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Summit must focus on supporting marginalised people into work

Ahead of the Federal Government’s landmark Jobs and Skills Summit, Jesuit Social Services says a coordinated approach to supporting marginalised people into work is critical in creating a fairer Australia for current and future generations.

“We welcome Prime Minister Albanese’s facilitation of the Jobs and Skills Summit and the bringing together of employers, unions, government and the education and social services sectors to discuss issues such as workforce participation, growing productivity, sustainable wage growth and equal pay for women,” says Jesuit Social Services’ Acting CEO Sally Parnell.

“Alongside these important issues, we need a fundamental understanding of the powerful role education, training and employment plays in addressing many of the overlapping issues facing disengaged and highly vulnerable people in our community. We need real and sustainable pathways to equip marginalised people with the skills and training they need to attain meaningful employment, and to support people who experience barriers to employment into work.”

Ms Parnell says that the promotion of education, lifelong learning and capacity building is fundamental to the work of Jesuit Social Services.

The organisation’s Jesuit Community College, a Registered Training Organisation, runs a range of programs connecting people, including from refugee backgrounds and those who have had contact with the justice system, into employment. Across 2021-22, these programs assisted more than 2,000 people with employment support, and helped place nearly 1,000 people into jobs.

Jesuit Social Services also operates Major Projects Jobs Service to support employers in the building and civil construction industry to access job-ready young people from culturally diverse backgrounds, and Corporate Diversity Partnerships with organisations including Melbourne Water to help them to achieve their diversity and inclusion objectives.

Joel, a former participant of the Major Projects Jobs Service, said he had been unemployed for more than six months before connecting with the program.

“I was struggling financially and frustrated after putting in a heap of unsuccessful applications. Jesuit Social Services helped me get a clearer idea of my employment goals and provided me with so much helpful advice, even working through my resume to make me a more appealing candidate,” he says.

In its pre-Federal Election platform, Jesuit Social Services called for the Jobactive system to be replaced by a new model that provides flexible and individualised training and support for people seeking work, an investment in pre-accredited training programs to support people to enter or re-enter education and training as a pathway to employment and the base rate of JobSeeker and related payments to be raised to at least \$69 per day.

“We hope to see some of these important reforms on the agenda at this week’s Summit and to become reality moving forward – to ensure that nobody is left behind.”

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