

SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES - Catholic Social Justice, Welfare and Educational Agencies, compiled by Jan Barnett rsj (Used with permission)

In the Christian gospel, Jesus calls us to engage the society in which we live and to do what we can to transform it in line with the values of the Kingdom which He proclaimed by his life. Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constituent dimension of the preaching of the gospel. Justice in the World, Synod of Bishops, 1971 (6)

For Christians the work of social transformation is not an optional extra. It stems from God's own passion for the marginalised and suffering. Part of the teaching and most ancient practice of the Church is the conviction that she is obliged...she herself, her ministers and each of her members, to relieve the misery of the suffering, both far and near, not only out of her abundance but also out of her necessities. On Social Concern, Pope John Paul II, 1988

An issue of justice which is critical today is that of the care of the very earth on which we live. Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of us, and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. The earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. Pope Francis, Laudato Si'

Today, all people of goodwill yearn for the values of justice, equality and human decency within leadership. We want to leave a legacy of a just, peaceful and sustainable world for future generations. We are invited to ask ourselves:

- Who are the people about whom Jesus would be most concerned at this time?
- How do we show respect and care for our planet earth and for the whole of creation?

LIST OF TOPICS

1. Aboriginal Justice
2. Aboriginal Juvenile Imprisonment Rates
3. Earth and Water – Our Lifeblood
4. Education for All
5. Housing and Homelessness
6. Privatisation
7. Transport

1. ABORIGINAL JUSTICE

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

As the 'first peoples' of Australia, Indigenous people hold a unique status in this land, which is not often acknowledged.

Genuine equality for Indigenous peoples, as a basic human right, requires an acknowledgement of their unique identity and cultural heritage, and an active recognition of cultural differences.

The Constitution of a democratic nation enshrines and safeguards the rights and dignity of its 'First Nations Peoples', and collaboration between Government and Indigenous people is essential to achieving this.

The Makarrata Commission has been set up to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations where there is truth-telling about Indigenous history so that a movement for a better future for all Australians is made possible. (Uluru Statement from the Heart)

Self-determination, as an effective policy (including prevention, early intervention and social inclusion), offers the way forward in providing real power to Indigenous people.

Genuine reconciliation requires truthful acknowledgment of our past history.

Everyone is entitled to the enjoyment of human rights without discrimination of any kind, (including on the basis of race).

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Health: There is still a seventeen-year difference between the life expectancy of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Education: There has been an improvement in Year 12 according to the 2019 Closing the Gap Report. Retention rates offer an important base for the future.

Housing and Unemployment: Serious problems in both areas continue throughout all Aboriginal communities, with ongoing generational effects.

Services: Inadequate policing, roads, water, electricity, sewerage, garbage disposal services are found across Indigenous communities – situations other Australian citizens would not tolerate.

Imprisonment: In the past decade, the incarceration rate for Indigenous men has more than doubled; Indigenous youth now comprise more than 50 per cent of juveniles in detention (despite being only 3% of the population); for Indigenous women, the rate of imprisonment is accelerating even faster – a 74% increase in the past 15 years.

Imbalance in media reports: Unbalanced media reporting reinforces the stereotyping and negative images of Indigenous people, with very little reporting of the success stories, or of the culture and strength of leadership in many men and women.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Aboriginal people continue to experience lower socio-economic outcomes than other Australians, as well as significant levels of discrimination.

Imbalance in media reporting helps to ignite underlying racism, (including institutionalised racism), which still exists in our nation.

Ongoing mandatory sentencing, imprisonment for fine defaults, "paperless" arrest laws, tough bail and parole conditions and punitive sentencing regimes all contribute to high incarceration rates, along with funding cuts to frontline legal services and inadequate resourcing for much needed programs.

Debate continues around Treaty and Constitutional Recognition, often politicised for electoral advantage.

The Federal Government's current approach to Indigenous affairs is its centralised, 'top-down' approach. The contentious issue of the cashless welfare card is symptomatic of this. There is little consideration of the stigma, disempowerment, and punitive perceptions experienced by communities against the possible benefits of such a program.

Politicians lack the will to make Indigenous issues a priority. Successful programs are often terminated because of short-term funding and selective choice of Indigenous leaders.

WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

WE CAN LOBBY POLITICIANS:

To engage in a bi-partisan, formal collaboration with Indigenous peoples on matters affecting their social, cultural and economic interests, as well as their political status within the nation.

To convince those who are sympathetic that substantive constitutional change and structural reform can enable this ancient sovereignty to shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

To advance consultation and decisions related to Constitutional Change and Treaty to empower Indigenous people to take a rightful place in their own country – where they have the power of their own destiny, and their children can flourish. (Uluru Statement from the Heart)

To entrench a vote in both government and civil society so that meaningful involvement in decisions will be guaranteed.

To introduce effective long-term strategies to eliminate disadvantage, and ensure the provision of adequate, recurrent funding without unfair conditions.

To ensure that all legislation, policies and programs are consistent with international human rights standards, and that accountability procedures are in place.

To develop a sound framework, which is people-centred and which recognises the social and cultural diversity of First Nations Peoples.

To build on the large body of research already completed, and to ensure accountability, prior to the institution of any new studies.

WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

Inform ourselves about the issues pertaining to ongoing discrimination and racism around Constitutional Change and Treaty.

Invite representatives from "the Aboriginal community" to lead a discussion about issues related to Constitutional Change.

Engage formally and with family and friends in the consultations regarding both Constitutional Change and Treaty.

Promote a more balanced approach in reporting (to eliminate discriminatory coverage and encourage education on current realities).

Promote diversionary/culturally appropriate programs that work with young people to detect signs of problem behaviour to help divert young people from entering, or re-entering the juvenile justice system. This requires adequate funding, guaranteed for the long term and subject to independent review.

Develop a bipartisan and community approach to innovative juvenile justice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Uluru Statement from the Heart

Justreinvest.org.au

www.hreoc.gov.au

www.antar.org.au

www.oxfam.org.au www.acsjc.org.au

www.erc.org.au

We have our heroes. Albert Namatjira painted the soul of this nation. Vincent Lingiari put out his hand for Gough Whitlam to pour the sand of his country and say, 'This is my country.' Cathy Freeman lit the torch of the Olympic games.

But every time we are lured into the light, we are mugged by the darkness of this country's history. Of course, racism is killing the Australian Dream.

It is self-evident that it's killing the Australian Dream. But we are better than that.

The people who stood up and supported Adam Goodes and said, 'no more;' they are better than that. The people who marched across the bridge for reconciliation; they are better than that. My wife who is not Indigenous is better than that.

And one day, I want to stand here and be able to say as proudly and sing as loudly as anyone else in this room, 'Australians all, let us rejoice'.

Stan Grant

2. ABORIGINAL JUVENILE IMPRISONMENT RATES

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

Everyone is entitled to the enjoyment of human rights without discrimination of any kind, including on the basis of race.

Genuine equality for Indigenous citizens, as a basic human right, requires an acknowledgement of their unique identity and cultural heritage, and an active recognition of cultural differences.

The principles of prevention, early intervention and social inclusion are fundamental to decision making and service delivery.

Effective policy minimises the alienation and marginalisation of people.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Numbers in Custody: Aboriginal young people (aged 10 to 25) remain the most overrepresented group in our prison population. Half of our juvenile justice population is Aboriginal despite only making up 3% of the general population.

Evidence: We know that those most likely to end up in custody are poor; Aboriginal; with some disability; have experienced abuse or trauma; have a parent who has been in prison; are homeless; have problems with alcohol or other drugs. There is evidence to show that an Indigenous juvenile is far more likely to be taken into custody than a non-Aboriginal person guilty of the same offence.

Reasons for increases in numbers: The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics confirms that increased numbers are the consequence of tougher bail and sentencing policies, reflected across the state.

Limitations of the Bail Act: The Bail Act has never reflected the interests of any young people, and is more onerous for Indigenous juveniles than for adults. Its limitations were exacerbated by the 2010 amendments. Though the bail Amendment Act 2014 required the bail authority to take into account the 'presumption of innocence and the general right to liberty', the presumption of innocence is being gradually eroded.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Putting young offenders in custody is both expensive and ineffective. More than half released from detention will re-offend. Detention also intensifies the need for greater support post-release.

Prison has a ripple effect on every family, especially if the member in prison was supporting the family. Justice Valerie French

Policy based solely on law and order results in demands for more detention centres at considerable cost, and with consequent cutting of costs to other services.

The 'political necessity' to appear tough on crime means that NSW governments have invested little in alternative measures or programs.

Not only does the "law and order" approach not deter crime, but the cost to keep a juvenile in custody is in excess of \$150,000 a year.

Justice Reinvestment has shown that a focus on prevention and rehabilitation leads to community-based and restorative justice programs., which have recorded lower rates of re-offending.

Thus, there exist two policy goals in conflict. We want to reduce the rate of juvenile Aboriginal imprisonment in NSW yet we use imprisonment as the main means of rehabilitation, despite numerous studies showing that it doesn't achieve that goal.

We need to be clear, when they talk about 'tough on crime' they mean 'tough on Aboriginal people'.
— Vickie Roach, Yuin Nation, Women's prison rights advocate

We cannot flee persecution to another country because we are spiritually connected to our own ancestral lands. So jails and mental institutions are full of our people. - Wadjularbinna Nullyarimma, Gungalidda Elder and member of Aboriginal Tent Embassy

WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

WE CAN LOBBY POLITICIANS:

To improve the quality of legal help available to young people so that they are able to articulate their defence in the culturally foreign environment of a courtroom.

To change the bail act to ensure that juvenile-specific criteria override the inflexible and punitive provisions of bail and repeat offenders' legislation.

To adopt a bipartisan approach that makes a commitment to reinvesting funds into programs such as the community-based model being advocated by Just Reinvest, a program ideally suited to the particular circumstances of Indigenous communities.

To reinvest a percentage of funds that would have been spent on law and order into early intervention, crime prevention and diversionary programs, thus creating savings in the criminal justice system. Such programs could reduce offending and re-offending rates by assessing problems facing particular communities, and diverting funds into those areas.

To invest in policies to keep all young people out of the criminal justice system, and change the focus in youth detention centres to support and rehabilitation as a priority.

To expand education in all juvenile detention centres to overcome the negative consequences on both education and outcomes and facility management for young people in detention.

To invest in preventative and restorative programs.

WHAT CAN WE DO AS A COMMUNITY?

WE CAN BEGIN CONVERSATIONS ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

Research internationally has shown clearly that reducing poverty and all that goes with it will reduce crime and ultimately the number of people in gaols. An approach that builds skills and resilience is ultimately more cost effective than spending \$500 per day to keep a child locked up.

Diversionary, properly funded and culturally appropriate programs that work with young people to detect signs of problem behaviour can help divert young people from entering, or re-entering the juvenile justice system.

Overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system is a national crisis to which all governments must respond. All jurisdictions must address the root causes of Indigenous disadvantage, and rehabilitate young Indigenous people currently in the system.

Evidence-based policy can no longer be passed over in favour of short-term political gains. We do not need more "law and order" elections in NSW.

There is need for better trained and culturally informed police and judiciary, properly resourced legal defence services, and working alternatives to incarceration.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Justreinvest.org.au

Australian Indigenous Law Review 2010, Vol.14, Number 1.

Bail laws in NSW, 'The Law Report,' <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lawreport/stories/2010/3072759.htm> - www.antar.org.au/nsw

PHILOSOPHY OF JUST REINVEST

GIVE THEM A LIFE NOT LIFE IN PRISON: Just Reinvest NSW is committed to addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in custody.

WE CAN UNLOCK THE PATHWAY TO CHANGE: Homelessness, child abuse, disability, high-risk drug and alcohol use, poor school attendance, a lack of appropriate services, violence, discrimination and poverty all act as precursors to young people becoming entrenched in the criminal justice system. These issues are difficult for Aboriginal young people to manage without help.

BUILD THEM A BRIGHTER FUTURE: We aim to influence the New South Wales Government to shift spending that has been allocated for prisons towards community-based programs and services that address the factors that contribute to criminal behaviour in young people.

3. EARTH AND WATER – OUR LIFEblood

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

All forms of life – plant, animal and human – are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent.

The conservation of the earth's resources is vital for our own and the planet's survival.

Future generations have a right to inherit a healthily functioning and bio-diverse environment.

The water cycle is part of a broader ecosystem on which our food and industry depends.

Access to safe, clean water is a basic right for humans and other species.

There needs to be a balance between the priorities of environmental needs and social and economic costs.

Protection of environmental resources, including vital wetlands, is fundamental to a healthy environment.

Water is best protected in natural watersheds for this and future generations.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Climate change continues to exacerbate issues of water – floods, fire and drought.

Unprecedented heat waves have been experienced throughout NSW, seriously affecting water supplies.

Drought has devastated the south-eastern states of Australia as farmers battle worsening conditions.

The Report of the Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission describes the maladministration and negligence which has led to mass fish kills and the devastation of the river system.

The need to keep rivers healthy is threatened by water harvesting from mining, agriculture and domestic use.

Current legislation is clearly not sufficient to protect land and water security.

There has been strong support by the NSW Government for coal, gas and mineral extraction as income earners. Mining takes water from rural supplies, contributes to pollution, and threatens rock structure, including aquifers. (Royal Commission Report, February 2019)

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

The politicisation of climate change has severely and negatively impacted on the urgency of the current crises. We are still taking too much water from the system, both in the Murray-Darling and more broadly. (Royal Commission Report, February 2019)

The coal mining and coal seam gas (CSG) industries in NSW are expanding at an unprecedented rate, threatening public health, clean air and water, productive farmlands and native wildlife. (Nature Conservation Council of NSW).

Coal-fired power stations and mining rights are still being debated against the best scientific evidence available (cf open-cut coal mine proposal at Cullen Bullen).

The privatisation debate is a critical consideration. Labor has announced a strong anti-privatisation stance (SMH July 2018).

Water has been something citizens, especially those living in urban areas, have taken for granted. No longer can this be the case.

“What we are doing to the environment is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.” — Chris Maser

WHAT DO WE WANT?

Integration of legislation which ensures that strategic planning and development outcomes are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

Restoration of healthy rivers, particularly the Murray-Darling system, through co-operation between Federal Government and the States to renegotiate the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

A safety zone of at least one km mandated around all rivers, wetlands and other significant water sources to protect them from damage.

Water efficiency – technology used in sympathy with natural ecosystems - so that water is used several times without depriving its ecosystem uses.

Continued retro-fitting of homes with water-efficient shower heads, toilets, tanks and recycled water.

Guarantees that desalination will not be used to meet Sydney's supply needs when storage levels are below 30%.

A moratorium imposed on Coal Seam Gas extraction until a proper strategy is developed which includes community consultation and independent scientific input.

A precautionary, integrated approach to managing the impacts of Coal Seam Gas developments, with a prohibition on Coal Seam Gas extraction in Sydney's water catchment and State Conservation Areas.

WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

Without objective, transparent and accountable decision-making processes to ensure adequate community input and confidence in the NSW water reform process, it is impossible to guarantee the future health of our water supply. There are a number of possible political actions we can take:

- Contact your local member by phone, or write to him/her (a phone call or letter is worth 50 signatures on a petition).
- Express your concerns clearly. Use the principles and issues as outlined, asking politicians to influence their party.
- Join with others in your parish or community and personally meet with your local member or candidate as a group.

WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

Spread positive community attitudes about water saving by our own example.

Practise water efficiency in our homes, parishes and schools.

Contribute to cleaner water by not using cleaning products containing phosphates and chemicals.

Don't allow garden litter and pet faeces to get into stormwater drains.

Encourage our workplace to minimise run-off and manage pollutants at their source through better land planning, waste minimisation and clean production strategies.

Join a community or nongovernment group such as the OzGreen "My River Project" which monitors the health of rivers, particularly, the Hunter, Cooks and Murray-Darling Rivers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

NSW Water: www.water.nsw.gov.au/Home/default.aspx

Coal Seam Gas Mining: www.nwc.gov.au/www/html/2959coal-seam-gas.asp?intSiteID=1

OzGreen: www.ozgreen.org

Nature Conservation Council: www.nccnsw.org.au

“This is a central issue in today's world, a problem that affects everyone ...and it cries out for practical solutions.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

4. EDUCATION FOR ALL

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

Education is the right of every child. All students have the right to equitable, intrinsically valuable, and accessible education.

Quality education for all students is a critical investment that NSW makes for its future.

Parents have the primary right and obligation to ensure the best education for their children.

Both the Commonwealth and State Governments play a critical role in the provision of funding that is stable, long-term and committed to all students.

An equitable distribution of resources takes into particular account the needs of students disadvantaged by social, economic, cultural or physical factors.

The valuing of teachers leads logically to the provision of adequate resources for teacher education, remuneration, and ongoing teacher development.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Educational Standards: Australian students have not improved their achievement on international tests for a decade, and are falling behind students in other advanced nations. Results in international tests like PISA are declining and many children are missing out at important milestones before, during and after school (OECD 2018).

Funding: The OECD 2018 Education at a Glance report has revealed that the Australian education sector falls below OECD averages in public education funding, access to early childhood education, class sizes and teacher workload.

Wedge Politics: The increasing use of wedge politics, through ideologically and politically driven attempts to create competition between sectors, has led to the polarisation of educational sectors, rather than a united commitment by educational bodies to achieve adequate funding for all educational institutions.

Deepening Divide: The education gulf in NSW is accelerating and widening significantly, with the concentration of advantaged students attending privileged schools increasing in the past 5 years by 13% (SMH January 2019).

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Impact of falling standards:

- Educational trends have led to an emphasis on standardised tests as the benchmark of a school's standards.

- Teacher shortage, particularly in specific subject areas, is exacerbated by the low status of, and limited career paths in, the teaching profession. (Deans of Education Study)

Funding: Below average funding in NSW in schools, as well as in early childhood, TAFE, Abstudy and in Adult Migrant Education Services have negatively impacted students in disadvantaged groups, especially those in greatest need, and those with the least powerful voices.

Educational divide: Figures from the government's MySchool website show that in NSW, selective high schools are among the most socio-educationally advantaged in the state, surpassing even prestigious private schools.

Polarisation of sectors: Continuation of competition between sectors detracts from advocacy for the adequate provision of funding for all stages of schooling, from preschool to post-compulsory education.

WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

WE CAN LOBBY POLITICIANS:

To commit to funding that provides greater equity, certainty and choice for all schools into the future.

To establish a level playing field in future planning charges and infrastructure levies, by removing the inequities that are adding to the costs to all schools and parents.

To promote ongoing consultation with all stakeholders about the need for a longer-term and future-focused vision for both the design and the content of curriculum.

To place greater focus on the needs of students disadvantaged by the cuts of the past twenty years (to compensate for differences in social status, material wealth, geographic location and resource levels).

To provide equitable access to new technologies to overcome the digital divide.

To provide opportunities for all students to complete tertiary studies without unnecessary hardship.

To provide for the valuing and ongoing professional development of teachers to meet rapidly changing demands.

To increase funding to early childhood education, so that it is accessible and affordable for the whole community, not just the wealthy.

WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

Inform ourselves about standards of education in Australia and about the causes and results of policies of the past ten years.

Support increased funding to all schools in conversation with friends, with an emphasis on students in greatest need.

Promote a more sophisticated approach to education, which recognises that education is more than basic skills testing. Invite guest speakers who can lead a discussion on the vision, aims and practice in education today.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Catholic Education Commission NSW: www.csnsw.catholic.edu.au

Catholic Schools Office Sydney: www.sydccatholic.schools.nsw.edu.au/

Other Diocesan Offices in NSW: Armidale, Bathurst, Broken Bay, Canberra-Goulburn, Lismore, Maitland, Parramatta, Wagga Wagga, Wilcannia-Forbes, Wollongong.

A century from now, what shall be said of our journey in these times? And who shall the shapers have been? Who shall have shaped the future more? The hopeful dreamers who were strong enough to suffer for the dream? Or the fearful pessimists who were convinced that dreaming and hope are for sleepers only, not for those awake to the age? A century from now, shall hope and humour have been strong enough to enable living with unanswerable questions? Or shall the pain that a transitional age necessarily brings have caused a retreat to old answers that no longer acknowledge new questions? A century from now, we shall have indeed journeyed ... and real journeyers know that the direction is always chosen by those who make the journey. Who shall choose the direction? ... So the question is still the same ... A century from now, what shall be said of our human journey in these times? And who shall the shapers have been?

Lilian Smith, *The Journey*, 1954

5. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

Poverty and homelessness are the problem, not the people experiencing it.

Every Australian has the right to a home. Adequate housing is a basic human need and a fundamental human right. (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, No.25).

Affordable, appropriate and secure housing, which offers safety, privacy and reasonable security of tenure, is fundamental to adequate housing provision.

Access to quality, affordable housing, which includes accessibility to transport, employment and community services, is central to community well-being, and provides a foundation for family and social stability.

The role of Government is critical in ensuring that the housing rights of people are met, particularly for those on low incomes and those with special needs.

Many factors lead to homelessness, but ultimately it is the result of poverty.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Housing Stock: There is an insufficient supply of affordable housing available for purchase. The waiting list for public housing in NSW now runs to 60,000 people.

Housing Stress: The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that almost one million households are now living in rental or mortgage stress, i.e., are paying more than 30% of gross income on recurrent housing costs.

Housing Affordability: Housing is the major cost facing every vulnerable household.

Homelessness: It is estimated that over 37,000 people are homeless each night in NSW. For women in particular, domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness. Other causes include: lack of affordable housing, unemployment, poverty and low wages. Women's refuges and youth shelters do not address the needs of homeless people.

Government Budgets: Government budgets do not adequately address the issues of housing affordability or homelessness.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

In the past fifty years, Australia has moved from a society where affordable housing was seen as a universal right, to one where it is now predominantly viewed as a safety net for those most in need.

Cutbacks in Commonwealth and State funding have led to increased rental and mortgage stress, and a reduction in the number of services to assist those suffering financial stress, and domestic and family violence.

Social problems (violence, financial insecurity, unemployment, underemployment, delinquency, marriage breakdown, infirmity and old age) have been shown to be aggravated by the lack of housing, or the provision of inadequate housing.

The negative impact of inadequate housing has exacerbated the need for spending on health, prisons, and welfare provisions. In many large housing estates, the lack of support systems has resulted in significant instability.

Governments have named domestic violence as a significant cause of homelessness, yet have failed to provide affordable housing to alleviate the problem.

We know that the continuing increase in homelessness can be related to the decrease in affordable housing.

WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

Housing will continue to be a critical issue, whichever Party is in power. Unless governments accept that housing is fundamental to a civil society, it will continue to be a growing financial and social burden for the whole community.

WE CAN LOBBY CANDIDATES:

To commit to realistic levels of funding for housing, regardless of other calls made on revenue.

To commit revenue to create new, purpose-built, safe, affordable accommodation for vulnerable people, and especially the elderly, the disabled, victims of domestic violence, homeless Indigenous Australians, and those suffering from mental health issues.

To use the proceeds from the sale of public housing to create new, purpose-built, safe, affordable accommodation to house elderly, long-term residents.

To develop new models of cooperative housing for low income households.

To increase the level of social housing and upgrade existing stock.

To provide funding for public and community housing, and incentives for the development of affordable housing in the private market.

To implement rent-setting in community housing, targeting low-income households and to increase rent allowance in areas of need.

To legislate to guarantee adequate protection (for both tenants and landlords).

To invest in emergency housing for those experiencing severe stress.

WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

We can share ideas with our own community.

We can work with like-minded groups.

We can investigate possibilities in our area of influence and action.

We can raise awareness of housing issues by inviting community and social housing advocates and practitioners to speak with us.

We can advocate with religious and community groups to investigate housing possibilities within their own sectors.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Shelter NSW: www.sheltersnsw.org.au

NCOSS: www.ncoss.org.au

Churches Community Housing: www.churcheshousing.org.au

St Vincent de Paul Society: www.vinnies.org.au

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council: www.acsjc.org.au

REMEMBER...

Poverty and homelessness are the problem, not the people experiencing it.

The people we see on the street are just the tip of the iceberg.

Domestic violence is one of the major causes of homelessness in Australia.

Family homelessness is a growing phenomenon. Homeless mothers and their children are disadvantaged and at risk.

Lobbying and advocacy work!!!

In November 2017, a small Working Group to End Homelessness in New York set out to get the word Homelessness into a United Nations document. On 18 February 2019, this Priority Theme was accepted by all the Member States of the UN.

6. PRIVATISATION

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

The Government plays an important role in maintaining social cohesion and guaranteeing equity in the community.

Government-held assets are essential for revenue to be used to advantage the poor. The Government has a direct role to play in redistributing the wealth in society towards those in greatest need.

Governments are responsible for devising policy that promotes socially and environmentally responsible outcomes.

Federal revenue raised from government-held assets supports vital social services and contributes to the provision of services by State Governments.

The privatisation of public assets places decision-making in the hands of the few, thus depleting democracy.

The privatisation of many public assets puts profit before people.

Industries that provide an important public service, e.g. healthcare, education and transport, should not be profit-driven by the private sector.

Those who do worst out of these privatisation processes are those with low levels of wealth.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The privatisation of Telstra paved the way for later transactions. The millions raised could never compensate for the uncompetitive landscape created.

Privatisation has been a central theme of NSW government since the long-term lease of the state's polls and wires, which paved the way for the biggest privatisation transactions in the state's history.

There have been 20 separate privatisation transactions by the NSW government since 2012 with gross proceeds of over \$40 billion. This includes the single biggest privatisation transaction in the state's history (\$16.2 billion) – with the long-term lease of 50.4% of Ausgrid, the electricity distribution network that services Sydney, the Central Coast and Hunter.

The privatisation of utilities has led to increased prices, compromising lower income households. The sale of the electricity sector has seen prices increase from December 1996 to December 2016 by 183% (almost 3 times the overall increase in prices).

The M2 and the Eastern Distributor in NSW have increased toll fares by at least 1% each quarter – more than double the current rate of inflation - while privatised Australian ports now boast the highest charges in the world, almost double NZ costs and seven times more expensive than Malaysia's.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Privatisation has enabled record infrastructure spending, but has placed ownership in the hands of corporations, eroding democracy and shifting decision making from the public to corporations.

Privatisation has led to job cuts, reduced training opportunities, environmental harm, displacement of people, increased prices and reduced services.

The selling off of State-owned assets has a one-off benefit only, placing both dividends and responsibility for services in the hands of privately-owned and privately-run monopolies, which often have little motivation to attend to social benefits and costs.

Growing inequality is accelerating where shareholders are the only beneficiaries of what was once a public asset with public reward. Low-income households tend not to own shares, but bear the burden of rising prices of privatised assets.

Often private infrastructure assets and increased foreign investment are structured so that there is very little tax paid in Australia.

Privately-owned monopolies (cf. the tens of billions of dollars from the Telstra privatisation) could never compensate for the uncompetitive landscape. Australia still ranks an awful 46th in the world for average broadband speeds as a result.

WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

WE CAN LOBBY POLITICIANS:

To ensure greater regulation of the sale of publicly-owned assets is put in place, especially if the assets are natural monopolies.

To ensure an arbitration system is established to settle arguments between owners and users of already sold-off assets.

To debate in Parliament the facts and benefits of Government borrowing to build infrastructure that remains a public asset. The current 10-year Government borrowing cost is low. Governments do not necessarily require a profit margin, so government-held assets are likely to be provided at a lower cost. Privately-financed businesses are charged higher interest rates to compensate lenders for facing the possible risk of failure. The higher interest cost can be significant, e.g. 2% - 5% more for 10-year terms. These higher financing costs need to be recouped and so are eventually passed on to consumers.

WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

Inform ourselves about the impact of privatisation policies of recent years.

Raise the issues in conversation with friends, with an emphasis on people in greatest need.

Raise the issues in conversation, pointing out that if the public assets are profitable for the Government, it means it needs to raise less revenue from other sources. This is a benefit to all citizens.

A society - any society - is defined as a set of mutual benefits and duties embodied most visibly in public institutions: public schools, public libraries, public transportation, public hospitals, public parks, public museums, public recreation, public universities, and so on. Robert Reich

The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies. Pope Francis

7. TRANSPORT

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

The provision of transport as an essential service is a basic human right in today's world. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church.)

Affordable, accessible, reliable and secure transport is fundamental to an adequate infrastructure, and is the right of every Australian.

The role of Government is critical in ensuring that infrastructure and transport needs of people are met, particularly for those on low incomes or with special needs.

Comprehensive and broad planning in infrastructure and transport fosters functional and attractive cities and centres, and contributes to improved societal outcomes.

The actions of each generation must take into account the needs of future generations and the environment. Governments have responsibility for both.

Co-operation between Federal and State Governments is essential for any effective infrastructure development. Planning should be centralised, community-focused, and not market driven.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Failures of Transport Projects: Transport Infrastructure projects of recent years have experienced significant setbacks, in both planning and execution:

- The WestConnex, which will cost taxpayers \$11.5b, will benefit only a relatively small number of Sydney residents, with traffic volumes reaching little more than one third of capacity, 10 years after opening. Private Industry will hit motorists with inflated tolls after paying only \$9 billion for a \$17 billion project.
- The light rail projects have experienced significant time over-runs and cost over-runs

- Running costs have become exorbitant, with Australians paying three times more for comparable infrastructure projects than other industrialised nations.
- The Sydney Metro will be privately operated and fully automated.
- The Government has set up a 'Transport Asset Holding Entity', designed to own the transport infrastructure and manage it as a for-profit corporation.

Car Dependency: Population increases and inadequate planning have contributed to growing pressures on transport systems and increasing car dependency. Both cars and freight on roads are increasing, with negative impacts on access and congestion, air pollution, and liveability.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Those benefiting: Current projects are perceived as being designed and commissioned for the benefit of construction contractors and private investors, rather than customers and the community.

Poor infrastructure: Limitations of current and proposed projects are resulting in significant problems across NSW:

- Sydney has become a construction zone causing havoc for businesses, motorists and the community
- Excessive distances from workplaces, schools and leisure pursuits create problems for many
- Public transport continues to be inadequate and limited for all, but especially for those who are poor, frail or elderly
- Increased reliance on cars results in traffic congestion, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and serious health, environmental, and economic consequences.
- Fluctuating fuel prices affect access to employment, education, goods and services, mobility, and participation in community activities.

Vested interests: The power of those with vested interests has a disproportionate influence on the transport agenda, maintaining a car/truck transport focus and diverting funding from public transport.

WHAT CAN WE DO POLITICALLY?

WE CAN LOBBY POLITICIANS:

To commit to the development of an effective and planned transport system, which serves the community, and which takes into account regard for the environmental, economic, and social consequences of planning, and the efficient use of resources, with:

- Planning controls which serve the community rather than vested interests
- Integration of land use and transport
- Development of more fuel-efficient vehicles

- Commitment to ongoing research and infrastructure development
- Improved country roads.

To foster and promote expansion and improvement of public transport services for the benefit of the whole community, rather than for the advantage of industry and investment, including:

- A reconsideration of the shift to privatisation from public ownership of transport
- A review of current projects, especially the WestConnex and Sydney Metro plans, with appropriate planning changes
- Dedicated bus lanes and transit ways in urban areas
- Greater frequency of buses
- Better coordination of other modes of transport with rail services
- Fares that allow for easier transfers between modes
- Improved bus and train timetables
- Concession fares for those on low incomes.

WHAT CAN WE DO PERSONALLY?

We can share ideas with our own communities and interact with established non-government bodies working on transport issues.

We can contact local community members for discussion and action steps.

We can write letters to, or visit, local Government members to advocate for urgent action, and emphasise the social impact of non-action.

We can actively support initiatives aimed at getting cars off roads: car-pooling, cycleways, “walking buses” for school and sporting activities, safety and access for motor cycles.

We can discourage the use of cars, knowing that more freeways will only encourage more cars.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.stateplan.nsw.gov.au

www.aptnsw.org.au/probsolns.htm

www.metrostrategy.nsw.gov.au/

www.itls.usyd.edu.au

www.lightrail.com.au

www.greenfleet.com.au

