

Community Education Resource

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019

A Place to Call Home: Making a home for everyone in our land

This resource is for parish social justice groups, YCS groups and senior secondary students. It describes a process in which to engage with the issues related to homelessness and housing insecurity described in the Australian Catholic Bishops Statement 2018-2019.

Having a place to call home is essential to personal security and for the flourishing of families. Despite this, Australia, the land in which home ownership has been prized since the end of World War 2, is in the grip of housing and homelessness crisis. According to the latest census conducted in 2016, more than 116,000 Australians are homeless; up from 102,000 in 2011. Domestic violence survivors, the sufferers of mental illness and the unemployed dominate the ranks of Australia's homeless. Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people, refugees, ex- prisoners and women aged over 50 are also more vulnerable to homelessness.

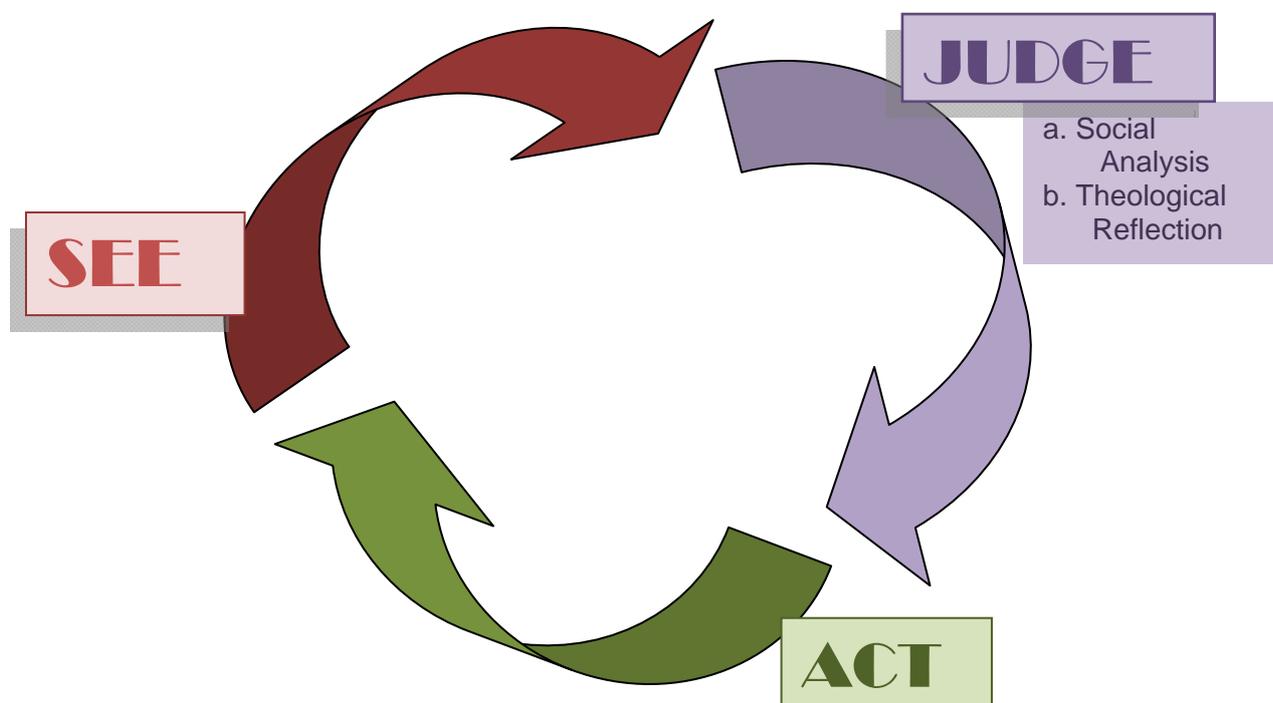
Australia's Catholic Bishops are calling for housing to be reasserted as a fundamental human right. Centrelink payments to job seekers and pensioners must be increased to ensure that they enable recipients to meet their basic needs. The three levels of government, federal, state and local, must work together to increase the levels of Australia's much in demand social and community housing stocks. In the response to the homelessness crisis, Catholic communities and individuals also have a considerable role to play. By volunteering with charities that work with the homeless, by demanding policy change, we can help ensure that every Australian has a home in our land.

Using the See, Judge, Act process, this resource describes the ways in which to see the challenges that arise from housing insecurity and homelessness.

Using the *See, Judge, Act* process, this resource provides ways to see challenges that arise from homelessness and housing insecurity.

We can then make an informed *judgement* on the situation and take *action* to change what can and should be changed.

For each phase of the process, there are references to the Social Justice Statement and suggestions for further resources and research.





Social Justice Statement References

Introduction page 3
Part 1 The Housing Crisis, pp. 4–10
Part 2 House and Home: A human right, pp 11–13
Part 3 Making a Home for Everyone, pp 14–18

In the Social Justice Statement the Bishops name the following as concerns:

Resources in the Statement

Australia's housing and homelessness crisis

- The nightmare of homelessness
- The homeless - those suffering from health and welfare issues
- The homeless – those experiencing economic instability
- The homeless – those who always battled exclusion

See notes 1–10

See notes 11-18

See notes 19-22

See notes 23-31

See notes 32-39

- Housing as a human right
- Challenging the policies of exclusion

See notes 43-47

See notes 48-52

See for yourself!

Other resources

How much do you know about Australia's housing and homelessness crisis?

For information on homelessness in Australia visit:

Select one of the issues that particularly concerns you.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul:
<https://www.vinnies.org.au/>

Name the aspects of this issue that concern you.

Council to Homeless Persons:
<http://chp.org.au/>

Use the notes in the Statement to find out more about it.

Homelessness Australia:
<https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/>

Which organisations address this issue in your state/local area?

See extensive web references to further information in the ACSJC *Ten Steps* Leaflet

Are there other issues related to homelessness that need to be addressed?

After this research, what question or questions do you now have regarding this issue?

Take this question to the next stage.

JUDGE

a. Social Analysis

b. Theological Reflection

a. Social Analysis helps us to obtain a more complete picture of the social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships. In this step, we attempt to make sense of the reality that was observed in Step 1. Why does this situation exist? What are the root causes?

Look at and discuss the concern you researched in terms of the following factors.

This deepens our understanding of our experience by asking: 'Which of these areas is this issue really about?'

Economic factors: – Production, distribution, patterns of ownership and decisions about property and resources.

Who owns? Who controls?

Who pays? Who gets? Why?

What part do economic factors play in the disadvantage faced by those who are excluded from the mainstream of our society?

Political factors: Totality of people's participation in decisions that affect their lives.

Who decides? For whom do they decide?

How are decisions made – by individuals? local, state and federal governments/agencies?

Who is left out of the process? How does this happen? Why?

Social Factors: How people group to relate to one another – social, class, ethnic, racial or age groups.

Who is left out?

Who is included?

Who is overrepresented?

Why?

Cultural factors: Sum total of ways of believing, thinking, feeling and acting, which constitutes what people call 'their way of life'

Values – what is important/ Beliefs – what is held to be true/ Attitudes – thoughts, words and actions influenced by beliefs

What values are evident?

What do people believe in?

What attitudes do you see expressed?

Who influences what people believe?

Religious factors: Religion is the expression of humanity's ultimate concern – the articulation of longings for a centre of meaning and value, for connection with the power of being.

What religious beliefs or practices support this practice?

What religious beliefs or practices challenge it?

By the end of this step, the group will have constructed a wider and deeper picture of the issue or focus. The underlying cause begins to emerge. For example, is it predominantly a social, political, cultural, economic or religious issue?

In light of the analysis the group renames the issue/question and takes it to the theological reflection

ACT Towards inclusive and sustainable development

Pages 15-18

From your information [Seeing]

... and analysis and theological reflection [Judging]

... what **ACTION** needs to be taken

- to change the situation?
- to address root causes?

We all have a role to play :

Understand the bigger picture behind the housing crisis)

- What are the economic and social forces that exclude people from safe and affordable housing
- Access the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council's paper *The Human Face of Homelessness*: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/publications/series-papers>

Parish and local community action

- Start a conversation in your local parish about how you can extend a welcome to everyone who comes to your church. How can people experiencing housing difficulties become valued members of your parish?
- Join a local Vincent de Paul Society conference that helps those in need in the local community. Commit to make regular donations to Vinnies or to diocesan agencies such as CatholicCare or Centacare.
- Engage with community groups or peak bodies like Homelessness Australia that are involved in advocacy to address homelessness.
- Write or speak to your local Member of Parliament and community newspaper to urge policy change to combat homelessness. The contact details of your local MP can be found here: www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members

What challenges emerged for you?

What action can you take? (See the 'Ten steps' below – also available as a leaflet)

If no action is clear, what additional research is needed?

How would you transform the structures and relationships that produce this situation?

How can you act to empower those who are disadvantaged in this situation?

What practical help can you offer?

How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your action?

Some useful websites:

ACSJC: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/social-teaching>

Secondary Res. <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/publications/social-justice-statements>

TEN STEPS TO MAKING A HOME FOR EVERYONE IN OUR LAND

The title of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2018–2019 is *A Place to Call Home*. The Statement confronts Australia's growing homelessness and housing insecurity, affirms that secure housing is a human right and a public good, and draws inspiration from the life and teaching of Jesus and our Christian tradition.

Here are ten steps we can take to work towards making a home for everyone in Australia.

1. REFLECT ON THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

Every day in our streets, we, like the Samaritan, see wounded people desperately in need of help. They are the homeless and the lost, injured by misfortune, by violence and by poverty. How have so many people come to be on the streets of such a rich nation?

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019, p. x

The Bishops' Statement begins with Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. Consider this parable in the light of Australia's homelessness crisis. There are various ways we can be Good Samaritans: some people help with emergency relief or a bed for the night, while others use their community connections to provide support and create more housing. All kinds of responses are needed.

2. GET THE FACTS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS AND THE HOUSING CRISIS.

The 2016 Census has revealed there are 116,427 people in Australia who are homeless ... That number includes not only people who are on the streets or sleeping rough, but also those who are 'couch surfing', living in boarding houses or emergency accommodation, or staying in severely overcrowded dwellings.

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

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019, p. x

Homelessness can often be a hidden problem and it is not confined to our major cities. There are many factors that can lead to homelessness, but ultimately, it is a result of poverty. Find out what the housing issues are in your local area, in your diocese or state, and nationally. Seek out information about Australia's housing crisis from research bodies such as:

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 census: www.abs.gov.au

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute: www.ahuri.edu.au

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Social Housing Survey:
www.aihw.gov.au

3. REACH OUT TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOUSING DIFFICULTIES AND HOMELESSNESS.

A place to call home is indispensable to our sense of self. Without it 'our spirit and identity are adrift, and our capacity for community engagement is weakened'.

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019, p. x

It is likely that people in your own networks, parish and local area have experienced homelessness or housing difficulties. They possess a humanity and dignity that needs to be honoured. Hearing their stories can build relationships that address personal needs and build solidarity.

Buy a copy of *The Big Issue*, a magazine by people who are homeless:

www.thebigissue.org.au

Read stories from people who have experienced housing difficulties, for example

<https://vincentcare.org.au/stories/client-stories>

Read the Vincent de Paul Society's publication *The Ache for Home*: www.vinnies.org.au

4. UNDERSTAND THE BIGGER PICTURE BEHIND THE HOUSING CRISIS.

Homelessness reaches more widely across our society than we might realise and touches more than those who are evicted or who cannot find a permanent home. In fact, a shadow of homelessness falls on anyone who struggles to meet barely-affordable rent or mortgage payments ... an overpriced market is pushing more individuals and families into homelessness.

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019, p. x

How can we improve understanding of the wider economic circumstances that drive people into homelessness? How do factors such as poverty, domestic violence and mental illness contribute to homelessness and housing stress? What has to change in our cities and communities so that everyone can have a place to call home?

Read the section 'The nightmare of homelessness' in the Bishops' Social Justice Statement.

Read *The State of Homelessness in Australian Cities* (2018) from the Centre for Social Impact: www.csi.edu.au/research/project/the-state-of-homelessness

Read *The Human Face of Homelessness* from Australian Catholic Social Justice Council.

5. MAKE OUR PARISHES AND COMMUNITIES WELCOMING PLACES.

People experiencing poverty are never to be regarded as 'a problem', but as principal partners in the work of building up bonds of unity and social cohesion.

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019, p. x

Start a conversation about how your parish can extend a welcome to everyone who comes to your church. How can people experiencing housing difficulties be protected from falling by the wayside?

- Are there ways your parish can identify those needing help?
- Is there someone in the parish who knows what resources are available for people with housing needs?
- Read *A Handbook for Building Stronger Parishes*, available from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference shop: www.catholic.org.au/shop/acbc-shop

6. TAKE ACTION TO SUPPORT HOUSING INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS.

In Australia there are many organisations working to help people who experience marginalisation and homelessness. In particular, Catholics can be proud of the work of diocesan social services, charities like Vinnies and initiatives by religious orders that reach out to people who are homeless.

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019, p. x

Commit to helping those in need in the local community through the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society, Catholic Care and other charities and services.

With others in your parish, consider if there are resources or properties that could house a family or individual in need. Consider housing development models that aim to end homelessness like those of the Australian Catholic Housing Alliance:

www.catholichousing.org.au

7. ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE LOCALLY AND NATIONWIDE

Australia needs to become more a community willing to address both the causes and the consequences of homelessness. We need the social, economic and political resolve to address this crisis ... Everyone deserves a place to call home.

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019, p. x

Encourage your parish, school or youth group to make homelessness a priority issue. Link with other social justice groups that work to end homelessness.

- Join the *Everybody's Home* campaign: everybodyshome.com.au
- Consider if your group or parish could join a larger organisation or help form one. Examples are: Shelter, Council to Homeless Persons, state Community Alliance groups and the Australian Council of Social Services.

8. HELP COMBAT MISUNDERSTANDING AND MISREPRESENTATION.

For any of us, a sudden personal or health crisis can cause great hardship and put pressure on family life. But for some people who lack the necessary economic resources or social support, such crises can lead to homelessness.

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019, p. x

How often do we hear calls to ‘clean up the streets’ or people in need being dismissed as ‘lazy’, ‘irresponsible’ or worse? Do councils and neighbourhoods always welcome proposals for shelters or facilities for homeless people? Challenge the myths that further marginalise people experiencing homelessness.

- Challenge the myth that homelessness will always be with us. Homelessness can be solved.
- Support the Mercy Foundation’s work to end homelessness:
www.mercyfoundation.com.au

9. REMEMBER: STANDING WITH THOSE IN NEED IS CENTRAL TO OUR FAITH

The Church and international law both regard housing as an essential entitlement for all people to meet their basic needs, flourish in community and have their inherent human dignity affirmed and upheld by others.

Social Justice Statement 2018–2019, p. x

Every person has an inherent dignity as a child of God, and that dignity obliges us to identify with those who are less fortunate. Let’s make this a basis of our work for justice. Consider how we can use more compassionate language, upholding the dignity of the most vulnerable and ensuring that they flourish in a just and generous society.

10. LET US PRAY

Use the accompanying Prayer Card prepared by the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council for personal prayer is a powerful way to bring about change in ourselves and our society. The prayer card that accompanies this leaflet is for personal or family use or for schools and parishes.