

CSSA Meets with Victorian Premier's Office to Advocate for Victoria's Most Vulnerable

27 March 2026

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) CEO Dr Jerry Nockles, accompanied by CSSA Director of Policy and Advocacy Ms Carmel Sefian, met this week with senior advisers from the Victorian Premier's Office at Parliament House in Melbourne to discuss critical support for Victoria's most vulnerable communities amid fiscal pressures facing the state.

Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV) Executive Director Josh Lourensz also attended the meeting, which focussed on shared priorities including youth justice, housing and homelessness, the Thriving Kids initiative, and sustainable funding for essential social services.

"We had a productive and frank conversation with the Premier's advisers about the challenges facing Victoria and the critical role social services play in supporting vulnerable Victorians," Dr Nockles said.

"CSSA fully understands the imperative for fiscal discipline and responsible budget management. However, we urged the Victorian Government to ensure that Victoria's most vulnerable are not the shock absorbers of budget savings.

"Any reduction in funding for social services equates to cost-shifting for taxpayers and government to other systems – the primary healthcare system, emergency departments, the justice system. The false economy of cutting prevention and early intervention only stores up greater costs down the track."

Dr Nockles highlighted the work of CSSA's Victorian member agencies, which collectively support tens of thousands of people each year through essential services.

"Our members – CatholicCare Victoria, MacKillop Family Services, and Jesuit Social Services – bring decades of experience, deep community connections and proven models that deliver real value for every taxpayer dollar invested," he said.

Ms Sefian emphasised the role that Catholic social services can play in supporting the implementation of the Thriving Kids initiative, due to commence from October 2026, and urged for support targeted to those most in need.

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"Thriving Kids is a welcome initiative emphasising supports in mainstream settings where many of our member services are already embedded," Ms Sefian noted. "However, it must be complemented by targeted approaches to reach the most vulnerable children and families – those least likely to engage in mainstream settings – including those disproportionately represented in child protection and out-of-home care systems" Ms Sefian added.

CSSV Executive Director Josh Lourenz spoke about the need for balanced and responsible public discourse around youth justice.

"Catholic social services work to support young people, children and their families – often as they navigate really difficult times in their lives. This work is crucial on both a personal and community level if we desire community safety and a hope-filled future. We need our political leadership to continually recognise that all children and young people in Victoria are both our present and our future – and have a clear focus on the evidence of what works to turn lives around and correcting systemic failures, rather than celebrating and spending on a much more costly and ineffective prison system" he said.

During the meeting, CSSA advocated for longer-term funding arrangements at a minimum of five years to provide certainty for the sector and better support planning and emphasised the importance of early intervention programmes that deliver measurable outcomes and generate savings for government.

"Today's meeting was an important step in building stronger working relationships with the Victorian Government," Dr Nockles said. "We look forward to continuing these conversations as the state prepares its May budget, and to working collaboratively to ensure essential services remain available for those who need them most."

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About CSSA:

CSSA is the national peak body for Catholic social service providers. CSSA's network of 42 member agencies works across all Australian States and Territories with a combined total of over 700 sites, delivering essential services to over 500,000 vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians. This work is of profound importance to Australia's 5.1 million Catholics.

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About CSSV:

Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV) is the peak body for Catholic social service providers in Victoria, advocating for compassionate socio-economic policies that uplift the lives of vulnerable people. CSSV member organisations support over 300,000 people a year, and employ more than 7,500 people supported by over 15,000 volunteers.

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The national network of Catholic social services



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