**27 August 2020**

**BISHOPS’ ANNUAL SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT FOCUSES ON MENTAL HEALTH**

The Catholic Bishops of Australia have released the Social Justice Statement 2020-21, on the critical subject of mental health, in the lead-up to Social Justice Sunday on August 30.

The statement titled ***To Live Life to the Full: Mental health in Australia today***, encourages faith communities, governments and individuals to make mental health a priority.

The statement encourages parishes and local communities to be places of welcome and inclusion, overcoming the barriers and stigma so often faced by people experiencing mental ill-health.

In addition to the written statement, which is free to download, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference’s Office for Social Justice has also produced an audio recording of the statement.

**Bishop Robert McGuckin will launch the statement in the Toowoomba Diocese August 28.**

An occasion such as this would typically include a gathering of people; however, in the current climate, a new format is required. This statement will be launched by Bishop McGuckin, followed by a round table discussion with local mental health experts and advocates. Parishes and other community members have been invited to join this launch via Zoom.

Bishop McGuckin and Dr David Tutty, Executive Officer for the Toowoomba Catholic Social Justice Commission, will welcome Derek Tuffield OAM, CEO Lifeline Darling Downs and South East Queensland, Julie Humphreys, Pastoral Care Team member at Toowoomba Hospital, Deborah Bailey, CEO Toowoomba Clubhouse and Anne Doyle, Advanced Health Worker – Mental Health to Bishop’s House for the launch.

“This is an important message in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had such a wide-reaching effect on everyone in our community,” Bishop McGuckin said.

“The heightened sense of anxiety we all feel in this moment is an opportunity to become more empathic and active in fostering the mental health of everyone. We should take this moment to be aware of those who most need our support.”

The 2020-2021 Social Justice Statement, ***To Live Life to the Full: Mental health in Australia today***, can be downloaded from the Office for Social Justice website: [**http://bit.ly/SocialJustice\_2020**](https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2020/07/03/social-justice-statement-2020-21/)

**The local launch is at 11:00am Friday 28/8/20 and can be viewed via Zoom**<https://zoom.us/j/94518461598?pwd=MDdYZ0hFYnl1MnQ5dUZQbzRtS0wxQT09>
Meeting ID: 945 1846 1598
Passcode: 496538

*Bishop Robert McGuckin is available for interview prior to the event.*

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