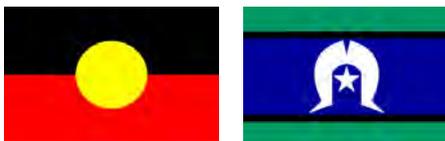


Acknowledgment

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 of all life.



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OUR FOUNDATIONS

Jesuit Social Services' Living Heritage and Practice

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential. We 'do' and we 'influence.' We accompany people and communities to foster and regenerate the web of relationships that sustain us all – across people, place and planet; and we work to change policies, practices, ideas and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice and exclusion.

The work of Jesuit Social Services embodies Christian faith in God's love for the world shown in Jesus. This is expressed in the central insistence of Catholic Social Teaching and of the Jesuit tradition on respecting the preciousness of each human being, on walking with the disregarded, and on caring for the earth, God's gift and our mother.

Jesuit Social Services began in 1977 and is a work of the Australian Jesuit Province operating under an independent Board of Directors as an incorporated organisation.

This text provides a reflection on the foundations of the work of Jesuit Social Services and serves as a guide for its continued practice in the Jesuit tradition. It consists of two components: Our Roots, which establishes foundations in faith, Christianity and Jesuit mission; and Our Practice that describes how we work, our practice framework and how our heritage is embedded in both.

Our Vision

Building a just society

Our Mission

Standing in solidarity with those in need, expressing a faith that promotes justice

Our Values

- Welcoming: forming strong, faithful relationships
- Discerning: being reflective and strategic in all we do
- Courageous: standing up boldly to effect change

OUR ROOTS

Introduction: A Resource and Guide

The founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola, described himself as a pilgrim. Reflecting on his own experience, he offered his companions guides to living on pilgrimage: ways of seeing the holy in all places, ways of discerning goodness in complex situations, and ways of service through self-giving love. When Ignatius sent Francis Xavier and the first Jesuits to India he told them to “set the world on fire”. The word foundations suggests inflexible structures, but our foundations are like the roots of a tree; they are deep and strong and living, providing structure and nourishment for the flourishing branches and leaves that reach out into our contemporary world. Ultimately, they are about the expression of love through deeds - love that drives our practice and our efforts to build a just society.

Jesuit mission is a loving response to infinite love. As the American poet Christine Rodgers puts it:

Love made me –
Love sustains me –
Love leads me forth.

For this I sing praise
bow low, and put
my life at the disposal of Love.

Every tree – every
single star in the sky
points back toward
the Beloved.

May nothing pull me
away from Love – no
small wish of mine
next to the immensity
of the Beloved.

With the Beloved
may I shine.

There are three central concerns in this document relating to our living heritage: our foundations in faith; our foundations in Christianity; and our foundations in Jesuit mission. The foundations in Jesuit mission are primarily about the fire of infinite love and, secondly, about ways of proceeding, reaching out into the world, because love shows itself in deeds not words.

The Conclusion to this document connects these foundations with Jesuit Social Services’ engagement with person, community, society and environment, offering pointers for building a more just society, where individuals and communities can flourish and fully celebrate the gift of life.

1. Foundations in Faith

1.1 The Human Condition

Abraham Maslow's humanist description of the hierarchy of needs of people in Western society makes an interesting point about humans being both material and spiritual: though we have physical needs like food, shelter and sex, and security needs like safety, health, property and employment, we also seek love and belonging and esteem and self-actualization. We move from the material and the objective to the existential and personal, thus becoming a self or subject who can accept and make meaning, a person who is capable of self-transcendence.

As we come to the limits of reason and the stark threats of existence, deep meaning is hard to find: the more we seek for meaning, the more we find ourselves threatened by meaninglessness, loneliness and mortality. For some people, life is thus judged to be absurd. For others, life can have a meaning if, following something like Maslow's humanism, we choose to make meaning. Meaning comes from making connections, making informed judgements, and making prudent commitments to other persons and to a culture and society. These are all reasonable acts of faith.

The word "faith" carries different meanings for different people, including "crazed fanaticism" and "naive gullibility". Faith primarily entails trust in another person that follows from some personal encounter or experience, supported by palpable evidence. This trust often includes believing what the other person tells us. Faith is thus both "belief in" a person, and "belief that" a way of looking at the world is true. Faith may never be absolutely proven to be true, but this does not mean faith is always unreasonable.

To be human is to live by reasonable faith: generally speaking, we trust our family, we trust our doctors, we trust maps, we trust some journalists, some web sites, and so on. We are wary about Google maps, however, or about email scams promising millions of dollars, because we know they may well be unreliable or downright false. Using experience and evidence, we learn to judge whether a person is true and trustworthy – including advertisers, politicians, spruikers, preachers, and potential partners. Faith can take us into precarious situations, but it can also take us into new worlds.

To be human is to be both limited and self-transforming. We are limited in our bodies and in our place and time. On the other hand, we are unlimited in our capacity for wonder, our thirst for knowledge, our yearning for completion in love. Through acts of faith we transcend our limitations and transform our lives. Maslow's hierarchy of needs tells a similar story: to be fully human is to move from physical needs to personal needs. Sometimes we get hurt and sometimes we may find it hard to trust.

It is an act of both faith and love to trust another person. This act of self-giving can be foolish and blind if it is a sudden infatuation, but building community depends on trusting relationships. We have a "gut feel" for truth and goodness, and so we trust. This human faith builds relationships, builds networks, builds community, and builds social capital. It is interpersonal before it is contractual: the relationships are more fundamental than the subsequent charters or constitutions.

1.2 Religious Faith

Religious faiths are the ultimate exercise of human faith, where total trust is placed in an absolute "Other". Religious faiths are the ultimate exercise in self-transcendence, seeking

union with an ultimate infinite being. They draw a person onto a “spiritual” journey. The more public the religion, however, the more believers are drawn from an individual spirituality into a communal spirituality with an explicit focus. Faith gets organised around deities and revelations and then teachings. Faith becomes religion.

Religions, like most advertising, can promise much and deliver little. Religions can exploit the human desire for connection and meaning. They can be unreasonable, lack credibility, and take advantage of people. On the other hand, however, there are religions that are part of the fabric of people’s lives and cultures that have stood the test of time, that are credible and reasonable, and that – despite aberrations – create community and offer meaning and hope.

Jesuit Social Services is a faith-based agency. It is grounded in both humanist faith and religious faith as proper responses to the unearned and unexpected gift of life. We embrace the human desire for meaning and fulfilment and the human capacity to trust another person in order to live a more complete life in community. For some this faith rests on the possibility of moral goodness, for others this faith rests on belief in a good god, a transcendent deity. In both cases the faith is reasonable, even if unproven. There is always an element of personal risk and personal self-giving in faith, just as there is in love.

1.3 Mysticism: God is Unknowable

Words never fully describe a reality. The more complicated our experience of reality, the more is art required. The words we use for God are inadequate, because by definition God must be a being unlike any being we know, a being without any cause, a being which is its own explanation, a being beyond our comprehension. It is as though we were ants trying to imagine what it meant to be human, only more so. The words we use for and about God are therefore inadequate. We may use words for God like creator or ruler or shepherd or judge or mother or father, but these are only analogies and pointers.

While names for God are anthropomorphic, and while the existence of God cannot be absolutely proven, the idea of God is not unreasonable. Some scientists who believe in God use an argument from design: that the highly tuned constants of our universe indicate some higher being. The argument against this is that big bang theory allows for an almost infinite number of universes, and our finely tuned universe is one such outcome, just as an almost infinite array of monkeys at keyboards can certainly produce one monkey who types out the whole of Shakespeare. A better argument for the existence of God, however, is not from the beginnings of our universe but from the purpose of our existence. A key, for example, discloses a purpose. There may or may not be a lock that the key fits, but the key discloses the kind of lock it can open. So also, the human desire for meaning and belonging discloses the kind of being that would provide ultimate meaning and belonging.

In human history there have been holy women and men who appear to have experienced enlightenment, a deep sense of the presence of such a God. These mystics are reduced to silence. They understand that when we start to use words about such a transcendent God we risk creating an idol made from our limited imaginations.

We can, therefore, only wait in silence. However, if God were to “speak a word” to us, that divine Word would have to be in our own language, a word we can grasp. Could this Word become flesh?

2. Foundations in Christianity

2.1 Jesus the Christ

Christianity is a religion based on historical events and on a belief in a historical person – Jesus of Nazareth – whose self-giving love is so absolute that his presence is regarded as divine: the incarnate Word of God. Jesuit Social Services, as its name indicates, is a work of the Jesuits, who try to live as companions of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus was born in poverty and executed as a criminal. He was an itinerant preacher and a wonder worker. He opposed unjust authorities, he healed the sick, he reconciled the outcast and he talked about a merciful, loving God. He preached a kind of regime change, the good news of a coming reign of peace and justice, which he called the Kingdom of God. At the beginning of his preaching he quoted the prophet Isaiah, identifying himself as an anointed one of God:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,
that the blind will see,
that the oppressed will be set free,
and that the time of the Lord's favour has come.¹

There was much about Jesus' actions that suggested he was the long awaited Messiah promised to the people of Israel. Nearly one fifth of the gospels is about Jesus healing people: there are lepers, demoniacs (mentally ill people), deaf people, blind people, lame people, a paralyzed servant, a mother in law with fever, a man with a withered hand, the dead son of a widow, a dying daughter, a hemorrhaging woman, epileptics, a man with dropsy (edema), a cut ear, infirmity (rheumatoid arthritis?), and so on. Jesus was quite a clinician. There were also several mass healing events where people queue up for days to be touched by Jesus. He wanted people to be able to live life to the full. As Marcus Borg put it:

More healing stories are told about Jesus than any other figure in the Jewish tradition. He must have been a remarkable healer....

Jesus recognizes the vulnerability of the sick in their need for care. He touches these people, physically and spiritually, breaking through that barrier of disease which often makes people feel less than human. He not only heals the outcasts but he also welcomes them back into community. He heals the whole community.

And as a figure of history, Jesus was an ambiguous figure—you could experience him and conclude that he was insane, as his family did, or that he was simply eccentric or that he was a dangerous threat—or you could conclude that he was filled with the spirit of God.²

The words “healing”, “health”, “whole”, and “holy” all share the same common root. Being “healed” or “made whole” means being made fully alive, true to one's being. So also the

¹ Luke 4:18-19; see Isaiah 42:1, 29:9, 61:1.

² Marcus Borg, *The Heart of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 2003), 90; *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006), 164.

words “salve” and “salvation” have the same root: they are about a healing that eases pain and rescues from peril. Jesus’ healing ministry was to make individuals and peoples whole. These were signs of the good news of salvation, signs of the reign of God. Jesus included rather than excluded people. Outsiders like the Samaritan woman, or the insane, or lepers, or tax collectors, or even the Roman Centurion, were all included: they were “not far from the Kingdom of God”.

Importantly, Jesus was much more than a preacher and a healer. He was seen as a social activist and a dangerous revolutionary by the religious and political leaders of his time. That was why he was executed. For example, in declaring “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice” and “Woe to you who are rich”, Jesus showed himself to be a prophet in the tradition of Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, who constantly spoke out for justice:

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

Loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, ... set the oppressed free and break every yoke.

Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed.

Do what is just and right. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.³

There were further signs in Jesus’ life that pointed to the unthinkable: his absolute unconditional self-giving love takes humanity to the level of perfection and implies the fullness of divinity. His followers thus became convinced he was not only the Christ, the anointed one of God, but actually the divine in complete solidarity with human vulnerability.

For Christians, the Jesus of history has thus been accepted as the Christ of faith. His resurrection is not about the resuscitation of a corpse, but about an eternal living presence, a guarantee of hope in the midst of the unfurling travail and beauty of the cosmos.

2.2 The Church

The Christian Church continues the historical work of Jesus of Nazareth: creating inclusive community, celebrating the presence of the divine, healing the sick, working for justice, giving to those in need, and bringing light where there is darkness. In the Christian imagination, God is a community of love rather than an individual. Similarly, Jesus’ followers, though many and multi-gifted, see themselves as forming one body. Jesus prays that his followers might be one, as he and the Father are one. Where there is community in the Spirit of Jesus, there Jesus Christ is present.

The first followers of Jesus formed small communities around the Eastern Mediterranean, from Damascus to Athens, from Corinth to Ephesus, and soon from Alexandria to Rome. These local domestic churches communicated with each other as they shaped a new identity and institution, balancing the freedom of the Spirit with the need for order and consistency of teaching and practice. So it was that a union of churches was formed, with a common creed ‘according to the whole’ (kata holos), from which we get the word ‘catholic’.

³ See Isaiah 1:17, 58:6; Jeremiah 21:12, 22:3.

As a human institution, the Catholic Church has lurched from periods of scandal and crisis to moments of inspiration and holiness. As a communion inspired by the Spirit of Jesus, its members have identified with the poor, supporting community, sharing goods, promising God's love and justice,

Through their everyday mysticism, Christians and fellow pilgrims try to bring light and the fullness of life into the dark places of a self-absorbed world. Prayer and sacraments nourish the imagination of a more open cosmos, and a spiritual life helps the growth of our spiritual senses and our gifts for discernment.

The Church sees the world as the theatre of God's presence and action,⁴ and Christian communities, as Church, are commissioned to play a role in society. As the 1971 Synod of Bishops famously put it: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."⁵

2.3 The Christian Worldview

In the Christian view of the world there is no dualism of matter and spirit, as separable layers of being. Body and soul are not separable. Where you have one, there you have the other. Matter can be imagined as frozen spirit. In the Christian view of the world, love gives life and love desires union with the beloved. Every being is precious because God is ecstatically in love with every person and every atom.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, as in most religions – and as in modern physics – the world is more than a material object in space and time. Human persons are more than elaborate machines and more than discrete bounded individuals. The tangible physical world discloses mysteries: call them animated, totemic, interconnected, enchanted, or spiritual. The quantum physicists John Wheeler, who coined the term "black hole", also spoke of "the great smoky dragon" of the quantum physics of reality: we see sometimes the head and sometimes the tail, but never the whole of reality. So also in the Christian view, our material existence discloses a spiritual dimension, a divine milieu. Our time-space construct starts in timelessness and is porous to the eternal.

Contemporary secular society has tended to protect itself and set up safety-barriers to keep us secure. This makes for peace and order and good conditions for businesses and markets. As society becomes more market driven, more consumerist, and more conscious of needs for security, in Charles Taylor's analysis, it becomes a "buffered" society – like riding in dodgem cars – where people feel safe. A buffered society, with its "law and order" and compliance, has produced a disenchanting society where material concerns have priority over spiritual gifts, where control has priority over ecstasy. The opposite of a buffered society is a porous society, where people may break rules, "do their own thing", and sometimes create havoc, but at the same time they are open to being fully human: open to the spiritual and to self-transformation.⁶

The Christian belief in the Incarnation – namely that in Jesus God becomes flesh – rests on an enchanted "porous" view of reality. God is not viewed as an object in some other place

⁴ Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (1965), #2.

⁵ 1971 Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World* (1971), #6.

⁶ See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge MA: Belknap, 2007), 307-321.

who pays occasional interest in the universe. Rather, God is omnipresent as a personal loving presence. The Incarnation reveals God's absolute involvement in the material world. The material world is not a closed mechanical system. It is open to infinite mystery.

2.4 The Human Person

In the Christian non-dualist view the human person is inseparably both flesh and spirit, body and soul, object and subject. One element entails the other. In Maslow's terms, the person seeking food and shelter is also the person seeking meaning and self-actualization. The human person is primarily a subject rather than an object. In other words, the human person is an embodied spirit, a free agent rather than a determinist machine. More importantly, the human person is primarily connected and relational rather than separate and individual.

There is a naïve and mistaken dualist view of "body and soul", as though the spirit or soul of a person is separable from the body (as a driver is separable from a motor car). This "dualism" holds there are two levels of reality, with the spiritual being more important than the material. This is not the orthodox Christian view of the human person.

Complex realities defy simple description. Many perspectives are required to capture a complete picture. The Christian view of the world not only requires many perspectives, but it also requires us to stretch our imaginations. We often have to hold contradictory ideas together at the same time to provide an adequate description of this divine milieu. Thus Jesus is human and divine; reality is material and spiritual; humans are both individual and communal, free and finite, saint and sinner, and so on. The Christian view of reality is rarely black and white. Instead of being "either/or" it is "both/and". This non-dualist view of reality requires a mystical sensibility as much as empirical observation. It requires a subtleness of mind, often holding opposites together: matter and spirit, law and love, human and divine, time and eternity, justice and mercy, grace and nature.

In the Christian view of life our future is not determined. God may have a plan for us – to use anthropomorphic language – but there is no detailed script. We believe that the plan is for all creation to be gathered and perfected into the love from which it came, but God gives us the freedom to make choices about that future. As we move into our future, God moves into the future with us. Just as God cannot by definition make a square circle, so also God cannot know an unknowable future – though God may know all possible futures.

This gift of freedom means that God may be powerless in the face of our bad choices, just as parents may be powerless when they give their children the freedom to be themselves. Our lives are precarious. The Christian view of human freedom accepts the fact of suffering. Some suffering is merely a part of being finite and embodied. Some suffering is physical, some is emotional, and some is spiritual. Some suffering is caused by human misuse of power. Natural disasters may cause suffering too, but it is often human powers that have placed poor people in the path of such disasters.

In the Christian view, God's self-giving is such that creation has its own life. Innocent suffering occurs, but God chooses to be with us in that suffering, in total solidarity. Such absolute love calls a response from us: to serve justice, so that there is no more violence, no more innocent suffering.

2.5 Church and State

The Catholic Church has had an "off again / on again" relationship with civil government. The Christian churches grew in towns and cities around the Mediterranean and for three centuries

were vulnerable to persecution from civil powers. In the year 313, however, the Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, decriminalizing Christian worship and beginning the Holy Roman Empire, when Church and State were deeply connected for a thousand years. During the recent centuries of Reformation, Revolution and Enlightenment, however, the Church eventually lost not only its military and political power but also its intellectual and moral authority. Under threat, the Catholic Church withdrew from the world, opposing the advances of republicanism and liberalism.

Church-State relations were reconsidered: some countries, like the United Kingdom, have an established church; others, like the United States, have a strong separation between Church and State. Church-State relationships in Australia are somewhat ambiguous, particularly where State funding of faith-based community, education and health services is concerned.

Today the Church sees itself as part of wider society, with its members having hopes and duties alongside all other members of society. It does not claim a privileged place in secular society, but it claims a right to participate in the theatre of secular society. In a landmark document on “The Church in the Modern World” from the second Vatican Council in 1965, the Church recognises that it is one with the whole human family and with the world in its activity and inspiration:

Every day human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family....

This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more humane balance. An improvement in attitudes and abundant changes in society will have to take place if these objectives are to be gained.

God’s Spirit, Who with a marvellous providence directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth, is not absent from this development....⁷

Vatican II’s view of the world – as the place where God’s Spirit is at work – transformed the way Catholics imagined their place in the world. The Church has tried to join with all people of good will as fellow pilgrims. The Jesuit mission would thus soon be restated as the “service of faith and the promotion of justice”.

2.6 The Role of the Laity

The Church is sometimes imagined as a Parish building controlled by bishop and priests that gets used on Sundays, where the lay people are passive second-order citizens. While this may reflect widespread practice, Church teaching is significantly different: first, the communal (or Marian) dimension of the Church precedes the hierarchical (or Petrine) dimension;⁸

⁷ Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (1965), #26.

⁸ See John Honner, “The Marian Church of Pope Francis” at <http://spirituality.ucanews.com/2015/08/15/the-marian-church-of-pope-francis-3/>

secondly, clergy and laity share co-responsibility for the Church;⁹ and, thirdly, the laity are primarily responsible for the Church's action in the world. The Church's participation in the theatre of society is primarily the role and responsibility of lay Christians. They are "to cooperate with all men and women of good will to promote whatever is true, whatever just, whatever holy, whatever lovable".¹⁰

Secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to the laity.... enlightened by Christian wisdom and giving close attention to the teaching authority of the Church, let the laity take on their own distinctive role.¹¹

This distinctive role of the laity is guided by Catholic Social Teaching.

2.7 Catholic Social Teaching

In 1848, when capitalist industrialisation was rife and workers were being exploited, when France was in the midst of the revolutions dramatised by Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables*, when a certain Karl Marx was living in Paris and applying the finishing touches to *The Communist Manifesto*, a former professor of commercial law called Frederic Ozanam was arguing for a more moderate socialism. On the one hand, Ozanam's Christian socialism allowed for private ownership and the freedom of the market, and thus for the flourishing of human endeavour. On the other hand, however, he insisted that the worker has priority over capital, and that society should protect the dignity of every human person and serve the common good.

In 1891 Ozanam's arguments were taken up in a Papal document called *Rerum Novarum*, the first formal Catholic Social Teaching "On the Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor".¹²

The immediate purpose of Catholic Social Teaching is "to propose the principles and values that can sustain a society worthy of the human person". Catholic Social Teaching is now seen to rest on five core principles, which have their basis both in Christian faith and contemporary social sciences. These core principles are summarised below:¹³

1. Dignity of the Human Person: "An authentic moralization of social life will never be possible unless it starts with people and has people as its point of reference." "Man and woman have the same dignity and are of equal value." "Being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone." "The social order and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person, since the order of things is to be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way round."
2. The Common Good: "Everyone also has the right to enjoy the conditions of social life that are brought about by the quest for the common good." "A society that wishes and intends to remain at the service of the human being at every level is a society that has

⁹ See Daniel Ang, *The Call to Co-Responsibility: Lay Leadership in the Church* at <http://www.moorestephens.com.au/sites/default/files/ang.pdf>.

¹⁰ Vatican II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (1965), #10.

¹¹ Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (1965), #43.

¹² See http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

¹³ All quotes are from *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html. Caritas Australia offers reflections on Catholic Social Teaching – and excellent cartoons – at <http://www.caritas.org.au/learn/catholic-social-teaching>.

the common good — the good of all people and of the whole person— as its primary goal.” “The common good therefore involves all members of society, no one is exempt from cooperating, according to each one’s possibilities, in attaining it and developing it.”

3. The Universal Destination of Goods and Preferential Love for the Poor: “God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone.” “The right to the common use of goods is the first principle of the whole ethical and social order.” “The universal destination of goods requires a common effort to obtain for every person and for all peoples the conditions necessary for integral development, so that everyone can contribute to making a more humane world.” “Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute and untouchable.” “The principle of the universal destination of goods requires that the poor, the marginalized and in all cases those whose living conditions interfere with their proper growth should be the focus of particular concern. To this end, the preferential option for the poor should be reaffirmed in all its force.”
4. Subsidiarity and Participation: “All societies of a superior order must adopt attitudes of help (subsidiarity) — therefore of support, promotion, development — with respect to lower-order societies. In this way, intermediate social entities can properly perform the functions that fall to them without being required to hand them over unjustly to other social entities of a higher level, by which they would end up being absorbed and substituted, in the end seeing themselves denied their dignity and essential place.” “The characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation, which is expressed essentially in a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which he/she belongs.”
5. Solidarity: “Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity.” “Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.” “It translates into the willingness to give oneself for the good of one’s neighbour, beyond any individual or particular interest.”

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church gathers all the relevant readings on these themes and provides a comprehensive index. Note also Catholic Social Teaching has its parallels in a range of secular documents, from the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights to the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles. All give primacy to the inherent dignity and equality of every person and thus the inalienable rights of every human person to a place in human society.¹⁴ For example, Pope John Paul drew up a list of human rights in the 1991 Encyclical Centesimus Annus, including “the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child’s personality; the right to develop one’s intelligence and

¹⁴ See <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> and <http://ifsw.org/policies/statement-of-ethical-principles/>.

freedom in seeking and knowing the truth; the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth's material resources".¹⁵

2.8 An Inclusive Church

At times in history the boundaries of the Catholic Church have been very sharply drawn: outside the Church, it was sometimes said, there could be no salvation. At other times it was widely recognised that Jesus included all in his good news, and all peoples were welcome in Kingdom. In the 20th Century, with the failure and decline of institutionalised religions and established churches, some theologians have re-imagined the topography of the Church. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a martyr to the Nazis, thus argued for "religionless Christianity" and "unconscious Christianity". Without being patronizing, he was suggesting that any person who lives for others, however unmindful of it, is following the pattern of the life of Jesus Christ. Similarly the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner wrote about "anonymous Christianity", noting that the gift of life and the gift of creation are already sacraments in as much as they are both experiences of grace and invitations to participate in life of Christ.

In the same spirit of openness, Jesuit Social Services employs and serves all peoples, respecting and supporting their cultures and their commitments, asking only a generosity of mind and an openness of heart. We recognise that we are part of the formal structures of the Catholic Church, but we also recognise that we are called to live at the edges of society, where needs blur boundaries and love has priority over law.

3. Foundations in Jesuit Mission

The Jesuits (formally known as the Societatis Jesu or "Company of Jesus") were founded in the middle of the sixteenth century by Ignatius of Loyola, a minor Spanish nobleman, one time knight, sometime student and beggar, and later mystic.¹⁶ Our focus here is on the inspiration behind the Jesuits – the fire in the belly – and the subsequent expression of Jesuit mission and the Jesuit way of working.

3.1 The Spiritual Exercises: Fire in the Belly

Developing our body requires physical exercises. These build physical strength and help us live in the material dimensions of our lives. Developing our spirit requires spiritual exercises. These build fire in the belly and help us live in the more elusive personal and spiritual dimensions of our lives.

Drawing on his own experience, and reflecting on what had helped him grow as a spiritual person, Ignatius developed his Spiritual Exercises. These include a series of meditations and contemplations that underpin Jesuit mission and the Jesuit way of working.¹⁷

Three of these exercises are particularly relevant to Jesuit Social Services: they are called "The First Principle and Foundation", the "Contemplation on the Incarnation", and the "Meditation on the Two Standards". As with yoga exercises, it is one thing to describe these

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 47: AAS 83 (1991), 851-852; cf. also Address to the 34th General Assembly of the United Nations (2 October 1979), 13: AAS 71 (1979) 1152-1153.

¹⁶ For more on the life of St Ignatius and Jesuit history see http://www.sjweb.info/resources/Life_of_ignatius/ and <http://faculty.fairfield.edu/jmac/sj/briefsjhistory.htm>.

¹⁷ For more information on the *Spiritual Exercises*, see <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises>.

spiritual exercises, and another to actually do the exercises, to find God in all things, and to feel the call and response of love. Here, however, are brief descriptions:

1. **The First Principle and Foundation.** Christine Rodgers' poem, used in the Introduction to this Foundations document, offers a contemporary version of Ignatius' first spiritual exercise. Working within the framework of Christian faith, Ignatius puts his starting point this way: the universe has been freely created out of love; we are created to become our unique selves, to know, love and serve God; by doing this we return glory and love to our creator and so fulfil the purpose of our lives and share in the divine life. All created things exist to help us fulfil this purpose.
2. **The Contemplation on the Incarnation.** Ignatius asks us to imagine the world as whole, as God might see it: a teeming mass of men and women, cultures and societies – some at war, some starving, some old, some young, some rich, some poor, some sad, some happy, some aimless, some being born, some dying. We could also imagine our planet earth in its ecological crisis. How can this creation be healed of injustice, pain and despair? We can similarly look out our own window at our own world today: how can we build a more just society? For Ignatius, God chooses out of love to come among us in an act of total self-giving love. What can we do?
3. **The Meditation on the Two Standards.** In 1931, during a miners' strike in the United States, Florence Reece wrote the union anthem "Which Side are You On?" Almost fifty years later Bob Dylan wrote "Gotta Serve Somebody". St Ignatius' meditation on the Two Standards puts a similar challenge to us: he describes a medieval context between two armies, each with its own flag or standard. This is a struggle between good and evil, between peace and violence, between humility and celebrity, between freedom and oppression, between justice and persecution. Jesus' way is a way of peace and healing and justice, a way of self-giving love and service, a way of simplicity and community, a way of suffering and a way of eternal love. Ignatius asks us to consider which side we want to be on.

These foundational spiritual exercises rest on a growing experience of being accepted and loved. They move us to express love in return. For a Christian, this means putting ourselves in God's hands and learning to find, love and serve God in all things.

Ignatius encourages us to "find God in all things". At first sight, this is an encouragement to live in a porous rather than a buffered world, to live in a divine milieu. More than that, it is also an encouragement to find not only the presence of God, but also the fire of God's love urging us to action.

3.2 The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice

The last of Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises is a Contemplation on the Love of God, where he observes that "love shows itself in deeds over and above words". In this spirit, the Jesuits identified a complementarity between service of faith and the promotion of justice:

The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another....

The Gospel demands a life free from egoism and self-seeking, from all attempts to seek one's own advantage and from every form of exploitation of one's neighbor. It demands a life in which the justice of the Gospel shines out in a willingness not only to

recognize and respect the rights of all, especially the poor and the powerless, but also to work actively to secure those rights. It demands an openness and generosity to anyone in need, even a stranger or an enemy. It demands towards those who have injured us, pardon; toward those with whom we are at odds, a spirit of reconciliation. We do not acquire this attitude of mind by our own efforts alone. It is the fruit of the Spirit who transforms our hearts and fills them with the power of God's mercy, that mercy whereby he most fully shows forth His justice by drawing us, unjust though we are, to His friendship. It is by this that we know that the promotion of justice is an integral part of the priestly service of the faith.¹⁸

In later General Congregations the Jesuits reaffirmed this commitment, adding inculturation, dialogue and reconciliation as key elements of their mission:

We want to renew our commitment to the promotion of justice as an integral part of our mission, as this has been extensively developed in GC 32 and GC 33.... We intend to journey on towards ever fuller integration of the promotion of justice into our lives of faith, in the company of the poor and many others who live and work for the coming of God's Kingdom....

In this global world marked by such profound changes, we now want to deepen our understanding of the call to serve faith, promote justice, and dialogue with culture and other religions in the light of the apostolic mandate to establish right relationships with God, with one another, and with creation.¹⁹

In their 2008 General Congregation the Jesuits also acknowledged the link between love of God and care for the earth. They committed themselves to Healing a Broken World, to care for the environment as part of the service of faith and promotion of justice. This meant working for right relations with God, right relations with creation, and right relations with other persons.²⁰ This call to care for our earthly home has been taken up by Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*.

The Jesuits described their spirit as "A Fire that Kindles other Fires", in the church and for the world, ready to move to the new frontiers in a global context, building bridges across barriers. Jesuit Social Services is commissioned by the Jesuits to help do these deeds of love, to kindle other fires, thus building a just society.

3.3 Ways of Proceeding

Jesuit foundations are more a way of proceeding than a fixed structure. Some core elements of this Jesuit way of proceeding are:

1. Discernment: this means a mix of empirical information and logical analysis combined with spiritual sensitivity. Spiritual sensitivity (or a sixth sense) has a feel for realities and relations deep down in people and systems. The spiritual senses are like intuitions, like emotional intelligence, like wisdom. A person of spiritual sensitivity can tell the

¹⁸ 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1974-1975), "Our Mission Today", " #1, #67.

¹⁹ 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1995), "Our Mission and Justice", " #3; 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (2008), "Challenges to our Mission Today: Sent to the Frontiers", #12.

²⁰ 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.

difference between ego and self-giving, between truth and deceit, between manipulation and love. Just as a musician learns the sound of major and minor keys through practice, so also can we learn discernment through the practice of tasting interiorly the gentle strength of goodness in the experiences of everyday life. So in making a decision we both weigh empirical evidence and sense the direction of the good spirit. Some might call this a cycle of experience, reflection, action. These habits of discernment are not grounded in intellectual reasoning so much as grounded in the whole person: body, mind, spirit. This is the meaning of being a contemplative in action. The call to discernment is a call to read the signs of our times.

2. The Magis: this means “the best” – keep striving to do better.
3. Freedom for the Frontiers: go where you are invited, hold no prejudices, be at the frontier, and build bridges across barriers.
4. Thinking with the Church: obviously, for Jesuit Social Services, this includes following Catholic Social Teaching. At a deeper level, however, it entails a profound humility, acknowledging that we may not know everything, or have the whole of truth. In other words, we should attend to the voice of the wider community, and particularly attend to the way the Spirit of Jesus moves in the faith community.
5. Solidarity: this means being with one with the people who are involved in the outcome of decisions. Decisions have to be grounded in the reality of people’s actual lives, not in abstract ideology. Sometimes this is called immersion, or pilgrimage, or being vulnerable to the reality of the lives of others. This entails an attitude of listening, cooperating, and learning. Without solidarity, we run the risk of making decisions through the lens of our own experience, rather than through the wider lens of those in need.
6. Influence: when choosing between two equally good options, choose the one that will have the widest influence for good. Though he was a humble pilgrim, Ignatius of Loyola was a shrewd governor. Though identifying with Christ poor and humble, he did not turn powerlessness and poverty into ideological evils. He welcomed all people, worked with all people, and drew all people into his pilgrimage, for the greater good of all, and so for the greater glory of God.

This Jesuit “Ways of Proceeding” guides Jesuit Social Services in developing its own ways of proceeding in particular circumstances.

Conclusion: Spelling out the Implications

In conclusion, Jesuit Social Services' practice is founded on the fire of love. These foundations, considered in the light of an analysis of critical factors shaping our social context will then shape decisions on what the organisation is called to do today, and how it shapes its practice and advocacy for the coming years.

OUR PRACTICE

Who we are

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society.

Our starting point is one of gratitude for all we have received, including the gift of life itself. We understand the interconnectedness of all life and that we are all held and sustained in a web of relationships – across people, place and planet.

We stand in solidarity with those in need, working with people and communities who are excluded and isolated.

Our work with people on the margins draws our attention to the multiple and interrelated factors that cause disadvantage, push people to the margins, diminish communities' capacity to shape their future, and damage the natural environment we all depend on. This understanding challenges us to take account of these factors in our accompaniment and our advocacy. We bring together 'doing' and 'influencing' to ensure our programs and advocacy are shaped by our practice wisdom, evidence and rich heritage.

We believe that fundamental to the building of a just society is the opportunity for all people to reach their full potential. In keeping with our heritage, we believe that all people seek meaning and purpose in their lives and that all our activity - our doing and our influencing - must take account of this imperative.

The tree is an important symbol across cultures and spiritual traditions. It speaks to the interconnectedness of all life- the seen and the unseen.



This tree sculpture, situated in the foyer of our head office, symbolizes Jesuit Social Services' strong foundations in our deep roots – drawing our nourishment and inspiration from our Ignatian spirituality and heritage and our values. The trunk of the tree represents our identity, culture and people. The branches reflect how we reach out into the world to influence hearts and minds to build a just society – through our services, education, advocacy, capacity-building and leadership development. The leaves represent the fruits of our efforts, providing shade, colour and beauty. They are also a source of energy, through air and sunlight, back into the body and roots of the tree in a dynamic process of regeneration and strengthening.

The use of recycled copper reminds us that in God's eyes nothing is ever lost, wasted or rejected.

Our way of proceeding

The day-to-day life of Jesuit Social Services brings together three sets of energies and systems:

The **human spirit** of the people who make up the Jesuit Social Services community.

The **business processes** that ensures people and services are resourced, developed and accountable.

The **practice framework** that ensure services and advocacy are evidence-based and effective.

We strive for integrity across all the domains of our activity and draw from our heritage to inform and nurture who we are (human spirit), how we organise ourselves (business processes) and how we 'do' and 'influence' (practice framework).

Contemporary practice

In 1977 what was to become Jesuit Social Services began with two Jesuits and two lay staff providing accommodation and support to young men exiting custody.

Our Vision, Building a just society, has taken us, like our Jesuit forebears, far and wide. At the time of writing the organisation has around 300 staff and 300 volunteers working across Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. Internationally, we lead Justice in Mining, and are involved in the International Jesuit Prison network, both part of the Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks.

Similarly, our mission has taken us into diverse areas of work. Working with boys and men, particularly those involved in the justice system, has remained a central focus. However, over forty years of service we have expanded to work across the following areas through our programs and our advocacy:

- Justice and crime prevention
- Education, training and employment
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Settlement and community building
- Ecological justice
- Gender Justice.

We have linked what we do at the individual and community levels to our work at the level of society through an increasing focus on influencing the hearts and minds of decision makers and the broader community through policy development, effective communication and advocacy.

We do this because we recognise the interconnectedness of all life and that to achieve a just society where all persons can flourish we need inclusive, welcoming communities, and a society characterised by the rule of law, a strong independent media and a just, sustainable economy. We believe that the only way to build a just society with these characteristics is to accompany individuals and communities on their journeys, to do and to influence so that communities become stronger, economies fairer and ecologies healthier at local, national and international levels.

As we continue to grow and change, how do we ensure that we remain true to our Ignatian heritage while delivering services in a coherent and strategic manner across such a wide

portfolio in contemporary environments? This is the challenge laid down in the preceding text, “Our Roots,” and we respond to the challenge through **who we work with**, and **how we work**.

At its heart, Catholic Social Teaching encourages the work of a social change organisation, being fundamentally about respect for each individual, striving for the common good, equality and participation across society and supporting solidarity with those most in need. We bring to this the Jesuit way of proceeding – discernment, going where the need is greatest, and always the magis -to be more, for more; the greater good.

Who we work with

From our foundations in Catholic Social Teaching and the Jesuit way of proceeding, we reflect on the critical factors shaping our contemporary world; the social, political and economic contexts, and we adapt our practice to work with those most in need.

The world is always changing - such is the nature of life - but there are times when change accelerates. We are living in such a time: an age of acceleration.

This acceleration of change is driven by a convergence of economic, technological and ecological forces. Rapid industrialisation and increased urbanisation of developing economies is rupturing family structures and traditional ways of life. Technologically the prevalence of smart devices, networks and the aggregation of “Big Data” are turning people into reactive consumers rather than reflective citizens. Ecologically, the true cost of global warming is becoming increasingly apparent, whilst through increased urbanization and digital disruption we become ever more disconnected from nature.

Indeed our reason for existence is that we might go where needs are not being met. Our way of proceeding encourages this mobility.

Characteristics of Our Way of Proceeding, Decree 26, General Congregation 34 of the Society of Jesus (1995).

We are conscious that the changes occurring in our society are having a disproportionate effect on some groups and this plays out through:

- Increased disadvantage, marginalisation and poverty
- Unequal access to education, training and employment opportunities
- Rates of substance abuse and mental health issues
- Homelessness
- Climate and pollution-related illness and mortality.

And so we apply ourselves to working with those facing the greatest challenges.

- The most disadvantaged and marginalised communities
- People with multiple and complex needs

- People involved in or at-risk of entering the youth and adult justice systems
- Boys and men with poor relationships and who display harmful behaviours and attitudes
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- People and families seeking asylum

We recognise that to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential, we must simultaneously work at the levels of individual, community, society and environment. And in this fourfold approach we are also guided by our Christian and Jesuit heritage.

1. **Persons:** All our activity is based on the belief that all people are: inherently relational; formed in family; part of a wider community; seek equality and a meaningful participation in society and need to feel their life has worth and a sense of purpose. These statements relate directly to Catholic Social Teaching on the dignity and rights of the human person and subsidiarity. This teaching rests on both social ethics and the words and deeds of Jesus, showing every person is uniquely precious and unconditionally loved by God. When Jesus heals a person he converses with them personally, he heals them body and soul, he returns them to their family, and he restores them to their community. We thus connect with the Jesuits' call "to recognize and respect the rights of all, especially the poor and the powerless, but also to work actively to secure those rights"
2. **Community:** Jesuit Social Services recognises that people flourish when they can find a place where they "belong". We provide opportunities for people to connect with one another, to participate in and contribute to their community, to nourish their culture and imagination, and to have a say over important matters affecting them. This approach relates directly to Catholic Social Teaching on the human person, the common good, and the principle of subsidiarity. The focus on community building also connects with the abiding message of Scripture that we actually are our brother's keeper and our sister's keeper, and that we are called to love one another, to welcome the stranger, to visit the prisoner, and to companion the outcast. In doing this, we help make humankind whole. For a humanist, this is to reject individualism and to recognise that we are more connected than we are separate. For a Jesuit, this is also to become a companion with others on the journey of life. For all Christians, this is ultimately to follow Jesus' way, so that we all may be united in the mystique of divine love.
3. **Society:** In building a just society, Jesuit Social Services imagines a society which serves and supports the community, where individual rights and the common good are mutually supportive, where all are equal before the law, with equal opportunity and equal freedoms for education, health, employment, and religion, where persons come before property and capital, where no sector in society has a monopoly on power, communications or policy, and where special attention is given to those most in need. This vision is derived from Catholic Social Teaching, whose immediate purpose is "to propose the principles and values that can sustain a society worthy of the human person." This in turn rests on Jesus' mission to make a regime change on earth, establishing what he called the rule of God: care for one another, where all are equal because all are fruit of divine love. The building of a just society is integral to the Jesuits' mission for the promotion of justice and the service of faith.
4. **Environment:** With its base in relational and restorative justice, Jesuit Social Services embraces the interrelation between social and environmental justice and uses the term

ecological justice to acknowledge this unity. Social justice and environmental justice are connected, because the poorest in our world are most vulnerable to the effects of environmental degradation, and the failure to care for our environment is emblematic of our failure to care for one another. Care for the environment reflects public concerns about the effects of climate change, the destruction of our ecology as well as commitment to building restorative communities in healthy relationship with their environments. From a Christian perspective, we have broken our covenant with the creator to care for the earth, a sacrament of God's love. The Jesuits have committed themselves to restoring right relationships with creation and to respond to environmental challenges. Jesuit Social Services joins Pope Francis's call for all peoples to embrace a global ecological conversion and care for our common home and each other. Therefore, care for the environment goes hand in hand with improving the lives of disadvantaged communities

How we work

As a contemporary, social change organisation how we work makes possible the outcomes we achieve. St Ignatius urged love-driven leadership, understanding that love shows itself in deeds, rather than words, and creates all staff as leaders across all the domains of our activities regardless of their formal position in the organisation. Jesuit Social Services' values, **welcoming**, **discerning** and **courageous**, guide how we deliver our programs and influencing, how we work with each other, how we run our organisation, and how we work with our external partners.

The way in which we express our identity and deliver on our vision and mission is essential to our culture, our essence. How we work is underpinned by two components, our approach to our work and our practice framework.

Our approach

Our starting point: gratitude. Gratitude is essential in avoiding a 'problem saturated' response to the suffering and social problems that those working in the community sector encounter. It encourages a 'strengths based' approach that looks for and builds on the positives in people, communities and situations. It engenders hope.

Our mode of operation: relationship. Relationship is at the heart of everything we do, speaking to our understanding of our interconnectedness with all people and the created world. It is expressed through our care for the whole person (*cura personalis*), not just their physical needs. In all we do we strive to be welcoming, discerning and courageous. We see ourselves as part of the community we seek to influence. We understand that our own ongoing transformation is linked to our relationships, our lifelong learning and the transformation of others.

Our methodology: doing and influencing. This involves forming authentic, respectful relationships with people and communities on the margins, assisting them to flourish, and addressing structural injustice. In keeping with our Jesuit heritage, we understand that we are called to live a faith that does justice and which expresses solidarity with the poor and marginalised. We are invited to come from a place of gratitude that is world-affirming, to prioritise inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue, and to meet the challenges of our ecological responsibility. Organisationally we respond to this by seeking to work collaboratively, building bridges across interest groups and forming coalitions to influence change in our world.

Our key process: discernment. Our Jesuit heritage provides us with a way of proceeding that moves from reflection to purposeful and strategic action. Two constant elements are Ignatian discernment and the promotion of justice. At the personal level, and also at the level of team and organisation, the practice of discernment helps us to identify our attachments, fear, blocks, priorities; this process frees us to act, to be flexible, to go to new frontiers and to be adaptable for 'the greater good.'

Ignatian discernment is both relational and transformative. It is a way of being in the world. It both respects all persons and their cultures, and actively attends to the transforming power of their hopes and ambitions. It involves a 'looking inward' as well as a 'looking outward' and builds a capacity to attend to what is going on in a person's heart or soul, a sensitivity for the inner story rather than simply addressing the presenting issues.

Our guiding principle: magis. Ignatius challenged people to always seek the most effective pathway in their work. He called this the magis, a Latin word that means 'the more' or 'the greater'. The magis means to undertake the better choice, the more effective enterprise, the more influential option, and the work that meets the greatest need. Such a choice may be harder but is more likely capable of yielding the greater good. At a practical level we review our priorities, regularly asking these questions, "Is this the best place for us to be?" and, "Is this the best we can do?"

Our people: contemplatives in action. Our people are the embodiment of our approach. As contemplatives in action, they are engaged in the world as companions, loving and serving through all activity.

Our practice framework

Our practice framework, **Our Way of Working**, provides a conceptual map that brings together our approach in a unified manner across all our work delivering services and influencing. Just as a trellis can provide support and structure for a tree, Our Way of Working provides shape and direction ensuring we advance our mission faithfully, enlivened by our Jesuit heritage. The framework is informed by the application of evidence-based practices, over forty years of practice wisdom and Catholic Social Teaching principles:

- Dignity of the Human Person
- The Common Good
- The Universal Destination of Goods and Preferential Love for the Poor
- Subsidiarity & Participation
- Solidarity

Our Way of Working – Jesuit Social Services Practice Framework



Our Way of Working, underpins all Jesuit Social Services doing and influencing work with individuals and communities. The framework speaks to the inherent humanity of each individual, every community, and their capacity to envisage and achieve a more positive and engaged future, no matter their current circumstances. It articulates the dynamic interplay of five components, which work together to help people reach their full potential and become active participants in their communities.

The five domains in the Our Way of Working framework

- **V**aluing self and others: practising and encouraging respect so that those with whom we work enhance their capacity to establish and maintain meaningful and respectful relationships in their personal lives and respect for the environment, recognising the interconnectedness of all life.
- **A**ffirming goals and aspirations: engendering hope through envisioning new futures and the establishment of supportive and reciprocal relationships. Accompanying people as they explore new ways of working collaboratively and sustainably.
- **L**inking individuals and communities to relevant supports: assisting people to realise their potential, to improve their mental, physical and emotional health, and to remove the barriers they face in achieving social and economic inclusion through access to services, supports and resources
- **U**sing skills and building capacity: delivering education, training and therapeutic programs that develop living skills and improve pathways to further education and employment, and by working collaboratively with communities to build social cohesion and shared outcomes.
- **E**nhancing civic participation where individuals and communities build 'communities of justice and exercise their right and responsibility to create a just, inclusive and sustainable world.

Building a just society is central to Our Way of Working. The fifth domain in the framework, enhancing civic participation, reflects our understanding that it is through relationships and participation that people are most fulfilled, are able to create shared futures, and become active players in advancing a just society; a society where the answers to environmental and social concerns are inextricably linked through ecological justice.

Jesuits enter into solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the voiceless, in order to enable their participation in the processes that shape the society in which we all live and work.

Decree 26, General Congregation 34 of the Society of Jesus (1995)

Recognising the right of every person, every community, to be active participants in the decisions that affect their lives speaks to the dignity of the human person. And indeed the five domains of the Our Way of Working framework spell out the word VALUE.

Whilst civic participation is an important goal in achieving a just society, the framework also recognises that people who are marginalised often feel powerless and without voice or opportunity to significantly alter their life trajectories. The four other domains focus our attention on those areas that are pre-conditions for human flourishing. Our Way of Working therefore provides the scaffolding for all our activity at the level of our service delivery, our community building, our influencing work and our ecological practice.

Our individual service delivery

Based on the Jesuit concept of discernment, our practice framework encourages us, and also our program participants, to attend to both the inner and outer life. It assists us to work from a strengths-based approach with the whole person rather than a problem-saturated focus. The framework is thus a tool for contemplation in action, enabling reflection on our work in a holistic way and anchoring our practice in broader Catholic and Jesuit heritage.

Our community building work

When we engage with communities we seek to work in partnership, working with communities that invite us in. We seek to build community cohesion, providing opportunities for engagement, ownership and shared vision. We assist communities to access the supports they require to strengthen skills and capabilities; and support community participation and leadership.

Guided by our practice framework we aim to assist displaced people and disadvantaged communities to reach their full potential and fulfil their cultural, social and economic aspirations. Wherever possible our community development embraces the promotion of education and training and the creation of employment opportunities as key strategies for enhancing the wellbeing of disadvantaged communities and increasing their civic participation.

Our influencing work

Many key social institutions with the capacity to define the common good are in decline, and advocacy is fragmenting into special rather than shared interests. We believe however that significant change can only be fully realised through structural change that addresses fundamental inequalities. Jesuit Social Services has been thinking globally and acting locally (and nationally) across its whole history and we are increasingly supporting the development of communities of justice to build coalitions for change.

Our advocacy grows out of, and supports, our service delivery. We are in the business of helping people overcome the barriers they face to reach their full potential, and our programs assist individuals and communities while simultaneously developing the evidence base to inform our advocacy. Our practice framework thus guides us to the domains where our advocacy can have the greatest impact.

Our ecological practice

Jesuit Social Services and the wider global Jesuit community recognise the pressing need to reconcile our strained relationship with our natural environment. In recent years, the publication of *Healing a Broken World* in 2011 (a global Jesuit publication) and Jesuit Social Services own *Environmental Way of Proceeding* in 2012 have provided a starting point for us to expand our vision of building a just society to also include reconciliation with nature.

As Pope Francis noted in *Laudato Si*

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.

The people and communities with whom we work face a range of co-occurring and interrelated problems. Too often these complexities are seen as being only social in nature whereas in reality the distribution of environmental risks and benefits has an underestimated impact on social exclusion, intergenerational disadvantage and recovery from trauma. We therefore seek to integrate an ecological approach into both our direct services and our advocacy.

Our commitment to ecological justice means transforming how we see ourselves in the world, understanding the interconnectedness of all living things, and the relevance of those relationships in both our personal and work lives; it encompasses taking action to ensure the organisation is environmentally aware and sustainable, and also that we incorporate a respect for nature and its benefits across our programs and practice. As a result of our history and commitment to social justice 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 as we strive to build a just society

The Jesuit approach embedded in our work

Our Way of Working, is the trellis that supports our organisation as it grows strong and true, faithful to its deep roots, its Jesuit heritage. It ensures that our practice wisdom and contemporary evidence are applied in a coherent, uniform manner that builds on and nourishes our heritage. Just as the leaves of a tree bring sunlight and air to a tree to nourish its roots.

Our practice framework places our work in this moment, on this day, into a broader context not only for the individuals, groups and communities with whom we work, but also for society as a whole. It links our services and our advocacy, our doing and influencing, to our Jesuit roots, through the organisation-wide practice of reflection.

For those of us who walk in the Jesuit tradition, the central, distinctive and enduring elements are not a set of rules but an orientation. They encompass:

- Being in relationship, being touched by the suffering of others.
- Fostering attitudes of gratitude and the understanding of our interconnectedness.
- Nurturing the longing in our hearts, and the hearts of others, for justice.
- Being open to reading the signs of the times, doing the social analysis and critical thinking.
- Taking time to reflect and discern what are our lived values, attitudes and behaviours.
- Having the interior freedom and disposition to listen and learn, to change direction, to start over, to move to action, to speak truth to power.

This is at the heart of our identity. As we build on our existing work and move to new frontiers we face a world where people continue to suffer and where our context is characterised by rapid change, growing disparity between rich and poor, and increasing marginalisation of particular persons and groups. These are the times when we dig deep into our Jesuit roots, drawing on those elements that are central, distinctive and enduring to inspire, guide and sustain us.

