



## CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES TEAM UP TO BATTLE DISADVANTAGE

**September 10, 2019**

More than 20 Catholic social service providers from across Australia have joined with researchers from the Australian National University to commission new research into entrenched disadvantage.

Today marks the commencement of research activity for the *Identifying Locational Drivers of Entrenched Disadvantage* project.

“This project is a significant coming together across the national Catholic social services network,” said Catholic Social Services Australia CEO Ursula Stephens, who launched the project earlier today.

The aim of the research is to identify what drives and entrenches disadvantage in every suburb of Australia. Among its innovations is factoring in population change and projecting trends over the next 10 years.

“A key feature of this research is that it was co-designed by academics and those working at the coalface, meaning it can be applied in practice,” Dr Stephens said.

“This process has involved members in every state and territory, with their expertise spanning the full range of services and taking in metropolitan, regional and remote providers.

“Ultimately, these research findings will help our members better target services to address the local drivers of entrenched disadvantage. They will also be used to complement existing research, while we hope they will inform government decision-making around place-based policy.”

Australian Catholic Bishop Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge delivered a video message supporting the project, which was played at today’s launch.

“Each day, the Church works with people living on or below the poverty line. We provide accommodation, meals and support when they have nowhere else to turn,” Archbishop Coleridge says in the video.

“Today, we welcome another contribution by our community to tackling the poverty challenge. I commend the 20 CSSA members who have chosen to become financial partners and take part in this research.”



Fr Mick Lowcock, head of North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services, one of the project partners, said it is impossible to overstate the importance of the Church's ongoing service to those in need.

“No matter how many people are in touch with those experiencing poverty on a daily basis, trying to alleviate poverty should be at the forefront of all our endeavours,” he said.

“While we are among the smaller of CSSA's members, we are excited to join with others in the network because nothing will make a bigger impact on our nation than enabling every Australian to have the best life we can offer them.”

Michael Austin, director of CatholicCARE Wollongong and a CSSA board member, said the research initiative harnesses the collective reach of Catholic social service providers in communities throughout Australia.

“It provides an exciting opportunity for CSSA members to contribute to a project that deepens our awareness of the drivers of entrenched disadvantage in Australia, and one that will inform the development of public policy in this critical area for Australia,” he said.

In coming weeks, the project will embark on an extensive consultation process with expert researchers, sector peak bodies and advocates for groups that experience disadvantage.

The first public report of research outcomes is due before the end of this year.

[Find out more about the project and the partner organisations on the CSSA website.](#)