



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops call for an inclusive and sustainable economy

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Australians are called to work for an economy that is based on principles of justice and equity – one that is at the service of all, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised, says the Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen.

Bishop Long was speaking at the launch of the Australian Catholic Bishops' 2017–2018 Social Justice Statement, entitled *Everyone's Business: Developing an inclusive and sustainable economy*.

The Bishops point out that although Australia has enjoyed a quarter-century of uninterrupted growth, the benefits have not been spread evenly. The top 20 per cent of households have received far greater increases in wealth than the poorest 20 per cent and nearly three million Australians, including 730,000 children, are living in poverty.

The Bishops point to four major examples of economic injustice and inequity today.

Growing numbers of Australians are in insecure, ill-paid work, and some live below the poverty line even though they are employed. Those on welfare are also likely to be in poverty and face greater bureaucratic hurdles. Australia's housing crisis has terrible effects on those on welfare, low-paid workers, asylum seekers and older renters, especially women. And Indigenous Australians are disadvantaged in health, education, employment and income, while they are grossly overrepresented in our prisons.

Drawing on the teachings of the Gospel and more than 120 years of Catholic social teaching, the Statement sets out five principles that could form the foundations of a just and inclusive economy:

- People and nature are not mere tools of production.
- Economic growth alone cannot ensure inclusive and sustainable development.
- Social equity must be built into the heart of the economy.
- Businesses must benefit all society, not just shareholders.
- The excluded and vulnerable must be included in decision-making.

The Bishops call for a new approach to the economy that prevents exclusion from the outset and builds justice into the very foundation of our society.

They echo the words of Pope Francis, who calls us to be 'an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society'.

The 2017-2018 Social Justice Statement can be downloaded from the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/>

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