

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. 3

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. 6

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. 4

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. 7

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. 12

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. 15

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. 18

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. 7

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. 12

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

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.

This brochure and additional information specific to your diocese is available at the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website:

www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/publications/ten-step-leaflets/