

A NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

Serving Communities with Courage and Compassion

26 – 28 February 2020
Melbourne

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Catholic Social Services Conference to Consider Church's Response 19 February 2020

The Australian community is facing the challenge of recovering from a summer of natural disasters — fires, floods and drought. Many Catholic agencies have been involved in providing relief to affected communities. At the same time, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia and the National Catholic Education Commission have moved to establish a new national collaboration called Catholic Emergency Relief Australia (CERA). It will serve as a coordination point for Catholic agencies responding to natural disasters now and in the future. Other Catholic organisations are expected to join the collaboration soon.

Dr Ursula Stephens, Chief Executive Officer of one of the founding CERA partners, Catholic Social Services Australia, said: “The forthcoming Catholic social services national conference offers a timely opportunity to consider two key matters. Firstly, we want to start to explore what services and support Church agencies have been giving in the aftermath of the bushfires. Which are most effective? What can we learn from one another? Secondly, the conference provides an ideal occasion to look at CERA and consider how this new whole-of-Church initiative can best assist people and communities recover from the bushfire crisis and future such events.”

To this end, the 2020 Catholic Social Services conference includes a plenary briefing session on the Church's response to the bushfires. It will be presented by Janet Cribbes speaking about CatholicCare's (Archdiocese of Melbourne) response to the 2009 bushfires, Dr Stephens and Jack de Groot, Chief Executive Officer of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW. Vinnies is providing services and relief to bushfire victims.

The biennial Catholic social services conference, [*Serving Our Communities with Courage and Compassion*](#), will be held at the Catholic Leadership Centre, 576 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne on 26-28 February 2020. This briefing session, *Responding to Natural Disasters*, will be held on Thursday 27 February, from 12:00pm – 12:45pm, in the Celtic Hall.

The conference will also include sessions on Catholic social services journeying effectively with our First Peoples, housing and the homeless, children and vulnerable people, regional Australians and those impacted by domestic violence, disability and/or the justice system. Other areas of focus will be serving at the margins, best practice in governance of ministries, eco-justice, formation for ministry, the Plenary Council, and fostering emerging leaders.



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For further information and bookings, see www.css.org.au/Serving-Communities.

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