Narratives of Hope: Community Engagement

The Australian Catholic University (ACU National) sees community engagement as enhancing the dignity and wellbeing of people and communities especially those who are the most disadvantaged or marginalised.

ACU National sees community engagement as part of everyday life at the university. Community engagement is not an add-on or the responsibility of some, and not others. Community engagement is for everyone in every discipline and every faculty. (ACU National’s Community Engagement website)

The university’s ideal graduates will be highly competent in their chosen fields, ethical in their behaviour, with a developed critical habit of mind, an appreciation of the sacred in life, and a commitment to serving the common good. (ACU National Mission Statement)

Purpose:
To assist students understand community engagement and actually be involved in it, by identifying and appreciating a faith-based community organisation whose work attempts to transform situations in which people or groups find it hard to have a sense of hope.

Task:
Identify the organisation you want to connect with and have it approved by the lecturer by Week 3.

See¹
Once your choice is approved, meet with a representative of the organisation and with their help come to a knowledge and understanding of:

➢ The values upon which the organisation is built and operates
➢ The people the organisation serves (‘clients’)  
➢ Specific challenges to hope which the organisation has identified for the people it serves
➢ Specific initiatives the organisation undertakes to help people develop (or recover) a sense of hope
➢ Ways in which individuals can share in the vision and engage with the mission of the organisation

¹ The unit uses Cardinal Joseph Cardijn’s See - Judge - Act model as a tool of review, reflection and action.
Judge
Having collected and reported on this information, explain how this work connects with the Christian vision of humanity, hope and salvation.

Act
In some cases, it may be possible for you to enhance your knowledge and understanding by participating in some work or activity of the organisation and actually engaging face-to-face with some of the people it serves. If you are offered this opportunity, please be sensitive to the dignity of the people you meet; always engage with them as fellow human beings, not as the object of your study or curiosity.

To help you undertake this project, there will be no class meetings or tutorials in week 4. Your written paper should be 2000 words; it must be delivered to the lecturer by 4pm, 18th September, 2008

Marking Criteria:
The marking criteria for this task are:

Content
• understanding of major elements of the chosen organisation’s mission and work;

Engagement
• evidence of critical appreciation of the organisation’s mission and work;
• ability to demonstrate connections between the organisation’s work and the Christian vision of humanity, hope and salvation;

Research
• written paper meets requirements set out in Unit Outline, including an adequate bibliography in appropriate form;
• consistent use of theological vocabulary and inclusive language.

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