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MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 4AM, NOVEMBER 19, 2021

Complex web of disadvantage persists in small number of South Australian communities: Jesuit Social Services

A new report from Jesuit Social Services shows a small number of communities in South Australia continue to experience a complex web of disadvantage including no internet access, poor air quality and high levels of prison admissions, which makes it challenging to improve life opportunities.

Dropping off the Edge 2021 is a summary of disadvantage in every community across each Australian state and territory researched by experts from the University of Canberra. It builds on Jesuit Social Services' research into locational disadvantage conducted over more than 20 years including previous *Dropping off the Edge* reports in 2007 and 2015.

"This report paints a stark picture of the disproportionate distribution of disadvantage across Australia, showing us that a very small number of communities continue to experience a complex web of persistent and multi-layered disadvantage," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

"We found that 19 of the top 20 most disadvantaged areas in South Australia ranked as highly disadvantaged in 2015; and that half were also disadvantaged in 2007. Just four areas, about 2 per cent of locations, accounted for 24 per cent of the most disadvantaged rank positions across all indicators which is a twelve-fold overrepresentation."

Dropping off the Edge 2021 also finds that of the 20 most disadvantaged communities in South Australia, 12 are outside Adelaide with disadvantage centred around the remote north of the state, and north-west of Adelaide. A total of 17 locations across the state experience severe disadvantage, meaning they are in the top five per cent across five or more indicators of disadvantage.

The new report was expanded to include indicators of intergenerational disadvantage and environmental disadvantage for the first time.

"When we expanded our lens to look at additional indicators of disadvantage like teenage pregnancy, heat stress and poor air quality for the first time, generally we found that the inclusion of these indicators didn't change the locations that presented as highly disadvantaged. This intergenerational and persistent disadvantage is a serious barrier to people living in these communities across Australia being able to reach their potential.

"Each of these communities has inherent strengths and resilience which we want to see fostered and supported so that people can flourish. For nearly 45 years, Jesuit Social Services has worked in a strengths-based way with people and communities to help them reach their potential."

Ms Edwards says *Dropping off the Edge* is a roadmap for Federal, State and local Governments to identify the communities most in need of support and the unique challenges each one experiences.

"It will take tailored, targeted and enduring work to truly create better outcomes for future generations in these locations. Priority investments and well-chosen interventions in some of the most disadvantaged communities across Australia can make a significant impact. We recognise that some initiatives are already underway that work in this way. Our research underlines the need for these to be given long term support in order to ensure that the effects of decades of poor policy and inadequate support services can be turned around in a way that is sustained.



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“We want a future where all Australians, regardless of where they live, have the same opportunity to live healthy, positive and productive lives.”

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