

**Submission
No 38**

INQUIRY INTO SERVICE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH SOCIAL NEEDS

Organisation: Catholic Social Services Australia and Jesuit Social Services

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**Catholic Social
Services Australia**



21st August 2015

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, *Inquiry into Service coordination in communities with high social needs*.

On 21st July 2015, Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) released an update of the highly-regarded *Dropping off the Edge* report. This report was authored by Professor Tony Vinson and Associate Professor Margot Rawsthorne from the University of Sydney.

The fourth study of NSW in a series begun in 1999, the 2015 *Dropping off the Edge* report shows that disadvantage in Australia is entrenched in a small number of communities. Over the 15 year period that we have researched this issue in NSW, the vast majority of the most disadvantaged locations have stayed the same. This report maps those communities and their defining characteristics, and provides a framework for positive and sustainable change.

Based on extensive data concerning indicators of disadvantage, the report provides significant insight into the web of disadvantage that is limiting life opportunities for people and their families living in these communities. The communities identified in this report are characterised by a web-like structure of disadvantage. The report shows that residents of these communities aren't just dealing with one form of disadvantage but multiple, complex barriers to wellbeing and participation.

In NSW the report examined 621 postcodes across 21 different indicators of disadvantage. The results showed that disadvantage was concentrated in a small number of communities with those living in the 3% most disadvantaged communities, 3.6 times as likely to have spent time in prison and three times likely to be experiencing long term unemployment, low levels of education and domestic violence. Twenty four of the state's 40 most disadvantaged postcodes in the 2015 report were also found to be the most disadvantaged in 2007.

Catholic Social Services Australia

PO Box 326
Curtin ACT 2605
Telephone: 02 6285 1366
Facsimile: 02 6285 2399
Email: admin@cssa.org.au
Website: www.cssa.org.au

Jesuit Social Services

PO Box 271
Richmond VIC 3121
Telephone: 03 9427 7388
Facsimile: 03 9427 1819
Email: jss@jss.org.au
Website: www.jss.org.au

We believe it is vital that communities help to drive solutions – government as well as the community and business sectors must develop strong and sustained relationships with people and communities to build better futures. Without urgent action there is a significant risk that some of the country's most severely disadvantaged communities may 'drop off the edge'.

In our advocacy statement, we have called on federal, state and local government, business and the community sector to urgently give priority to addressing this unacceptable situation through:

1. Sustained and long term commitment to change;
2. Addressing economic and social disadvantage at the individual, community and macro level;
3. Developing local solutions that are targeted, tailored and agile; and
4. Integrating government services to support local solutions and effectively drive change.

The findings from NSW are outlined in more detail in the report, summary document and NSW Fact Sheet (attached) as well as in our advocacy statement. These documents and related material are also available at www.dote.org.au. We would be happy to elaborate further at the hearing.

Please contact Liz de Chastel, Senior Policy Officer, CSSA on telephone _____ or email | _____ if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Marcelle Mogg
Chief Executive Officer
Catholic Social Services Australia

Julie Edwards
Chief Executive Officer
Jesuit Social Services