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National policies and place-based solutions crucial to address climate change

A new report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which outlines a number of key climate-related risks for Australia, is a reminder of the urgency for evidence-based and inclusive climate action. It also highlights that the effects of climate change are being felt at community level right across Australia, says Jesuit Social Services.

“The serious and imminent risk posed by climate change to the planet and people has been evident for a long time and this is put in stark focus by the IPCC’s new report, which confirms that Australia is suffering greater impacts of climate change than any other advanced economy and that many ecosystems around the world are beyond the point of return. Already, we have seen the displacement of some Aboriginal communities due to extreme climates. We must intervene before it is too late,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“It is deeply concerning that the IPCC highlights an increased number of heat-related fatalities as a key risk facing future generations. It is imperative that our political leaders take immediate action to support Australia towards a low-carbon future, enabling future generations to lead healthy lives.”

Jesuit Social Services’ *Dropping off the Edge 2021* report reveals the interconnected nature between social and ecological disadvantage, finding that many of the most disadvantaged communities across Australia experience climate-related challenges such as heat stress and poor air quality.

“Through our decades of work with people and communities, we see that the impacts of climate change disproportionately impact the most disadvantaged people and communities, which exacerbates existing inequality and marginalisation. This was made clear when we decided to add indicators of environmental disadvantage – including heat vulnerability, air pollution and access to green canopy – to our existing indicators of social disadvantage such as long-term unemployment, family violence and child maltreatment in our latest *Dropping off the Edge* report.

“What we found was that the inclusion of environmental indicators didn’t change the communities identified as the most disadvantaged – instead they showed us that a small number of communities are grappling with multiple and complex forms of disadvantage including environmental challenges. This shows us that now is the time for priority investments and well-chosen interventions to make a significant impact in some of the most disadvantaged communities across Australia.”

Jesuit Social Services has established the Centre for Just Places which is working with governments, local leaders and organisations to develop effective place-based approaches to address complex disadvantage, climate risk and build community resilience

Jesuit Social Services also recently released a [discussion paper](#) into the impact of climate change on Australia’s prison system - exacerbated by factors like rising prison populations, overcrowding, punitive practices such as solitary confinement and ageing or otherwise unsuitable infrastructure.

“Addressing climate inequality is vital to build a more just, inclusive and resilient society for all.”

Media enquiries – Kathryn Kernohan, 0409 901 248 or kathryn.kernohan@jss.org.au