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Elected Federal Government must commit to National Centre for place-based approaches: Jesuit Social Services

With a small number of communities across Australia dealing with complex and entrenched disadvantage, Jesuit Social Services says the elected Federal Government must commit to a National Centre for place-based approaches to ensure all communities have a chance to flourish.

“We have undertaken research into locational disadvantage for close to 20 years, including major *Dropping off the Edge* reports in 2007 and 2015. This research is a road map to the suburbs and postcodes experiencing entrenched disadvantage which severely limits opportunities and outcomes for residents,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“We know the communities that are struggling – and we know we can break the web of disadvantage by a cooperative and coordinated strategy owned and driven by communities themselves.

Ms Edwards says a National Centre for place-based approaches would provide an ongoing, bipartisan social innovation funding pool to design and test long-term place-based responses and also act as a key hub for policy, advocacy, research and evaluation.

“It is also vital that we recognise that long-term change takes long-term commitment. It is stark that many of the communities listed among the country’s most disadvantaged in our 2007 report remained equally as disadvantaged in 2015. There is no short-term solution to stubborn, persistent and entrenched disadvantage and we need our political leaders to be bold and stay the course.”

Jesuit Social Services’ Federal Election platform, *A more compassionate Australia*, outlines key priorities across a range of interconnected social policy areas from ‘closing the gap’ to employment, youth justice, mental health and affordable housing.

Recommendations include:

- Develop and commit to a National Youth Justice Strategy
- Raise the age of criminal responsibility to the age of 14 across all states and territories
- Raise the rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance by a minimum of \$75 a week
- Increase public and community housing stock by 500,000
- End offshore detention and abolish temporary protection visas
- Invest in early intervention efforts with boys and young men to stop family violence before it starts

“Elections are opportunities to ask ourselves what our priorities are and what type of society we want to live in. We need to ensure on the margins of society are no longer overlooked and that our political leaders commit to policies, practices and investments to give everybody the opportunity to reach their potential,” says Ms Edwards.

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