



Expanding the conversation: Ecological Justice series

## Just Transitions

September 2019



**Jesuit**  
**Social Services**  
Building a Just Society

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## Executive Summary

Climate change is happening throughout Australia and across the world. It affects people in all places, from the most concentrated urban areas to the most remote communities. It is becoming increasingly clear that the impacts of climate change are greatest on people in the poorest countries on earth, and on the most marginalised people in many developed countries. Responding to climate change in an effective and equitable way is one of the greatest global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Jesuit Social Services has a vision of building a just society. We are a social change organisation working with some of the most marginalised individuals and communities, often experiencing multiple and complex challenges. Jesuit Social Services' service delivery and advocacy focuses on five key areas:

- Justice and crime prevention
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Settlement and community building
- Education, training and employment
- Gender justice.

Creating a just society has never been easy. But the unprecedented and growing pressure of the climate crisis and environmental degradation, and the pressing need to move to a healthy, sustainable world in an equitable way, has required reassessing the idea of justice itself.

Justice takes many forms – social, environmental, climate, gender, racial, distributive, spatial, and intergenerational. But the scale of the environmental challenge facing the world means a new paradigm of justice is needed. Jesuit Social Services has adopted the concept of ecological justice, a comprehensive approach that includes all the other forms of justice. It recognises that human society is inextricably linked with nature and is dependent on, and constantly interacting with, the global ecosystem.

To minimise the unfairness inherent in climate change, increasing attention is being paid to the idea of a 'just transition' – that is, how to move from current untenable economic and social systems to an ecologically sustainable, zero greenhouse gas emissions world in a way that ensures those least able to cope with climate change receive the help they need to successfully adapt.

In the context of climate change there is no single agreed definition of a just transition. However, some common elements are emerging. A just transition needs to:

- be broad in scope, applying not only to more immediate concerns such as new jobs, skills and investment, but also the wider impacts of emissions reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and ecosystem recovery
- operate at multiple levels (global, national, local)
- utilise partnerships, including with new partners or sector
- foster active, broad-based engagement and participation to achieve the buy-in needed for a just transition
- operate at a pace that both keeps global warming under 1.5 degrees and does not undermine support for the low-carbon transition, and
- be proactive, anticipating sources of injustice by emphasising an ecological justice approach to minimise the negative impacts of transition.

A genuinely just transition will provide a fair and inclusive transformative process that finds common interest across the full range of the Sustainable Development Goals. It will also be consistent with *Laudato Si's* central premise of caring for our common home<sup>1</sup>, and the need for labour and work to be separated from the dominant profit motive that cares little for social or environmental consequences.

Even if problems are considered in purely scientific, technological or economic terms, they still have a distinctly ethical dimension. Economic and social transformation has to occur to realise real healing and healthy relationships with the earth and the built environment, and this will impact on our economic policies and future employment possibilities.

Considerable effort is currently being made by multilateral organisations, national governments, and through a host of local government and community based programs and initiatives to achieve just transitions.

Jesuit Social Services wishes to expand the conversation on just transitions to include people and communities already experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation, who stand to be most affected by the impacts of a changing climate.

For the community services sector that works closely with people on the margins, climate change and the ecological crisis present a new set of challenges. We feel there are added insights and challenges specific to this sector and our work that could contribute to any transition being as fair and just as possible. This paper is part of an ongoing symposium series exploring Just Transitions and Ecological Justice hosted by Jesuit Social Services in Melbourne, Sydney and the Northern Territory.

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<sup>1</sup> Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si: On care for our common home*, Pope Francis, 24 May 2015 ([online](#))

## Section 1: Climate Change and a Just Transition: An Unprecedented Challenge

### Climate Change Affects Everyone

We are still to fully comprehend the full extent of the impact that climate change will have on lives, livelihoods and ecosystems. What is clear from scientific modelling and economic forecasting is that many industries, state services, local livelihoods and our natural systems will be at extreme risk.

Climate risks can be categorised as:

1. **Sudden (rapid onset)** hazards and extreme weather.
2. **Incremental (slow onset)** and iterative harms such as drought and heat.
3. **Secondary impacts** on livelihoods, food, labour, water, energy and infrastructure.

The possible impacts of climate change are far-reaching and touch on almost all aspects of our lives, including:

- Increasing water, food, energy, housing, and employment insecurity.
- Growing and increasingly diverse populations of economically and ecologically marginalised people.
- Increased inequality, civil instability and violence.
- Increased morbidity rates and declining population health status.

Across the world, the capacity of governments to respond to the challenges of climate change has been questioned. It is acknowledged that some states, such as some of our Pacific Island neighbors and low-lying South East Asian nations, are in danger of becoming failed states. There have been reports of potential risks to basic human rights and human security. In June 2019, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston, warned of international climate apartheid if the inherent inequality of carrying the burden of climate change risks is not addressed by governments and the international community.

### Responses to climate change are still evolving

Responding to climate change risks and realities will require a mix of adaptation, mitigation, transition and transformation. Possible paths that can be taken include, but are not limited to:

- *Uncoordinated responses dominated by the market.* Without appropriate government policy to ameliorate and manage the transition, this approach risks exacerbating social inequality.
- *Belated responses to climate change.* If management of climate risk is further delayed, then urgent government intervention may be unavoidable in the near future, resulting in higher cost and greater social and economic disruption.
- *A networked approach from the profit and non-profit sectors, all levels of government, and communities.* Such a coordinated and broad-based approach offers the best chance for a response that is flexible, pre-empts harms and risks, ensures more equitable futures and re-distributes power.

Government, industry and the community services sector will all be impacted by climate change, albeit in different ways: no sector, region or organisation will be untouched.

## Just Transitions

To minimise the unfairness inherent in climate change and environmental degradation, increasing attention has been given to the idea of a 'just transition'.

A just transition is a process of moving from current untenable economic and social systems to an ecologically sustainable, zero greenhouse gas emissions world in a way that ensures those least able to cope with climate change receive the help they need to successfully adapt, and a healthy relationship is achieved between human communities and the eco-systems within which they live and on which they depend.

Because of the complexity and the multiple dimensions of climate change, there is no single agreed definition of a just transition. In terms of policy proposals, though, some common elements are emerging. These include:

- A just transition will need to be wide-ranging:
  - Take a broad and inclusive approach to the concept of justice.
  - Go beyond the immediate economic impacts of emissions reduction, while recognising the importance of new jobs, skills and investment.
  - Broaden perceptions of who are considered to be 'at risk' to include those adversely affected by adaptation and mitigation actions more generally.
- A just transition will need to operate at multiple levels:
  - Partnerships and collaborations, including with new partners or sectors, are needed.
  - Fostering active broad-based engagement and participation will be important to achieve the support needed for a just transition.
- A just transition will need to be carefully guided:
  - The window available to keep global warming under 1.5 degrees is narrowing quickly, making rapid action necessary to avoid the real possibility of catastrophic climate change.
  - However, rapid change will increase the near term cost of transition, and increasing the cost of adjustment "could weaken support for, and indeed create considerable resistance towards, the low-carbon transition".<sup>2</sup>
- A just transition will need to be proactive:
  - Avoiding all injustice during the transition will not be possible, but anticipating sources of injustice by emphasising a comprehensive, ecological justice approach will help reduce the negative impacts of transition.

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<sup>2</sup> Gambhir, A, Green, F. and Pearson, P. *Towards a just and equitable low-carbon energy transition*, Grantham Institute Briefing Paper No. 26 (August 2018) p.2 ([online](#))

Exploring the idea of a just transition is essential for community service organisations and the community services sector to develop their direction and focus in both advocacy and program delivery. It is also essential for creating a better understanding of what a just transition means for other sectors, organisations and communities, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalised.

### **Jesuit Social Services: Our journey**

Jesuit Social Services has been working for more than 40 years delivering practical support and advocating for improved policies to achieve strong, cohesive and vibrant communities. We are a social change organisation working with some of the most marginalised individuals and communities. Our services span Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory where we support more than 57,000 individuals and families annually.

Our service delivery and advocacy focuses on the following key areas:

- *Justice and crime prevention* for people involved with the criminal justice system.
- *Mental health and wellbeing* for people with multiple and complex needs and those affected by trauma, suicide, and complex bereavement.
- *Settlement and community building* for disadvantaged communities, and recently arrived migrants and refugees.
- *Education, training and employment* for people with barriers to sustainable employment.
- *Gender and culture* providing leadership on the reduction of violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and building new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe.

In 2008, Jesuit Social Services began to incorporate ecological justice into our organisational culture, program delivery and advocacy. This emerged from a commitment to building a just society, our Jesuit heritage emphasising reconciliation with creation, and our experience working with the most marginalised in the community who are likely to be most affected by environmental degradation and climate injustice.

Our 2017 paper, *Ecological Justice – Expanding the Conversation*, outlines this journey and the commitment to building a just society inclusive of both social and environmental justice.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See here: <https://jss.org.au/ecological-justice-expanding-the-conversation/>

## What sort of justice does a just transition need?

*These new movements and efforts illustrate environmental justice moving towards a form of just sustainability that embodies not only a variety of themes of justice, but also a thorough engagement in everyday material life – the things that pass through our bodies, the practices we use to transform the natural world and the institutions we can shape collectively.*<sup>4</sup>

*(Schlosberg, D. 2013)*

Scientists, world leaders, activists and academics warn that a transformation of our relations with climate and earth needs to occur immediately and collectively. This transformation will affect economic systems, land costs and distribution, energy availability, and community and governance capacities. In essence, a new paradigm of justice is needed: one that requires us to confront the reality that the causes and effects of injustice we have traditionally seen and defined as separate, local and with identifiable causes and effects, are now infinitely more complex in their generation and impacts.

Jesuit Social Services has embraced the concept of *ecological justice*, a wide ranging view of justice that includes the spectrum of both human and environmental equity. Jesuit Social Services sees ecological justice as:

*A holistic paradigm inclusive of social and environmental justice which rests on the principle that ‘everything is interrelated’, ethical action in the environmental sphere is therefore central to equity at a social level.*<sup>5</sup>

Ecological justice starts from the fundamental importance of the global ecosystem: the community of all living things and the non-living physical environment that surrounds them. The global ecosystem sustains all life, so ensuring the integrity of global common resources is a prerequisite for maintaining and improving justice in all areas.

All the aspects of justice – social, environmental, climate, gender, racial, distributive, spatial, intergenerational – go towards make up ecological justice, and achieving ecological justice is one of, if not the main, challenge facing society today. As Pope Francis emphasised in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, the social and environmental are inextricably linked – and ecological justice requires both a historical understanding and a developing perspective on the forces that shape our world.

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<sup>4</sup> Schlosberg, D. (2013) *Theorising Environmental Justice: The Expanding Sphere of a Discourse*, Environmental Politics 22(1) ([online](#))

<sup>5</sup> Jesuit Social Services (2018) *Ecological Justice: Dropping off the Edge (DOTE) and Environmental Indicators Final Report*, p.2.



Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality.<sup>6</sup>

Jesuit Social Services' approach to ecological justice is informed by its respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Their cultures rest on an understanding of the deep relationship between land, ecosystems and human communities and has underpinned their care of the land over thousands of years. Since colonisation and through ongoing dispossession, First Nationals people have been witnessing the destruction of land, waters and ecosystems that are their sustenance and basis of their spiritual and cultural life. Justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culture and land must be central to any commitment to ecological justice in Australia.

The breadth of the concept of ecological justice means it has many aspects and applications. These include impacts on human livelihoods and habitat of essential areas including energy, employment, housing and food security. It draws attention to the choices being made at the hard end of social justice between punitive or restorative environments for those incarcerated or exiting prison. It asks important questions about the influence of design and habitat on human communities and individual behaviour. In emerging and transitioning economies, ecological justice highlights the need for equity and restorative relationships between employment and the environment. At the national and international level, carbon responsibility is an urgent concern.

### The move to a just transition

The idea of a just transition has been part of international policy proposals since climate change was first raised as an economic threat. Internationally, three phases have been identified in the development of a just transition to an emissions neutral world.<sup>7</sup>

- **Phase 1** – from the adoption of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, through the negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol, to the Poznan Conference of the Parties (CoP) in 2008. Despite the US not ratifying the Kyoto Protocol on the grounds that it would damage its economy, this phase did not see much attention given to issues of social and economic transition.
- **Phase 2** – from 2008 to 2014, which saw more explicit attention given to reconciling the tension between jobs and the environment. The idea of green jobs gained more momentum in this phase.
- **Phase 3** – from 2014 on, where the concept of a just transition has become a central theme in climate change discussion and negotiation, as evidenced by its inclusion in the 2015 Paris Agreement and the International Labour Organization's (ILO) 2015 report *Guidelines for a Just Transition – Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*. Progress in

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<sup>6</sup> Laudato Si, p.104

<sup>7</sup> Rosemberg, A. (2017) 'Strengthening Just Transition Policies in International Climate Governance', The Stanley Foundation, Policy Analysis Brief ([online](#))

achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the main climate-related SDGs<sup>8</sup>, is also often seen as a prerequisite for a just transition.

More recently, the need for a just transition has been linked to the call for a Green New Deal in the United States. The European Union is leading just transitions by using smart specialisation strategies which are a place-based economic and social policy approaches characterised by the identification of specific regional strengths and strategic areas for intervention. The approaches emerge after extensive stakeholder engagement and trans-sectoral design. This strategy is being used in Australia in areas like the Hunter and Latrobe Valleys as they adjust to the closure of coal mines.

In Australia, the Australian Labor Party released a Climate Change Action Plan prior to the 2019 Federal Election, which included:

- an “orderly transition of [electricity] generation from old coal fired power stations to new clean energy (...) that will ensure there is proper support and assistance for impacted workers and communities”, and
- “a Just Transition to a clean energy future.”<sup>9</sup>

Features of Labor's approach to a just transition include:

- Establishment of a Just Transition Unit in the Department of Environment to co-ordinate the work of different Commonwealth agencies to implement the just transition element of the Paris Agreement,
- “...development of a regional approach to employment issues associated with the withdrawal of generation capacity”, including the regional grouping of generators and the spreading of opportunities for redundancies and redeployment across all generators or mines in the region. Other employment impacts of transition, such as retraining and benefits, would be assessed using advice from a Just Transitions Advisory Council.
- In conjunction with state and local government, development of a “proactive program of economic diversification for impacted regions and communities.”

While the proposal's outlined the skeleton of a just transition policy architecture, it is yet to be confirmed as to whether this remains Federal ALP policy.

In 2016, the Victorian State Government released *Victoria's Climate Change Framework* which emphasised that “the transition to a net-zero emissions and climate-resilient economy (...) is positive, orderly and just.”<sup>10</sup> Eight areas have been identified as being of particular importance for a just transition:

- Investing in the generation, supply and use of renewable energy

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<sup>8</sup> See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

<sup>9</sup> Australian Labor Party *Climate Change Action Plan* ([online](#))

<sup>10</sup> Victorian Government (2016) *Climate Change Framework*, p.21 ([online](#))

- Assisting the Latrobe valley in its move from coal fired electricity generation
- Developing an integrated and climate change-resilient transport system
- Creating a low-emission built environment able to cope with climate change
- Protecting the health and well-being of Victorians by improving individuals' and communities' adaptation capacity and resilience
- Assisting the on-going adaptation of the agricultural sector
- Improving management of water resources
- Increasing the resilience of the natural environment.

The Friends of the Earth Melbourne report *Transforming Victoria: Creating Jobs while Cutting Emissions* outlines a pathway for a just transition in Victoria which also calls for the creation of a Just Transition Authority and appointing a Minister for Transition.

### A wider vision

Climate justice coalitions internationally and locally have articulated a wider vision of what is needed for a just transition that extends beyond labour practices and industry transitions.

*Just Transition is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be.*<sup>11</sup>

*Climate Justice Alliance*

This wider vision speaks clearly to the transformational potential of a just transition, and the need to ensure that the transition to renewables does not replicate existing power structures that are harmful or exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities.

For example, in the Northern Territory, there is growing interest in the economic opportunities presented by renewables; without clear parameters set by government, there is a risk that new solar projects could perpetuate the pattern of old industries – extracting value from Aboriginal land without the participation or benefit of traditional owners and local communities.

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<sup>11</sup> See <https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/>

## Section 2: Community sector challenges and responses

### Challenges of a just transition for the community sector

While the industrial, employment and energy shifts are the core concern of a just transition, the community sector will also be dealing with the secondary impacts of any transitions. For those organisations already dealing with the complex web of disadvantage, intergenerational poverty, mental health issues, substance dependence, inadequate access to healthy habitat (housing, energy) and lack of access to supported education and training pathways, a key focus needs to be on how a just transition will impact on their lives and communities. Just transition policies need to include equity for the most marginalised and those outside employment, as they are the most likely to bear the brunt of climate breakdown as well as economic upheaval during necessary energy transitions.

The role of the community sector in adaptation and advocacy for the climate and the economically vulnerable will increase. There will be a greater need for governmental support and knowledge sharing with the community services sector in order to alleviate the fall-out of any transition – just or not.

The expanded demands placed on community service organisations by climate change, and their ability to meet them, was considered in the extensive National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) project of 2013 *Adapting the Community Sector for Climate Extremes*.<sup>12</sup> Their findings included:

- Community sector organisations are highly vulnerable and not well prepared to respond to climate change or extreme weather events, with many small and medium-sized organisations at risk of permanent closure as a result of major damage to physical infrastructure and disruptions to critical services.
- The detailed consequences of major disruptions to social service provision for people experiencing poverty and inequality – for whom community sector organisations are the shock absorbers for everyday adversity as well as crises – are very serious as they impact the basic needs for human survival: homelessness, deprivation, hunger, isolation and death.
- Despite the sector’s vulnerability and the severity of the consequences, to date, the community sector has been overlooked in the climate change adaptation policy settings.
- At present, community sector organisations perceive an overwhelming range of barriers to action. Key amongst these is a lack of financial resources and skills and the concern that adaptation is ‘beyond the scope’ of the sector’s core business.

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<sup>12</sup> Mallon, K., Hamilton, E., Black, M., Beem, B. and J. Abs (2013) *Adapting the Community Sector for Climate Extremes*, NCCARF ([online](#))

Jesuit Social Services' engagement with ecological justice over the past 8 years – internally with staff, with participants and within the sector – has identified a similar range of challenges in relation to climate change. These include:

- Scarcity of resources and time pressures.
- Competitive funding environment works against a collaborative approach.
- Our main cohort – vulnerable and precarious communities facing social and economic barriers – is particularly exposed to negative effects of climate change and adaptation.
- The sector's perception that climate change, environmental and industry issues are the concern of other sectors or 'higher' decision makers.
- Belief that community service organisations are not experts in either climate change impacts, science or the economics of just transitions.
- Climate change and economic transition is a 'wicked' and political problem that is overwhelming.

All of these challenges can compound, limiting full engagement of the sector on climate change and just transitions issues. This indicates a need for more opportunities for the sector to focus on the specific challenges, responsibilities and capacity of the sector to contribute.

### Capabilities and Possible Responses of the Community Services Sector

The NCCARF report also found that community service organisations have a clear desire to prepare for and adapt to climate change and extreme weather impacts. Like all sectors, the community services sector has a particular and unique role in contributing to the possibility of a just transition.

The community service sector:

- Has inherent skills, networks and capacity to contribute to a just transition and the realisation of ecological justice.
- Is close to communities, providing it with the capacity to educate, contact, mobilise, amplify voices, identify neglected areas and increase the resilience and agency of those most at risk.
- Comprises organisations whose core business is the pursuit of justice and equity, and many of whom are contracted by governments to do this work.
- Through communities of justice and the mobilisation of cohorts most affected by ecological injustices, has the capacity to prevent worst harms *and* activate contributions to transformative economies and ecologies.

Recognition of the lived reality of many in the sector is vital in a realistic understanding of what role the sector can play in any just transition. Collaborative advocacy strategies and increased involvement of peak bodies will assist in opening up channels of communication. Action on the ground needs must include adaption and mitigation alongside preventative equity programs to ensure those who are already experiencing marginalisation are not further excluded.

A just transition will require knowledge exchanges and closer relationships between the community services sector and others including local councils, government departments, industry, climate change researchers and environmental NGOs. The community services sector will also need more support and training in order to face the challenges and understand the most effective and restorative actions that can be taken to reduce further acceleration of already complex cycles of disadvantage.

There is a myriad of ways in which the community services sector can respond to support a just transition through organisational change, program delivery and advocacy. Some examples include:

*Respect and engage with First Nations care for country*

*Circular economies*

*Democratically distributed energy*

*Urban food sovereignty*

*Ecological and climate change literacy*

*Regenerative livelihoods skills*

*Retraining in viable employment*

*Ethical organizational procurement*

*Home retrofits*

*Emissions reduction*

*Green canopy for heat vulnerable areas*

*Restorative agriculture*

*Carbon sequestration*

*No new coal mines*

*Training in climate risks for participants*

*Public transport urban and rural*

*Sustainable planning and development*

*Biodiversity protection*

*Relational and restorative behaviour change*

*Provide examples of sustainable living*

*Organisational divestment*

## The community services sector in action

### Some examples of the work of Jesuit Social Services

Jesuit Social Services is looking to contribute to ensuring a just transition through our work and for the people with whom we work. Our approach is underlined by our commitment to holistic ecological justice, which has resulted in organisational, program delivery and advocacy changes.

In 2018, Jesuit Social Services opened its Ecological Justice Hub in Brunswick, focused on realising ecological justice with communities most at risk from climate change and economic transitions. Our employment, education and training programs across the organisation increasingly include skills needed in transitioning economies, and create models of sustainable and ecologically just living. In addition, our research and advocacy continues to reflect growing awareness of ecological justice as a lens through which to discuss and analyse the complex, interrelated issues facing our communities.

#### 1. Organisational change and advocacy

Jesuit Social Services fosters an ecological culture where transformation starts with the personal. The Jesuit Social Services approach is to:

- encourage shared values of personal relationships with ecology, and
- integrate an ecological justice perspective into all programs and advocacy

The acknowledgement of the interconnection between environmental and social issues has influenced our practice, policy and organisational identity, and shaped our strategy to ensure we are equipped to address justice issues of the future. We are committed to achieving a just society that contributes to restoring healthy ecological relationships for all.

We have used our original *Way of Proceeding* as a basis to develop our ecological approach. Our *Way of Proceeding* recognises three interconnected domains that must be considered in all aspects of the organisation's operations, namely:

1. *Human Spirit* – Focusing upon essential anthropological and spiritual questions around what it means to be human and enquiries into the conditions within which humans thrive and have healthy relationships. This involves an informed and discerning process of understanding ourselves, our fellow humans and our relational context.
2. *Practice Framework* – Developing a relational way of being and acting that reflects and lives ecological justice. This promotes environmental awareness and ecological justice across our practice areas and our advocacy including justice and crime prevention, settlement and community building, mental health support and wellbeing, and education, training, and employment.
3. *Business Processes* – Adopting environmentally sustainable business practices and processes. Discernment in relation to our financial and other resources so they respect and contribute to, rather than harm, efforts to build a just society.

#### 2. Ecological Justice Hub

Jesuit Social Services' Ecological Justice Hub in Brunswick promotes and gives witness to ecological justice, ensuring that justice and equity are central to ecological sustainability. It helps build knowledge and skills through practical 'hands-on' projects, to strengthen understandings of ecological justice and what this means in practice in our homes and in communities.

The Ecological Justice Hub at Saxon Street, Brunswick, is a garden, workshop and gathering space, as well as an education and advocacy centre. The Hub seeks to address the potential adverse social and economic impacts of environmental degradation and threats for some of the most disadvantaged members of our communities, supporting them to build resilience together. The Ecological Justice Hub seeks to do this through:

- Building ecological awareness and understanding for community members and community, government and businesses through advocacy and community education.
- Providing skills, training and employment support into green economy jobs for people experiencing barriers to employment.
- Creating 'green living' demonstration projects that support climate change reduction and environmental recovery.

The Ecological Justice Hub has successfully tested a model of community advocacy, education and training, jobs pathways, and green living demonstration projects through:

- the development of a range of education and skill training programs. These include permaculture and the 'HammerTime' program for women who want to develop carpentry skills and enter a trades career,
- creating links between skills training at the Hub and employment opportunities on Victoria's major construction projects,
- staging an inaugural Eco-Justice Symposium that brought together organisations and stakeholders from across community, government, energy and education sectors to share ideas and the potential for cross-sectoral action and partnerships, both in policy and practice.
- the identification and testing of key ecological living demonstration projects.
- *Just Habitat* – building small eco-friendly homes while creating employment and developing skills for people.
- *Just Energy* – solar power systems for redistribution to people on low incomes.
- *Just Nourishment* – establishing permaculture gardens that produce fresh, healthy food.
- *Just HammerTime* – workshops to provide skills in carpentry and construction for young women.
- *Just Mushrooms* – workshops to demonstrate the benefits of growing mushrooms.
- *Just Honey* – promoting local bee keeping.
- *Just Compost* – turning Brunswick and city waste resources into garden compost.

### 3. Ecological place-based research

Jesuit Social Services' Dropping off the Edge (DOTE) series is nation-wide research about the locational distribution of social disadvantage, sponsored by Catholic Social Services Australia. The fourth DOTE report, released in 2015, found that complex and entrenched disadvantage continues to be experienced in a small but persistent number of communities in each state and territory across Australia.

In New South Wales, for example, just 37 postcodes (6 per cent of the total) accounted for almost 50 per cent of the most disadvantaged rank positions. Communities such as these experience a web-like structure of disadvantage, with significant problems including unemployment, a lack of affordable and safe housing, criminal convictions, and domestic violence.



In New South Wales, DOTE 2015 found that people living in the top 3 per cent most disadvantaged postcodes were 3.6 times as likely to have spent time in prison and more than 3 times as likely to be experiencing long term unemployment compared with the rest of the state.

In 2018, Jesuit Social Services explored how DOTE could review environmental risks and threats that impact communities. This enabled a greater understanding of the association between environmental health risks and the locational distribution of social disadvantage in Australia. We focused on two areas in particular: food security and green spaces. While more research needs to be done, preliminary findings suggested that social disadvantage and environmental risks consistently overlapped. In terms of a just transition, this exploratory research indicated that more advocacy and policy attention needs to be paid to improving both social and environmental outcomes for those populations and communities already experiencing persistent, multiple, and complex disadvantage. Our findings will inform the 2020 iteration of DOTE, which will investigate the presence and setting of local environmental risks and threats that impact communities, supplementing pre-existing indicators of social disadvantage.

### Conclusion

The journey of Jesuit Social Services in ecological justice has not been without its challenges; however it has also been instructive regarding where to focus our efforts, and has brought rich collaborations with organisations and communities beyond our traditional partners.

The continuing journey has taught the importance of being organisationally adaptive to the conditions on the ground and accompanying each other and our participants into very uncertain futures with a constant awareness of restorative and relational justice.

Taking an ecological lens, we have become more aware to the challenges that lie ahead for the community services sector and the people and communities with whom we work. We consider that a just transition is the most appropriate way in which we can collectively face the multiple challenges of uncertain and precarious climate, social and economic futures.

The outcomes of any path taken will be unpredictable and require flexible but considered responses. Our future depends on the mobilisation of all sectors – government, community and private – around a collective, collaborative commitment to reduce emissions and a just and sustainable future.

The community services sector has much to contribute to the realisation of a just transition, particularly in the areas of advocacy, program delivery and education and training. As a sector we need to simultaneously work to reduce the barriers to our engagement with and responsiveness to ecological threats, while building our internal capabilities. Increasing the sector's capabilities and resilience will, in turn, help building the community capability and resilience. Jesuit Social Services is committed to supporting and participating in initiatives and policies that work towards a just transition and looks forward to engaging with others in this necessary journey towards ecological justice.

## Recommendations

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Meeting the challenges of climate change requires leadership by governments of all levels:

1. Recognising the serious and imminent risk posed by climate change to the planet and people, Jesuit Social Services calls on federal, state and territory governments to act swiftly to legislate an emissions reduction target of net zero by 2050 and set a clear path to a just transition to a low-carbon future.
2. Recognising the collective effort required to achieve this goal, we recommend that governments establish coordinating bodies that facilitate cross-sector collaboration to work towards a just transition. This should include engagement across all levels of government, together with industry, researchers and technical experts, environmental organisations, the community services sector and communities themselves.

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At the same time, the community services sector has a key role to play working alongside, mobilising and advocating with communities in raising awareness, trialling innovative projects and working alongside government, business and philanthropy to make sure that we achieve a just transition.

To support the role of the community sector, Jesuit Social Services recommends that governments:

3. Increase funding and resources for organisations and communities seeking to trial, test and implement climate change adaptation, mitigation and transformation activities.
  4. Increase access to and translation of latest research and evidence-based practice relevant to the community services sector.
  5. Support initiatives within the community services sector to increase awareness of ecological justice and how to minimise environmental injustice and inequity, with a focus on organisational culture and program delivery.
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