sense of meaning of life and community."[4] (*Laudato Si*). Jesuit Social Services has responded to these changes and challenges by recognising that restoring healthy ecological relationships is a necessary element to reviving both social and environmental equity. This extends from questions around the CO2 emissions from extractive, fossil fuel industries to the accessibility of safe and healthy habitat and access to energy for human populations in our cities.

The interconnection and interdependence of humans upon each other, as well as their environments, is more evident than ever before in human history. However, it is difficult to comprehend the gap between action and its impacts when the consequences occur at a distance, both in time and place, from people's lives and locales. This creates a challenge for communities and policy- makers to predict the impact of their actions upon their own and other environments and populations. Within this complexity of interconnection there is a common frustration, and sometimes despair, about how to ensure justice. For individuals alone it can be too overwhelming, particularly for populations dealing with survival on a day-to-day basis. In this context it is the collective responsibility of community groups, organisations and institutions to provide avenues for individuals and communities to participate in the advocacy and action for justice and equity in the areas of ecological justice and human security. To promote justice that is inclusive of social, environmental and economic equity is the challenge of our times. It requires an ethical approach inclusive of personal, communal and national commitment and action.

## Role of the community sector

While Australia has a long and internationally-recognised history of environmentalism and green movements, links between community sector organisations, environmental movements and the pursuit of ecological justice are limited. The community sector in Australia has started to address the need for climate resilience strategies and preparedness for environmental threats, risks and degradation. There is also rising public and sector awareness of the impacts of ecological injustice in areas such as energy equity where the impact of increasing energy poverty on vulnerable populations is becoming evident. However, a broader understanding of ecological justice as defined in this paper is yet to be fully incorporated as a central consideration for social service delivery.

The community sector is uniquely positioned to advocate for ecological justice due to its vocational mission to support the most vulnerable and marginalised. This engagement enables greater possibilities for

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[3] *Laudato Si On Care for our common home*, Encyclical Letter, Pope Francis, 2015, Paragraph 156

[4] *Laudato Si,* Paragraph 143

advocacy and education on the interrelatedness between social and environmental justice; that is, ecological justice. Jesuit Social Services has consistently argued that public policy must pay greater attention to the role of structural factors and social inequality as key determinants of health and wellbeing, and therefore as drivers of demand for community services.

## Ecological justice: ways of practice

Communities of justice occur when a group of individuals and/or organisations, connected geographically or by mutual interest, work together for a common purpose around justice and fairness. They are communities of practice or communities of intent with shared values. They form the foundation of a healthy democratic society and are pivotal in generating, challenging, changing and disseminating social and cultural values and norms.

Restorative justice refers to practices that repair the harm caused or revealed by fractured relationships and heal those relationships by creating or restoring equity through inclusive and cooperative practices.

Jesuit Social Services works with and advocates for people with multiple and complex needs. These people are often some of the most disadvantaged Australians. They can face a range of co-occurring and interrelated issues, such as homelessness, disability, substance misuse, health problems, and involvement in the child protection and criminal justice systems. Too often these complexities are seen as being only 'social'. In reality, the distribution of environmental risks and benefits has a clear impact on social exclusion and intergenerational disadvantage. For organisations concerned with social justice, there is growing recognition that the consequences of harm to the natural environment are felt more acutely by disadvantaged people and communities – for example those who cannot, through poverty or other causes, access shelter when required, or who are most penalised by rising energy prices or financially unable to cope with the destruction of property through natural disasters.

While our social, health and education systems are able to meet the needs of the majority of people, they are often not adapted to cater for the most vulnerable, who are also the most susceptible to being exposed to environmental hazards. These people may have limited access to relevant information or live within inhospitable environments, often without the benefit of being part of supportive and resilient communities. For many of our program participants, developing independent living and interpersonal skills and building their confidence are the foundations of recovery. For people with multiple and complex needs, a whole-of-person approach is critical in addressing the unique mix of intersecting and overlapping issues that each individual faces. A whole- of-person approach includes taking into account the environment, access to environmental benefits, exposure to risks and a holistic comprehension of their community and other relationships – in other words we must pursue ecological justice, not merely social justice. Jesuit Social Services is committed to raising the profile and enactment of this new paradigm of justice within its organisation and beyond.

Jesuit Social Services, due to its base in relational and restorative justice, embraces the interrelation between social and environmental justice and uses the term ecological justice to acknowledge this unity. While the distribution of risks and benefits is central to environmental justice, without cultural change and healthy human relationships this distribution is bound to be remedial rather than sustained and ingrained within policy, politics and economics. Thus education, awareness and practice leads to building communities of justice which is central to Jesuit Social Services' approach to ecological justice.

# Ecological justice at work: fields of action

*"Everything is closely related"*

*"Todays' problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis."*

Pope Francis, Laudato Si.[5]

Ecological justice enables a holistic account of social and environmental issues. Commencing with how Jesuit Social Services has embraced ecological justice, this section highlights how the new paradigm of justice can provide an expansive lens to relevant contemporary issues we collectively confront, but will impact more heavily upon marginalized populations.

The key fields of action and application are 1) organisational and governance change 2) key areas of our work in place based disadvantage and criminal justice 3) and how ecological justice impacts upon communities and human habitat. Here we focus on areas applicable to our participants and programs in order to briefly explore the ramifications and responsibilities of Jesuit Social Services, the community sector and the relevant public and government bodies in relation to ecological justice. Four fundamental principles inform our understanding of ecological justice and underpin our efforts in building a just society: human dignity, the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity.

## Organisational change and leadership in ecological justice

Jesuit Social Services has placed a growing emphasis on an expanded view of justice that includes social and environmental justice. In 2008 Jesuit Social Services responded to the Jesuits' call to reconciliation with creation and care for our common home as it is highly relevant to the organisation and fulfillment of its vision. A commitment was made to introduce the concept and practice of ecological justice.

Jesuit Social Services used its original *Way of Proceeding* as a basis to develop its ecological approach. This *Way of Proceeding* recognizes three interconnected domains that must be considered in all aspects of the organisation's operations.

1. **Human Spirit -** Focusing upon essential anthropological and spiritual questions around what it means to be human and enquiries into the conditions within which humans thrive and have healthy relationships. This involves an informed and discerning process of understanding ourselves, our fellow humans and our relational context.

2. **Practice Framework** – Developing a relational way of being and acting that reflects and lives ecological justice. This promotes environmental awareness and ecological justice across our practice areas and our advocacy including justice and crime prevention, settlement and community building, mental health support and wellbeing, and education, training, and employment.

3. **Business Processes** – Adopting environmentally sustainable business practices and processes. Discernment in relation to our financial and other resources so they respect and contribute to, rather than harm, efforts to build a just society.

In *Laudato Si* Pope Francis states explicitly that reconciliation with creation is essential for the necessary cultural shift towards ecological justice. The predominant cultural belief that humanity is separate from nature is relatively recent and in stark contrast to the traditions and beliefs of many indigenous cultures, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This conviction that humanity and nature are separate has enabled justification for the forced breaking of nourishing relationships with land and nature, denial of the long term consequences of the loss of those bonds and the subsequent social and economic disadvantage for many. Acknowledging the deep cultural transformation and healing required, Jesuit Social Services acknowledges that ecological justice is reconciliation with creation at a personal and organizational level. This has involved Board retreats, workshops, ecological working groups, ecology practice tips

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[5] *Laudato Si,* Paragraph 37.

disseminated to all staff, rising eco-literacy and sensitivity towards the environmental realities of participants, as well as broadening our advocacy and understanding around ecological justice.

Informed by our heritage, Jesuit Social Services' commitment to the new justice paradigm starts with gratitude and the acknowledgement that everything is a gift. Many organisations focus on practical business process initiatives when promoting environmental sustainability. However, at Jesuit Social Services we start with at the personal level, with ourselves: the domain of the human spirit. We extend to the other domains of Practice Framework and Business Processes to ensure that our commitment to the environment runs deep, staff and organisational buy-in is more genuine and sustainable and this is embedded across all our activities. This ensures that our commitment is more than an add-on, but core to our operations and an integral part of building a just society. Since developing our ecological approach, Jesuit Social Services has undertaken a number of activities across the three domains: (See Appendix A for a summary of our progress).

In the nine-year process of building our ecological practice and commitment across these three domains the following cultures and values have been confirmed and programs have evolved:

- Ecological justice literacy and exposure to ecological connection has beneficial and empowering impact upon participants and staff.
- Ecological justice widens and nourishes preexisting practices and ways of working for staff and innovative practices emerge from collective reflection on this new paradigm of justice.
- Deeper cultural reflection and eco-literacy, both organisationally and in advocacy (public dissemination), contribute to the transformation of both cultural and structural change.
- Our commitment to building communities of justice is an essential aspect of our approach to ecological justice.
- Behaviour change and adaption is not a discourse and practice of blaming individuals but of community and relationship building.
- Changes in business processes require structural policy, economic and political support from government and private industry in order to reconcile organisational funding needs with environmental benefits.

## Embedding Ecology in practice

### Our Way of Working

An ecological conception of person, relationship and practice is not intended as an 'add-on' to the daily practice of practitioners and daily lives of participants. Rather 'ecological practice' amplifies our relationship to and with nature in our everyday identity, sense of belonging and connectedness.

This is expressed through the Jesuit Social Services practice framework, known as *Our Way of Working*. A central vehicle for exploring and extending the meaning and integration of 'Ecology' for practice has been the series of Practice Ecology Workshops run a number of times each year across the agency. Early conceptions of what this meant centred on the familiar – environmental actions around energy efficiencies and recycling or dedicated programs such as the wilderness therapy underpinning *The Outdoor Experience* (see below) or environmental arts projects in the Artful Dodgers Studios. Overtime, however, our range of meanings deepened to connect more strongly with the heart of the Jesuit Social Services practice approach in identity, belonging and relationship.

The evolving themes form the basis of an emergent theory for ecological practice with our participant group - largely marginalised and disadvantaged individuals or communities, often with experience of trauma and consequent fractured sense of self, relationships and exclusion from or limitations in maintaining healthy ecological relationships. Emerging themes have included the role of 'place' in identity and relationship; of the touch, taste, smell, sound, sight of nature in conjuring memories of safety, security and peacefulness at the heart of relaxation and mindfulness techniques endemic to physical and mental health and healing from trauma.; or alternatively, as providing a different context for conversations between participants and workers; the health benefits of wise choices around nutrition and exercise for our body's ecology, inclusive of physical, spiritual and mental health; and how thrifty budgeting and pro-environmental actions can coexist through daily life activities of shopping, energy consumption and transport. All this speaks to emergent ecological social work practices.
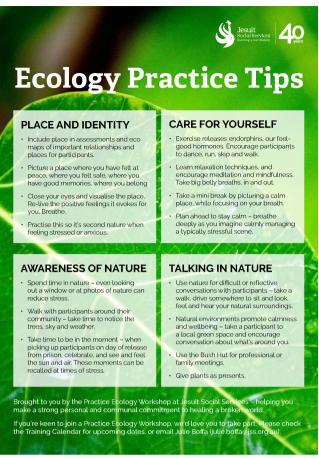
These were captured through a series of six 'Ecology Practice Tips' circulated to all staff at Jesuit Social Services by our CEO, Julie Edwards over 2016-17.



**Ecology Practice Tips**

**PLACE AND IDENTITY**
- Include place in assessments and eco maps of important relationships and places for participants.
- Picture a place where you have felt at peace, where you felt safe, where you have good memories, where you belong
- Close your eyes and visualise the place. Re-live the positive feelings it evokes for you. Breathe.
- Practise this so it's second nature when feeling stressed or anxious.

**CARE FOR YOURSELF**
- Exercise releases endorphins, our feel-good hormones. Encourage participants to dance, run, skip and walk.
- Learn relaxation techniques, and encourage meditation and mindfulness. Take big belly breaths, in and out.
- Take a mini break by picturing a calm place, while focusing on your breath.
- Plan ahead to stay calm – breathe deeply as you imagine calmly managing a typically stressful scene.

**AWARENESS OF NATURE**
- Spend time in nature – even looking out a window or at photos of nature can reduce stress.
- Walk with participants around their community – take time to notice the trees, sky and weather.
- Take time to be in the moment – when picking up participants on day of release from prison, celebrate, and see and feel the sun and air. These moments can be recalled at times of stress.

**TALKING IN NATURE**
- Use nature for difficult or reflective conversations with participants – take a walk, drive somewhere to sit and look, feel and hear your natural surroundings.
- Natural environments promote calmness and wellbeing – take a participant to a local green space and encourage conversation about what's around you.
- Use the Bush Hut for professional or family meetings.
- Give plants as presents.

Brought to you by the Practice Ecology Workshop at Jesuit Social Services – helping you make a strong personal and communal commitment to healing a broken world.

If you're keen to join a Practice Ecology Workshop, we'd love you to take part. Please check the Training Calendar for upcoming dates, or email Julie Boffa (julie.boffa@jss.org.au).

Jesuit Social Services acknowledges that marginalised communities are often not responsible for environmental harm and climate change, but are the ones who will face the greatest livelihood consequences of environmental degradation and extreme weather events, which in turn compound vulnerability. The ecological crisis is a crisis of inequity. Therefore, there is a need for greater compassion and understanding of the limits of ecological responsibility, which are informed by power imbalances, prioritization of the need for survival, lack of agency, racism, prejudice and place based disadvantage. Social workers and those working with vulnerable communities are on the front line of empowerment and advocacy, and are, therefore, uniquely placed to encourage societal change.

An expansive understanding of restorative justice recognises that the bonds and connections between humanity and nature are broken, harmed and in need of healing. This requires cultural change enacted both personally and organisationally.  Ecological justice expands beyond our understanding of individuals in social relationships, to recognition of the person being in multiple social and environmental relationships that influence and impact upon well-being, health and justice outcomes. Without cultural change and commitment, business, political and social projects and policies risk perpetuating the myth that humans are separate from nature, and therefore risk perpetuating injustice.

Just as exposure to environmental risks and toxicity has an impact upon human health, wellbeing and behaviour, the inverse is also true: experiences with and exposure to nature have proven to have a beneficial and empowering impact on those who have been deprived of access to such experiences. Equitable access to environmental benefits and shared experiences of connection and relationships with nature is an essential component of ecological justice.

## The Outdoor Experience

For more than twenty years Jesuit Social Services has run The Outdoor Experience (TOE) which is our community adventure and bush therapy program for at risk young people to develop relationships with self, others and nature. TOE provides participants with relief from the difficult conditions in which they live and helps them connect with nature and the broader environment by providing well-designed and supported adventure and nature based activities. At risk young people experience opportunities for learning and growth and have predominately utilised extended remote journeying as a powerful catalyst for change. TOE has provided more than 2000 young people the opportunity to journey within some of the most remote and wild regions of Victoria and to experience the benefit of access to and relationship with nature.

The program has a significant positive impact on participants' morale and strengthens their relationship with staff and importantly with the community. Research has shown that "the combination of nature, group and adventure activities provides a rich source of healing potential which, in a number of ways, goes beyond what therapy has to offer in a more conventional setting."[1] This program is based upon the socio-ecological approach to health, where community and environmental sustainability are integrated within a common approach. It is an example of ecological justice in action.

## Ways forward:

- Increased focus on the importance of organisational leadership and cultural change as part of sustainability, addressing climate risk and programs addressing environmental justice.

- Inclusion of holistic approaches, such as building communities of justice and embedding approaches to ecological justice in programs and policies addressing equity and social service delivery.

- Increased training for the community sector on the process of introducing ecological justice into their ways of working and program delivery.

## Place-based disadvantage

The reality of place-based disadvantage illustrates the inherent connection between social and environmental factors that impact upon healthy outcomes and livelihoods for communities. Ecological justice enables a deeper understanding of the causes and challenges in confronting place-based disadvantage, and those insights are relevant for planning, health and community sectors among others. Greater understanding of the causes of injustice enables greater agency in building a just society and ecological justice illuminates influences and factors of disadvantage that have not been previously considered.

In 2015, Jesuit Social Services, along with Catholic Social Services Australia, released the Dropping off the Edge Report (DOTE), which confirmed earlier reports that found complex and entrenched disadvantage continues to be experienced by a small but persistent number of locations in each state and territory across Australia.[6] For example in Victoria just 27 postcodes (4% of total) account for 28.2% of the highest rank positions across 22 indicators of disadvantage. The report charted the vulnerability of certain Australian neighbourhoods against a range of social, economic, health and educational forms of disadvantage. Emerging evidence illustrates that such factors are also strongly associated with environmental risks and vulnerabilities. In other words, that same small number of postcodes is also likely to experience disproportionate environmental injustice, represented by factors such as fewer green open spaces, greater

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[6] https://www.jssj.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/JSSJ1-4en2.pdf

site contamination (e.g. soil contamination through siting of toxic waste dumps, air pollution through industrial activity etc.) and higher density resulting in fewer natural features such as trees, flora and fauna.

Emerging awareness of locational justice in regional and urban planning is important to understanding place-based disadvantage. The locational weighting of disadvantage provides an opportunity to examine and recognise ecological injustice. The new paradigm of justice invites a revisiting of DOTE's outcomes by overlaying indicators relating to the geographic distribution of environmental justice. These indicators could include presence of green and public space, proximity to toxic lands, infrastructure and industry, exposure to climate risk, air quality and waste management operations in the locality.  The interaction between place and communities is essential to understanding social injustice and planning policies that can either reproduce or reduce these injustices.

The area of Environmental Public Health examines the wider impact of environmental determinants on human health. As the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has noted, "The natural and built environment is a major determinant of health and wellbeing. Our surroundings can influence our health through a variety of channels – through exposure to physical, chemical and biological risk factors *or by triggering behaviour changes*. Likewise there is a growing awareness that humans, through the intervention in the environment, play a vital role in exacerbating or mitigating health risks."[7] As the World Health Organisation has shown, health inequities as indicators of place-based disadvantage can be directly correlated with the unequal distribution of environmental risks and outcomes.  "People living in adverse socioeconomic conditions in Europe can suffer twice as much from multiple and cumulative environmental exposures as their wealthier neighbours, or even more. Similarly, inequalities in exposure to environmental threats have been identified for vulnerable groups such as children and elderly people, low-education households, unemployed persons, and migrants and ethnic groups."[8] The World Health Organisation concluded that there is a need for more environmental epidemiology to understand how environmental risk factors should inform effective policy design.

Explicit recognition of and research into environmental issues will deepen the understanding of the interplay between social and environmental factors in place-based disadvantage.  For example, in the United States evidence has shown undesirable environmental features are clustered in particular neighbourhoods where low-income or marginalised people live.[9] Places of environmental stress and toxicity are often neglected by policy makers. These are usually sites where housing is relatively more affordable thus creating multipliers of marginalisation for communities and eco-systems. Environmental Justice Australia stated in their 2015 submission to the Victorian government on a Charter of Rights that:

"From our 23 years of work with Victorian communities we know that environmental injustice is experienced throughout Victoria, and in some cases significantly impacts on the human rights of individuals in those communities affected. The most obvious recent example is the Hazelwood mine fire in the Latrobe Valley, where residents were subjected to extremely high levels of toxic pollution for up to 45 days, with an ongoing inadequate response from government agencies. The Latrobe Valley community, which is already disadvantaged in a number of ways, bore - and continues to bear - a disproportionate burden of the harms that result from electricity generation that all Victorians benefit from."[10]

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[7] http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=107374185

[8] http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/78069/E93670.pdf

[9] From the WHO report: The American studies initially focused on the proximity of certain groups to polluting industries or main roadways. Income level and ethnic origin are two indicators often used in the American literature to characterize environmental inequalities. Indeed, certain ethnic minorities, particularly those with low income, are more likely to live close to main roadways carrying high volumes of traffic, to airports, polluting industry, incinerators, dumps and power stations (Rios et al., 1993a; Brown, 1995; Morrel et al., 1997; O'Neill et al., 2003; Gunier et al., 2003; Norton et al., 2007).

[10] https://envirojustice.org.au/sites/default/files/files/Submissions%20and%20reports/environmental_justice_mapping_project.pdf

In 2017 there have been two toxic fires in recycling stations in Coolaroo, Melbourne's outer North and Chullora, Sydney's outer west; both areas considered to have relatively lower socioeconomic demographics. The rising risk of such environmental toxic incidents indicates the possibility that new areas of disadvantage will appear as areas over-exposed to toxicity will respond by socio-demographic changes and evacuations by those who can afford it. This illustrates the need for greater transparency and accountability in the positioning and subsequent regulation of environmental risks.[11]

"Environmental health activities have often taken the traditional approach of responding to environmental threats to health as they emerge, without necessarily developing integrated responses or addressing threats beyond the currently observable. This may function well for issues such as asbestos contamination but for emerging global environmental health threats, such as climate change, a different response is required. The nature of these threats implies that the response needs to be anticipatory, integrated, and requires the consideration of higher level determinants and indirect pathways.

Climate change is an emerging threat for health. International efforts for temperature increase to stabilize at below 2°C above pre-industrial levels will not eliminate climate change impacts on health. An anticipatory response requires actions to minimize expected climate change induced risks and impacts. An integrated approach requires an understanding of the interrelations between risk factors which have climate change as a main driver. Examples include health impacts through climate induced changes in water and food quality and access, air pollution, and extreme climate events. Higher level determinants, and their complex pathways to health, are often outside the scope of action of the health sector but they need to be identified to promote action, and would include, for example, social determinants of health (e.g. vulnerable communities); relevant policies (such as those in energy, transport and industry); and demographic and social changes.

This statement[12] from the Strategic Plan 2016-19 of the Australian Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) emphasises the important role of the community sector in:

1. Contributing to anticipatory, integrated and indirect pathways that ensure environmental public health.
2. Strengthening, protecting and advocating for vulnerable communities' areas where ecological justice needs addressing.

Jesuit Social Services acknowledges that place-based disadvantage is not wholly determinative of wellbeing and social connectedness. Pope Francis in Laudato Si marvelled at the ability of the poor to practise human ecology where "a wholesome social life can light up a seemingly undesirable environment" and "the limitations of the environment are compensated for in the interior of each person who feels held within a network of solidarity and belonging."[13] The resilience and social solidarity of many communities facing marginalisation illustrates that building a just society is not merely an exercise of checking a list of determinative factors. While reducing barriers to injustice and inequality is vital, justice as relational and restorative can appear in the most environmentally degraded and socially neglected parts of our world.

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[11] http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/taskforce-to-audit-recycling-facilities/

[12] pg 12
http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/A12B57E41EC9F326CA257BF0001F9E7D/$File/Standing-Committee-Strategic-Plan-2016-2020.pdf

[13] Laudato Si, Paragraph 148.

## Ways forward:

- Increased collaboration between the community sector and organisations that map environmental risk.

- Rehabilitation of degraded and toxic lands

- Research and advocacy on environmental indicators of disadvantage to inform urban planning and environmental health policies and law.

- Promotion of equitable access to healthy environments for marginalised communities.

- Environmental justice education and ecological justice community building in areas of high risk.

- Prioritising the outcome of healthy and sustainable environments in all government policies.

## Criminal Justice

For forty years Jesuit Social Services has accompanied people involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the criminal justice system. We work with people to prevent and divert involvement in the justice system and support people exiting prison and youth justice facilities. Everyone should have access to the opportunities in life that will enable them to flourish – to complete their education, to get a job, to access safe and affordable housing, to raise their children in safe communities and to see the next generation thrive. This includes those in the criminal justice system.

## Ecological Justice in correctional facilities

It is well established that built and natural environments impact upon the behaviour of individuals and social cohesion. There is a marked difference between facilities designed within a punitive and control paradigm, and those seeking to create environments conducive to rehabilitation. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that the conditions and physical environment of correctional facilities impact upon the outcomes for those exiting prison. If rehabilitation and the integration of offenders back into community is a policy priority, the architecture, design and location of prisons and correctional facilities should be sensitive to ecological and restorative justice.

The ecological justice issues relevant to prison design and location include:

- Both the environmental impacts of prisons on local areas and the threat to prison inmates if they are forced to live in close proximity to toxic and hazardous environmental conditions. Australia has relatively rigorous regulations around environmental impact assessment requirements for all new prisons being built that take into account the needs of pre-existing local communities and eco-systems but they could go further.

- Rethinking the architecture and design of prison and remand facilities. Need for increased inputs of environmental and behavioural psychology to improve the experience and behaviour of inmates.

-  The ecological assessment of prison infrastructure and its impact on the environment to include initial construction materials and ongoing outputs such as waste and emissions.

- The need to focus upon rehabilitative as opposed to punitive design. Access to green space, natural daylight, and living environments that encourage healthy connections between inmates, staff and their shared environment.[14]

There is increased understanding that ecological justice, the interplay of environmental and social factors, is an influential component of the social therapeutic approach where healthy relationships are central to rehabilitation.  For example: the loss of freedom and experience of isolation in detention can directly contribute to manifestations of violence, aggression, anxiety, distress and suicide. The negative impacts of solitary confinement on an individual's overall level of mental health illustrate not only the importance of

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[14] http://jss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SUB-170208-Inquiry-into-Youth-Justice-Centres-FINAL.pdf

social relationships, but the kinds of environments we are exposed to.[15] In other social care settings, such as hospitals, a therapeutic approach to design is widely accepted and aims to increase people's sense of freedom, community and belonging. This therapeutic approach is becoming more widely accepted in a corrections context, and these principles are all the more important for young people, as their ability to cope with intense deprivation is much less than adults. Deprivation is not mere denial of social contact, but the denial of basic, healthy environmental relationships such as access to daylight, fresh air and natural settings.

In his book Situational Prison Control, former NSW prison psychologist Richard Wortley articulates strategies, focused on physical design, to reduce negative behaviour in prison contexts:

- Setting positive expectations through domestic furnishings that confer trust
- Reducing anonymity through small prison size
- Personalising victims through humane conditions
- Enabling a positive sense of community through ownership and personalisation of the space
- Reducing provocation and stress by designing environments where inmates have capacity to enact control over environmental conditions and personal space. [16]

Another approach is possible. Prisons such as Halden Prison in Norway are purposely designed to more closely reflect environments in the community.[17] [18]

## The ecological prison.

The award-winning Bastoy Prison Island in Norway is known as the world's first ecological prison. Incarcerated men at Bastoy live in village houses rather than cell blocks, grow most of their own food, process their own recycling and are responsible for nourishing all living things on the five- acre island including plants, land and relationships. Its recidivism rate is 16 per cent, one of the lowest in the world, and it is one of the cheapest prisons to run in Europe. Bastoy has been recognised as one of the most humane prisons in the world. It resembles small communities or villages rather than hardened, enclosed environments. The initiator of this innovative prison, Arne Kvernvik Nilsen, believes justice facilities should be designed to address the underlying issues that brought inmates there in order to better prepare them for a successful transition back into society upon release.

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[15] Ibid. pg 26

[16] https://theconversation.com/from-expected-reoffender-to-trusted-neighbour-why-we-should-rethink-our-prisons-60114

[17] Norway's recently commissioned Halden prison possesses what is regarded as the world's most humane prison design. The exterior consists of bricks, galvanized steel and larch, rather than concrete, which is more aesthetically pleasing. Internally, the design incorporates art murals, jogging trails and a freestanding two-bedroom house where inmates can host their families during overnight visits. This prison was designed to reflect Norway's humanist philosophy, which posits that repressive prison environments constitute cruel punishment and are not conducive to prisoners' rehabilitation. Norway's humanistic philosophy towards incarceration is buttressed by a 20% two-year recidivism rate, which is less than half that of the United States or the United Kingdom. The positive impact of such prisons on prisoners' health is also affirmed by reviews showing that good prison designs facilitate custodial harmony, improve the wellbeing of prisoners and staff and improve the prospects of prisoners' rehabilitation (Fairweather & McConville, 2000).

[18] http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/norways-bastoy-prison-focus-human-ecology

## Youth Justice

Children and young people in contact with the justice system are among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the community and generally progress to have higher rates of offending throughout their lives. The causes of offending in younger children are strongly connected to their environment and its impact on their development.

Jesuit Social Services' research has identified a strong correlation between child and youth offending and entrenched disadvantage. For example, in Victoria we found that:

- In 2010, 78 per cent of children aged 10 to 12 years with youth justice orders, or who had experienced remand at this age, were known to child protection. Of these, 60 per cent were known before their seventh birthday.[19]

- 25 per cent of children on youth justice orders in 2010 came from 2.6 per cent of Victorian postcodes.[20]

- Children 14 years and under at their first encounter with the justice system are more likely to come from areas with higher rates of developmentally vulnerable children on the Australian Early Development Index.[21]

The extreme vulnerability and complex needs of children and young people in contact with the justice system indicate a need for more effective welfare responses to childhood disadvantage and appropriate justice responses that recognise the unique needs of vulnerable young people, including developmental needs which are heavily influenced by their physical environment.

The following are features of design that have been identified as contributing to a more therapeutic environment for young people in social care settings.[22]

- Facilities should be secure and comfortable, with maintenance of an ambient temperature and access to daylight and fresh air.

- Privacy should be available, wherever possible, and young people's dignity should be preserved.

- Activities should be made available, wherever possible, to constructively engage young people.

- Noise and overcrowding should be minimised.

### Ways Forward:

- Inclusion of ecological justice in policy choices between rehabilitative and punitive approaches.

- Incorporation of spatial justice in the design of prisons and remand centres

- Education, training and preparation for social, economic and ecological changes – prison biodiversity and appropriate job skills training and programs.

- Update guidelines and environmental justice considerations on all new prisons built

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[19] Jesuit Social Services and Effective Change Pty. Ltd. (2013) *Thinking Outside: Alternatives to remand for children*, Jesuit Social Services, Richmond, http://www.jss.org.au/files/Docs/policy-and-advocacy/publications/Thinking_Outside_Research_Report_-Final_amend_15052013.pdf.

[20] Ericson, M. & Vinson, T. (2010) *Young people on remand in Victoria – Balancing individual and community interests*, Jesuit Social Services, Richmond, http://www.jss.org.au/files/Docs/policy-and-advocacy/publications/Young_people_in_remand_in_Victoria_-_Balancing_individual_and_community_interests.pdf.

[21] Jesuit Social Services and Effective Change Pty. Ltd. (2013).

[22] Horsburgh, D. (2004), 'How and when can I restrain a patient', Postgraduate Medical Journal, Vol. 80, pp. 7–12, http://pmj.bmj.com/content/80/939/7.full.pdf+html.
http://jss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/JE-article-in-Promotio-Iustitiae.pdf

## Barreng Moorop

Recognising the need to divert vulnerable children away from the youth justice system, Jesuit Social Services delivers the Barreng Moorop program in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA).

Barreng Moorop works with 10-14 year-old children, their siblings and their families residing in the North and West metropolitan regions of Melbourne who intersect the criminal justice system. The program provides culturally responsive trauma-informed services to divert young Aboriginal people away from the criminal justice system. Since its inception in 2015, Barreng Moorop has assisted 35 Aboriginal children and their families.

Barreng Moorop works with the whole family and community (where appropriate) to provide a wraparound response, understanding the composition of Aboriginal families, in which the extended family plays an active role. The responsibility of child care and rearing is shared amongst a range of family members with, in many cases, a multi-generational core of kin providing primary care. In response, Barreng Moorop works with, and provides support to, family members with the focus of using family, community and culture as protective factors to divert young people away from the criminal justice system in a manner which is sustainable and genuine.

Barreng Moorop uses trauma-informed practices which acknowledge the trauma Aboriginal people have experienced throughout history due to colonisation, loss of culture and connection to land, and the removal of children from their families. We note that these factors and the impact of transgenerational trauma plays out in the daily life of many of the Aboriginal children and families we work with.

## Exiting prison

Jesuit Social Services advocates for a smarter justice system and a safer community. Prison should be a last resort and should focus upon rehabilitation and preparing people for their return to the community. Adequate support should be given to people exiting prison to assist them to make a successful transition and reduce the likelihood of repeat offending. We run programs to help people address the reasons behind their offending (such as substance abuse, mental illness, or poor literacy and numeracy). We help them find housing and work, and access health and other support services – though the reality is that we can assist only a small percentage of people who need such help. Despite the strong evidence for the effectiveness of rehabilitative programs they remain underfunded, compared with the growing investment in building prisons.

For 40 years Jesuit Social Services has supported people exiting prison. Our justice programs build on our belief that all people, including those exiting prison, should have the same opportunities to access housing, education and employment. Jesuit Social Services has been an active advocate in this area.

The costs of incarceration include interrupted educational attainment, reduced earnings, decreased productivity and social dislocation. Lack of skills and work experience is particularly prevalent among formerly incarcerated members of marginalised communities where the young are disproportionately represented. Lost opportunities to engage with training, connections and wider networks and culture of work and civic engagement are impacts of incarceration. The rate of technological and labour change has resulted in the exclusion of many from employment and housing. For those in prison the lag effects are significantly increased, resulting in a further and downward spiral of marginalisation. Therefore, vocational training is vital during and after prison time. Ecological justice programs in the United States, such as the very successful and influential *Roots of Success* program, lead the way in retraining those exiting prison into the new economies of renewable and green jobs as well as integrating literacy, community leadership and

ecological justice.[23] Jesuit Social Services is currently exploring ecological justice education and training programs with a view to adapting them to the local context.

For those traumatised by severe social violence, such as child sexual abuse, building trust and confidence in caring for nature has been proven essential in rebuilding confidence and healing.[24] Jesuit Social Services recognises, in its work with the most marginalised ex-prisoners such as sex offenders, that community safety inhibits full participation in social networks for some offenders. Engagement with gardens, animal care and non-human relationships can foster forms of community and connection that reduce social isolation and loneliness for such individuals, and thus recidivism.

Ecological justice not only addresses the separation between humanity and eco-systems but also the separation and marginalisation within communities. Pope Francis states that we are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Therefore, our strategies for solutions demand an integrated approach to combat poverty, restore dignity to the excluded and, at the same time, protect nature. Ecological restoration and healing is both social and environmental. What emerges is a possible economic ecology that includes the most marginalised in our society, as well as nature. This is highly relevant for those exiting prison who face not only social exclusion and dislocation, but also economic deprivation and precarity. The new paradigm of justice asks us to examine those who are most excluded and organise integrated solutions.

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[23] https://rootsofsuccess.org/

[24] The Body keeps score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma, Bessel Van Der Kolk, 2015.

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# Ecological Justice for Human Habitat:

## Infrastructure and Communities of Justice

Infrastructure plays a crucial role in fostering safe, strong, healthy and ecologically just communities. Infrastructure investment that increases the realisation of ecological justice is particularly important for the most vulnerable communities. For example, infrastructure influences the availability and access to green and public spaces where communities come together, and plays an important role in building community connectedness, civic engagement and community empowerment. While necessary in all communities, it is particularly important in communities that face entrenched disadvantage in order that they not only connect with each other, but also with their shared habitat and locale.

Jesuit Social Services' leadership in the area of ecological justice has coincided with a parallel commitment to building communities of justice. Communities of justice occur when a group of individuals or organisations, connected geographically or by mutual interest, work together for a common purpose around justice and fairness. They are communities of practice or communities of intent with shared values. They form the foundation of a healthy democratic society and are pivotal in generating, challenging, changing and disseminating social and cultural values and norms. We envision a just society built on strong, resilient communities where relationships, not transactions, are at the heart of everything. Communities of justice are important to the realisation of ecological justice but also need legal and governance support for localised solidarity and for initiatives to thrive.

The principle of subsidiarity informs Jesuit Social Services' commitment to communities of justice. The principle of subsidiarity is that people should have a say over the issues affecting their lives and that decisions affecting them should be made at the appropriate level. Central authorities are best placed to perform certain tasks, but, where possible, decisions and tasks should be taken up at the local level. As extreme weather and infrastructure failure increase due to climate change, localised community capacity becomes a national security issue. However, the precursor to interventions in times of emergency is a commitment to building strong community networks and civic engagement before such crisis occur and urgent state or sector intervention is required.

For infrastructure and policy to enable communities to address disadvantage and ecological justice in their communities, we need to support processes of local decision-making by the community and be flexible *in response* to their needs. As identified by VCOSS, in a recent paper, a 'collective impact' approach values community knowledge and strives for the community to have genuine ownership over the services, direction and initiatives in their communities. Engaging the community in the co-design and co-production of infrastructure and policy that impacts upon their lives is one element of this framework.'[25]

To ensure it is meeting community needs, infrastructure and policy must be developed with genuine and substantial community consultation, particularly regarding community facilities, services, education and important decisions around what environmental risks and benefits communities face. Due to various factors, legal recognition of and protections against environmental harm, both to eco-systems and human communities, are not as well developed as our legal recognition and protection against social harm. The law is responding, albeit slowly, to the increasing awareness and evidence that environmental degradation constitutes a harm which requires legal redress and prohibitions.

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[25] http://vcoss.org.au/documents/2016/10/VCOSS-Communities-Taking-Power-2016.pdf

## Ways Forward:

Strengthening procedural and regulatory mechanisms to protect communities requires:

- Decisions regarding the presence of toxic environmental sites within or proximate to communities requires to have regulatory frameworks that allow community access to all the necessary information on the impacts and plans for those sites.

- Rigorous and accessible procedures for community engagement, input and agency as to how such decisions are made.

- Increased legal protection and governance support for local based community initiatives that address ecological justice.

- Increased development and application of environmental criminal law, preferably within the restorative justice framework.

Programs that contribute to building communities of justice:

- Increased training and preparedness of staff and participants within the community sector for predicted impacts of climate change and vulnerabilities in energy transitions or failures that focus upon the unique needs of local communities.

- The inclusion of ecological justice and the importance of community building in all training and education on predicted impacts and responses to such extreme events.

- Increased support and education regarding the importance of the commons, both social and environmental, and the local community and state responsibilities in relation to them.

Communities of justice prioritise marginalised people and eco-systems under stress. The climate crisis brings increased uncertainty and unpredictability of livelihoods and possible responses to threats as well as the risk of exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and marginalisation within society. However, ecological justice imports an added awareness of the importance of building relationships with eco-systems and communities as a proactive affirmation of reconciliation with creation, and the hope that inclusive cultures emerge that are more resilient, due to their connectedness and practices of interdependence.

## Energy, Housing and Food Security

Housing, food and energy considerations are integral to Jesuit Social Services' holistic approach to service delivery and advocacy and are highly impactful upon our participants' lives. The interconnections between place-based disadvantage, affordable housing, food security, access to infrastructure and energy impact on ecological justice outcomes for many communities. It is well established that communities have greater chance of social cohesion and wellbeing when there is access to nutritious food and healthy, hospitable habitat. The rising unaffordability of these basic necessities leads to social exclusion and is an issue of ecological justice.

While globalised economies play a significant role in the equitable distribution and availability of these environmental rights and benefits, public policy and community empowerment are essential in protecting and nourishing human habitat and local eco-systems. Too often these basic needs are dismissed as being purely influenced by the market and relegated to the area of individual choice and responsibility. This abdicates the wider ecological justice responsibilities governments and communities have in their obligation to protect and nourish healthy habitats for communities and the eco-systems they are connected to.

## Housing as Human Habitat

Housing is essential not only to well-being, but to human life itself. Rather than being a mere built structure, it is the place of safety, protection from the elements and where we develop social relationships and connection with our environments. Homelessness and living in inadequate or poor housing hinders economic self-sufficiency, health and social connectedness. Also, it should be recognised that homelessness can be both visible and invisible, and some families and individuals live with constant shelter precarity.

Housing is being affected by increased gentrification and is seen as a capital and investment stock which goes against the understanding of housing as a human right or, in an ecological sense, a right of habitation: humans, like all species, require healthy habitat in order not only to survive, but thrive. Causes of homelessness and substandard housing can be linked to unprecedented urbanisation, poorly regulated real-estate markets and inequitable outcomes from specific taxation regimes. The United Nations report, Habitat III, considers the Sustainable Development Goals in relation to homelessness. It stresses the need to shift the emphasis from the individualised person facing habitat insecurity towards the larger and more influential questions of human rights and the obligations of governments and private sector interests towards ensuring healthy habitat for communities and individuals. In Australia this requires a shift in public discourse and understanding of homelessness. The organised public demonstrations in 2017 by homeless people in Melbourne at Flinders Street station and the tent city in Martin Place, Sydney highlighted the lack of understanding public figures and lawmakers have in this essential area of human rights and ecological justice.

Homelessness is an issue of ecological justice because, among other factors:[26]

- Availability of safe, secure and stable housing is a major issue particularly for people with mental illness, addictions and other complex needs.

- People with multiple and complex needs experience greater homelessness and housing disadvantage.

- We know from our work with young people in the justice system that a small number of young people remain incarcerated because of the lack of access to a home.

- Specific cohorts, including women and families fleeing domestic violence, young people (including those leaving out-of-home care or the justice system), and people leaving prison are particularly vulnerable to homelessness.

Barriers to habitat security include:

- Entry into the private rental market is particularly difficult for women and families fleeing domestic violence, or people leaving prison, as the lack of rental history and financial barriers can prevent access to the housing market.

- Financial barriers also prevent young people accessing both the private market and social housing. Very few social housing providers accommodate young people because their financial modelling does not cater for people on low incomes.

- Lack of independent living skills is a barrier to maintaining stable accommodation. Many young people leaving care, or young people leaving the justice system, have not yet developed the independent living skills necessary for stable accommodation. For this cohort, transitional, supported housing, with after-hours workers, is central to a pathway to stable, independent living.

- Prisoners face significant barriers to maintaining their housing in the community while in prison. Around 31 per cent of people exiting prison do so into homelessness.[27]

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[26] http://jss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SUB-161010-Infrastructure-Victoria-FINAL.pdf

[27] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016, The health of Australia's prisoners 2015.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/9c42d6f3-2631-4452-b0df-9067fd71e33a/18878.pdf.aspx?inline=true

Those with insecure housing or denied habitat (homeless) are more vulnerable to violence, discrimination and being caught up in the criminal justice system. This will be exacerbated by the increase in bypass laws which criminalise those who do not have access to healthy and secure habitat. Additionally, those without secure habitat are more likely to be exposed to environmental risks. The rising criminalisation of the basic right to seek shelter illustrates the importance of a paradigm shift towards ecological justice and the importance of relationships.

Jesuit Social Services' Next Steps (Dillon House) and Perry House models are two examples of supported living arrangements. Perry House is a living skills residential program for young people with intellectual disabilities who are involved with the criminal or youth justice systems. Perry House workers facilitate the development of independent living skills from a strengths based practice approach which promotes resilience and a 'can do' approach to life. Each resident is supported to develop a 12-month program plan which aims to optimise their capacity to live independently in the community. Activities may include reconnection to family, engagement in employment, training or education, financial management, good communication and use of technologies. To meet the varying needs of society's most vulnerable people, a diversity of housing options is critical. Options include transitional, supported living arrangements such as residential programs, lead tenant housing, step down models, and approaches that support individuals' entry into the private housing market through housing first models and head-leasing.

It is critical that affordable housing is good quality and ecologically appropriate, whereby dwellings – both private and social – not only adhere to minimum standards of quality but also incorporate principles of ecological justice. It is well established that the quality, location, design and materials used in both urban planning and development of the built environment impacts significantly on the habitats and locales they are present within.  Housing structures must be strong, sustainable and energy-efficient. This requires investing in aspects such as good insulation and having access to equitable energy provision. While more costly upfront, these buildings are cost effective in the long-term, reducing costs for tenants as well as the environment. If well considered they enable the building of resilient communities in the face of environmental risks. Without access to transitional, stable, quality, supported housing arrangements, the most vulnerable people will continue to be at risk of long-term homelessness and will face an ever-greater challenge of overcoming any other issues they are facing. Importantly, as we collectively face increasingly harsh climatic conditions, the lack of adequate shelter for sections of our community is an inequality that will exacerbate social discord and cohesion.

## Ways Forward:

- Increased education and advocacy on the human and social need for healthy habitat as an obligation rather than primarily being a financial investment and challenging the criminalisation of homelessness, as is currently seen in public discourse and policy responses.

## Food security

In Australia food insecurity is a hidden crisis, with increasing numbers of people unable to afford enough food for themselves or their families. [28] In a climate of increasing prices for nutritious-food, wider gaps in household income brackets and environmental resource pressures, food insecurity is likely to grow in prevalence and severity.[29] While there are many definitions of food security, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations defines food security as:

*When all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life* (FAO 2009).

In Australia we are in the enviable position of having adequate quantities of high–quality food to feed our population and our food is supplied through domestic production and imports. In 2010 it was reported that we produce enough food today to feed around 60 million people, yet two million people still rely on food relief every year.[30] A higher prevalence of food insecurity has been reported among particularly marginalised communities, such as asylum seekers (71%), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (22%), disadvantaged urban households (25%) and people who are unemployed (23%). Australian families that are welfare-dependent spend 40% of their disposable income in order to afford a nutritious diet, as opposed to 20% for the average Australian family. [31]

Food equity is an integral part of food security. Among urban populations, poverty, increased cost of living and poor housing were reported as playing significant roles in food security status.[32] Nutritionally empty foods are often more available and cheaper than healthy diet options, forcing many low-income families and individuals into poor food options. Households on low incomes are at greater risk of a number of chronic diseases and often live in regions where fast food outlets are 2.5 times more accessible when compared with affluent regions. At the same time the cost of organic and locally-produced food excludes many working families from choosing this option.

Food security is an essential component of ecological justice: not just at the point of human consumption but also along the supply chains of food production. The social, environmental and economic cost of nutrition-poor food as opposed to healthy, localised food is not adequately considered in policy and, according to the Australia Food Sovereignty Network is actively discouraged by existing regulatory regimes.[33] Australia is a recognised and courageous public health world leader in reducing tobacco use by utilising taxation, public health education and regulation. Food production, distribution and consumption practices illustrate an equivalent risk for public health not only in the appearance of chronic diseases and the impact on local economies, but additionally the climate change consequences due to the volume of food and the reliance upon agricultural practices, water and soil quality, transportation and the energy consumption of food packaging. Policy intervention is needed to support local food producers as well as those living in food deserts to minimise the wider impact upon our climate and eco-systems.

Concurrent to rising food insecurity is the paradox of increased food waste in Australia. Globally the impacts of food waste contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and wastage of water, capital, labour, eco-systems and lands. According to the Robobank report in 2016 Australians waste 10 billion dollars of food each year and households throw away 14 per cent of their weekly groceries (equating to more than $1000 per

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[28] Food insecurity and hunger a 'hidden crisis' in Australia, says Foodbank CEO – The Guardian, August 4 2016

[29] Maintaining food security in Australia – Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, 31 October 2016

[30] Food insecurity in Australia: Implications for general practitioners (PMSIEC 2010) (DAFF, National Food Plan2012

[31] Maintaining food security in Australia – Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, 31 October 2016

[32] "Too little and too much: Exploring the paradox of food insecurity and obesity in disadvantaged populations: Research highlights" Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton South, Vic, VicHealth, 2016 http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/207700844?q&versionId=227927957

[33] Australian Food Sovereignty Network http://afsa.org.au/

household annually). While Australian consumers need to think about the impacts on farming and sustainability generally, the added injustice of food waste concurrently occurring as marginalised communities grapple with food insecurity prompts deeper questions of current economics and regulation of food production and waste.

Recently some national governments have tackled food waste by banning supermarkets from throwing away or destroying unsold food and requiring them to divert it to food banks and charities.[34] Diverting organics, of which food waste is a major part, from landfill will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and could be used to sequester carbon and contribute to improved farm production. In landfill, organic wastes can give rise to leachate, methane emissions, odour, vermin and unstable landforms. Conversely, food waste is a potential source of soil conditioning or energy.[35] These positive policy initiatives point to a rising public policy awareness of the principles of the circular economy which looks beyond the current extractive industrial model of 'take, make and dispose' towards a regenerative system where resource input, waste, emissions and energy leaks are minimised by slowing, closing and narrowing material and energy loops. Food security impacts upon ecological justice from the wider frame of environmental care and concern for lands, climate change and waste to the equitable distribution and access to healthy diets for Australia's most vulnerable communities.

## Ways Forward

We support the recommendations of VicHealth in 2016:[36]

- Collaboration across a range of sectors and stakeholders is required to make healthy foods physically, socially, culturally and financially the easier, more desirable choice relative to less healthy foods, and community involvement in planning and implementation of interventions is of great importance.

- Promote knowledge and skills that assist people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage in preparing satisfying (satiating), nutritious meals.

- Consider education programs that encourage all Australian children across the social spectrum to develop skills that will enable them to grow, prepare and enjoy healthy foods.

- Increase the availability and accessibility of nutritious, affordable foods, and decrease the availability and accessibility of non-nutritious foods, in particular by:

    o considering communities' public and active transport access to nutritious, affordable food

    o investigating the potential impact and feasibility of reducing the density of fast food outlets in disadvantaged communities.

- Optimise disadvantaged households' healthy foods purchasing power

- Further the evidence base through research into disadvantage, food insecurity and obesity

We further support the following:

- Reducing food insecurity will require a combined effort from governments, industry and the community.

- Addressing individual food insecurity should be part of the Australian Government's broader strategy to reduce social disadvantage

- Prioritisation of food waste as a concern for both public health and ecological justice including commitment to the circular economy, and policy that diverts waste from landfill.

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[34] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/04/french-law-forbids-food-waste-by-supermarkets

[35] Australian National Waste Report 2016 from the Department of the Environment and Energy. Pg 29 and 32.

[36] "Too little and too much: Exploring the paradox of food insecurity and obesity in disadvantaged populations: Research highlights" Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton South, Vic, VicHealth, 2016

## Energy equity

The electricity sector is undergoing a major change in response to the imperatives of climate change. The old centralized electricity networks are giving way to interconnected networks with a diverse range of energy production mechanisms and a much more variable and flexible demand pattern. This provides considerable potential for more effective delivery of energy and at the same time considerable management challenges.

The Australian electricity sector is evolving rapidly. The key facets of this transition are:

- **It is moving from state to national:** Less than three decades ago, the electricity sector was highly centralized within the states with minimal inter-state connection. Now, the sector is increasingly monitored and regulated at a national level.

- **Public to private in a few decades:** Until three decades ago, large state-owned corporations ran all elements of the energy system, namely production, transmission and distribution. Now, there are multiple privatized entities operating various elements of the system. Some companies are integrated (operating in more than one element) and some in only production, transmission or distribution. The operating framework is not truly competitive in nature and lacks safeguards and other mechanisms to control price increases and to ensure vulnerable families have electricity for an acceptable level heating and cooling.

- **The electricity sector characteristics are changing**: Responding to the imperatives of both aging infrastructure (much of it more than fifty years old) and need to reduce carbon emissions, the energy networks are becoming less centralized and more interconnected. Consumers are both reducing consumption and becoming more flexible in their patterns of consumption. The renewable energy infrastructure is much more "modular" than the old centralized networks and are therefore more flexible with respect to financing and constructing and maintaining.

- **Climate change**: The impetus for renewables and a lowering of capita energy consumption and use patterns is demanded by climate change. Unfortunately, climate change is also a clarion call for political disputes which create major blockages to orderly transition to a low carbon economy.

- **Technical complexity and political simplicity:** The challenges of understanding the inherent technical complexity of a viable, secure and efficient energy system is often in juxtaposition with a politically driven simplistic and opportunist line of opposition to change. Whilst often compatible with media objectives, this tends to confuse and distract the broader community.

- **Long-term planning is critical:** Consideration of energy infrastructure investment requirements cannot be short term. The impact of any policy on investment will extend into multiple decades. Hence consideration of investment requirements must be over a similar timeframe.

It is evident the energy sector is in a state of transition. Unfortunately this transition is not occurring as effectively and efficiently as it might. Debate about a national energy policy is politically mired and it remains to be seen if the long desired consensus on energy policy is going to be achieved any time soon. For over a decade, a lack of political bipartisanship on climate change has beset the resolution of a workable energy policy to guide the transition from a carbon based electricity system to one based on renewables. Whilst it has been dressed up as many things, the difference between the two sides (now referred to as *the Climate Wars*) is two-fold, namely:

1. Between those that accept climate change is real and the result of excessive carbon use and those who don't or won't accept this.

2. Between those who accept that some form of financial provision is needed to reflect the "externalities" cost of carbon generation and those who consider that there is no such externalities cost and that renewables should not reasonably receive "subsidies".

Meanwhile, energy vulnerability is increasing across Australia and will affect the disadvantaged more than other populations. Many factors influence energy vulnerability, including the increasing incidents of

infrastructure failure, due to more frequent and protracted extreme weather events, exploitative and poorly-regulated pricing, administrative and cost barriers in accessing clean, reliable energy and lack of access to clear information regarding energy supply.

The existing Jesuit Social Services concerns on electricity policy were presented more specifically in a submission to the 2012 Senate Select Committee on Electricity Prices[37]. This position is paraphrased below:

- households to have secure, reliable, sustainable and affordable energy;

- rising electricity prices are undermining these rights;

- low income families are being impacted disproportionately by price increases;

- low income renting families have limited access to energy efficiency measures;

- households need a national consumer body to represent them;

- fairness and equity principles to be imbedded into energy policy, in the law and in operation and management decision making; and,

- protect low income families from rising energy prices through concessional assistance.

The lack of equitable access to renewable and reliable energy sources for vulnerable communities will compound pre-existing marginalisation as the effects of climate change increase. For example, in the face of rising temperatures the amelioration of heat stress symptoms will be critical to protect populations from related health impacts. However, this will be less accessible to the most marginalised across Australia due to increases in energy prices, lack of access to energy-efficient devices and the adverse energy of low-quality housing. In July 2017 the ABC reported on research indicating that average wholesale power prices for east coast states in the National Energy Market have jumped between 150 per cent and 240 per cent over the past two years. Increases in electricity prices will continue to impact more severely upon lower-income earners. Pre-emptive policies of equitable access to energy are increasingly considered essential to protect against the effects of climate risk.

Compounding these difficulties is the need for Australia to transition to renewable and clean sources of energy. This requires coherent, well-researched, courageous and coordinated policy from all levels of government and industry. While transitioning to clean energy is an ecological justice imperative, considerations of equitable distribution of the risks and benefits across the Australian population are also imperative.[38]

## Ways forward:

- Equal access to renewable clean energy.

- Increased price monitoring and regulation of electricity and energy suppliers.

- Provision of accessible information on energy supply and options for marginalised communities.

## Energy and Carbon responsibility

Jesuit Social Services works within the larger international community of the Jesuit network, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. Property, investment and business processes of Jesuit Social Services impact upon climate change events due to their contribution to carbon consumption and subsequent impact on more vulnerable nations.

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[37] JSS, *Submission to the Senate Select Committee Inquiry on Electricity Prices*, Sept 2012.

[38] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016, The health of Australia's prisoners 2015.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/9c42d6f3-2631-4452-b0df-9067fd71e33a/18878.pdf.aspx?inline=true

The fiduciary duty of governments to safeguard their peoples and territory from climate and environmental degradation has recently become a cause of many law suits around the world as jurisprudence changes to meet the realities of this new paradigm of justice. There have been successful climate justice cases including in the United States, the Netherlands and India where statutory and government bodies have been held accountable for not adequately regulating their emissions.

One of Australia's major areas of carbon responsibility is in the energy and mining industries. While the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change only requires nations to account for emissions produced within their borders, the export of fossil fuels to other nations remains an ethical issue for climate justice. Australia is the world's largest coal exporter and the proposed mega mines in Queensland's Galilee Basin will only increase our contribution to the global carbon burden. Ecological justice in the area of climate justice requires awareness and action around the impact of climate change on those communities least responsible and least prepared for the consequences and risks. Australia has an obligation to neighbours more vulnerable to climate risk, such as the islands in the South Pacific, where climate refugees are already a topic of international policy discussions on refugees and human security. Carbon responsibility is an increasing concern for national and international security.

The CEO of Jesuit Social Services leads the Justice in Mining Network, one of four Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks. The Justice in Mining Network works to protect human rights and the environment and seeks to ensure mining only occurs where issues of equity and sustainability are addressed. The Network is guided by Catholic Social Teaching, our Ignatian heritage and our Jesuit justice vocation. The Justice in Mining network collaborates with other advocates around the globe in working towards a fairer and wiser use of the world's limited resources. Natural and mineral resources are essential for much of modern-day life. But resource extraction can have a number of negative impacts on local communities, including degradation of land, pollution of waterways, displacement of people and damage to culture and the fabric of communities. Free prior and informed consent is not always obtained by companies intent on profit, and the needs of local residents are often overlooked or ignored. Laudato Si provides further impetus for dialogue and action, and the Justice in Mining Network presents a means to encourage this. A grass-roots response to the challenges presented by the world's current consumption of resources is needed. This project engages the Jesuit community in helping to change attitudes to resource use, as well as ensuring that local communities in mining areas are heard and that mining companies pay heed to their needs so that mining occurs in an equitable and sustainable manner.

The Justice in Mining Network provides advocacy and other support to local communities and individuals to ensure exploitation of natural resources occurs only when issues of equity and sustainability are addressed.

In order to achieve its Purpose, the Justice in Mining Network has the following specific Goals:

1. Raise awareness among Jesuits, partners and the communities we serve, of the importance of good governance and management of natural and mineral resources and sustainable lifestyles.

2. Build capacity among Jesuits, partners and the communities we serve, to enable them to understand, address and provide leadership in matters regarding the governance of natural and mineral resources.

3. Support and advocate with and for people and communities affected by mining

## Ways going forward:

- National, state and local government commit to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energies.

- Increased advocacy and engagement by the community sector on Australia's carbon responsibilities and obligations regarding the impact on marginalised communities both within and outside our borders.

# Conclusion

*"The future of humanity […] is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organise." [Pope Francis]*

Jesuit Social Services is committed to the realisation of ecological justice due to:

- our overriding concern for building a just society

- our Jesuit heritage which emphasises reconciliation with creation

- the fact we work with marginalised people who are likely to be most affected by environmental degradation and climate injustice

- our background as a community organisation with advocacy expertise and links into diverse parts of our community

- our tradition of innovation; and our shift to building communities of justice.

The disconnection from land is acute and most impactful on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but harmed, disconnected and broken relations with land and ecology affect the wellbeing and justice outcomes for all Australians. Jesuit Social Services's commitment to ecological justice is reflected in our current strategic plan, and encompasses both taking action to ensure the organisation itself is environmentally aware and sustainable, and also incorporating a respect for nature and its benefits across our programs and practice. It means transforming how we see ourselves in the world, and understanding the interconnectedness of all living things and the relevance of those relationships in both our personal and working lives.

Our commitment to ecological justice asks for a reexamination of our relationships with the world and introduces a broader understanding of what just communities and fair policy could do to address both the needs of the earth and of humanity into the future. Rather than the assertion of rights and entitlements, ecological justice is holistic and affirmative of life, our common home and the collective capacity to innovate and organise around nourishing and strengthening our shared connections. Due to Jesuit Social Services' history and commitment to social justice in Australia over the last 40 years, we are able to step into a deeper understanding and increased advocacy on issues pertaining to ecological justice as the natural next step in building and contributing to the new paradigm of justice and working towards a just society.

> *We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which Jesuit Social Services operates and pay respect to their Elders past and present. We express our gratitude for their love and care of the land and all life.*