MEDIA RELEASE

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Zero emissions transition plan must prioritise affected communities

The latest report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which assesses methods for reducing greenhouse gases to mitigate climate change, is a reminder that people experiencing disadvantage and communities with livelihoods dependent on emissions-intensive industries must be a focus in the urgent transition to a clean economy, says Jesuit Social Services.

"People already experiencing disadvantage are first and often worst hit by climate change, with fewer resources to cope and adapt. For example, people on lower incomes are more likely to live in uninsulated housing without adequate heating and cooling and, without support to adapt to the changing climate, there are fears that more First Nations people in remote communities will be forced to leave their traditional country," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

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.

Susie Moloney, Executive Director of Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places, says the IPCC findings make it clear Australia must take immediate action to drastically drive down emissions across all sectors of the economy.

"This action should be led by a practical and coordinated national plan for just transition, which should share the benefits of the new economy fairly and leave no one behind, placing affected workers and communities — such as mining workers — at the centre by empowering them with a seat at the planning table, access to re-skilling, and work opportunities with fair pay," she says.

"Strong Government investment in energy efficiency and solar in low-income homes would significantly reduce energy bills, create thousands of jobs, cut emissions, and provide access to cleaner and more affordable power for disadvantaged people. A just transition also calls on us to support those most affected by the changes to identify and lead solutions in their communities. Governments should invest in community-led First Nations initiatives, such as community-owned renewable energy projects which deliver access to affordable clean energy and job opportunities that support First Nations people to continue to live on country, if they want to."

The practical transition plan must accompany ambitious mitigation targets and funding. "The Federal Government's target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 is too little, too late. Governments at all levels must act now to reduce emissions by 75% below 2005 levels by 2030, and reach net zero emissions by 2035. Last week's 2022-23 Federal Budget contained virtually no new commitments to meaningful climate initiatives. Instead, the Government is investing millions in tax-payer dollars to expand fossil-fuel projects such as fracking in the Beetaloo Basin, which alone could drive up Australia's emissions by 13%. The path Australia chooses now is our opportunity to build a more just, resilient and inclusive Australia for future generations."

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