



Vinnies
good works

NSW SOCIAL JUSTICE
NETWORK

SOCIAL JUSTICE DAYS AND EVENTS NOTES

HOMELESSNESS WEEK: 5 – 11 AUGUST

Homelessness Week aims to build community support and government commitment to end homelessness. That involves raising awareness about the causes and impacts of homelessness, and educating the community on how they can use their power as citizens to make a difference.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Policy and Advocacy Team have prepared these notes for Members and Volunteers who would like to speak about homelessness in their parishes, schools and local communities.

Bulletin notice:

Everyone in our community should have a stable, safe and healthy place to call home. The theme of this year's Homelessness Week is "Homelessness Action Now!" It is a week in which we highlight the need for action to better support people experiencing homelessness to get the services they need. The Society of St Vincent de Paul NSW assists individuals and families who do not have access to long-term, safe and stable accommodation.

Vinnies NSW continues its call for a political commitment for a substantial boost in long term funding of homelessness services, to restore the social housing safety net, and for rental standards that secure tenancies and set fair limits on rent increases. You can find out more about the Society's calls for homelessness action on its Social Justice website at <https://socialjustice.vinnies.org.au/>

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SPEAKING NOTES:

This week the Society of St Vincent de Paul NSW is joining in activities around the nation to mark Homelessness Week. The 2024 theme, “Homelessness Action Now!”, highlights the need to address a crisis that is getting worse every day.

Around Australia, on any given night, there are over 120,000 people experiencing homelessness. Here in New South Wales, that’s around 35,000 people, a 27% increase over the last decade. And the number of people sleeping rough has increased by 69% in just the last two years. Many more are at risk of homelessness, with soaring costs of living including high rent increases and energy price hikes pushing people to the edge of crisis. Almost half of the people that Vinnies assists are in housing stress. And the lack of social housing places means that over 125,000 people are on a waiting list, many for up to ten years.

The St Vincent de Paul Society sees the people behind these statistics every day, whether it’s during our home visitations, in our retail stores or when providing our homelessness services.

Chronic housing stress leaves people without money to pay for household essentials including medication, food and electricity. It can be a catalyst for relationship breakdown, domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental ill-health. It impedes access to education, employment and support services. It leads to homelessness. Sadly, children are particularly at risk and homelessness impacts on their ability to flourish and lead happy, healthy and safe lives.

The Catholic Church has spoken of the need for concerted action on homelessness. In their 2019 Social Justice Statement, the Australian Bishops said:

In the face of entrenched homelessness in such a prosperous nation, it is time for Australia to reassert the true value of housing as a human right that is fundamental to individual and family wellbeing. All are our neighbours – all are owed this right.

When this right is denied or placed under threat, the dignity and the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities is harmed.

Our immediate challenge is to help people on the brink of a crisis by supporting them with food, medicines, bills, and other expenses and temporary housing.

Vinnies members do this every day through our 370 conferences. We also provide 100 frontline services and 26 homelessness services across New South Wales. Your contributions and donations to our appeals are essential in assisting people who are homeless or at risk.

But we can’t do it alone. Much more needs to be done to end homelessness and to ensure that when it occurs, it is rare, brief and not repeated.

Vinnies NSW continues to call on governments for a substantial long-term funding boost to homelessness services. It is wonderful that \$6 billion has been announced for social housing in the NSW Budget; but more will be needed to ensure housing as a human right. We also welcome the Government’s announcement of the removal of ‘no grounds’ evictions and will continue to advocate for the setting of fair limits on rent increases.

You can find out more about our homelessness and housing advocacy on our Social Justice website at [“socialjustice.vinnies.org.au”](https://socialjustice.vinnies.org.au)

The God-given dignity of each individual and family without a safe and secure place to call home demands *Homelessness Action Now!* and housing as a human right.

Please consider how you can support Vinnies and join our work to end homelessness. If you would like to find out more or lend a hand as a Vinnies member or volunteer, please come and speak with me after Mass.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Visit the **Homelessness Australia** website for further information and resources for Homelessness Week: <https://homelessnessaustralia.org.au/>
- Visit the **Vinnies Social Justice Network** website for our latest Social Justice Statements on: Homelessness, Social Housing, and Fair Rentals: <https://www.vinnies.org.au/nsw/advocacy/social-justice-statements>
- Join the **Make housing more affordable** campaign <https://socialjustice.vinnies.org.au/campaign/make-our-communities-affordable/>

NSW is experiencing a housing affordability crisis due to a severe lack of secure and affordable rental housing for people on moderate and low incomes. One way to fix this is to ensure that any new housing developments include affordable rental housing. An alliance of community sector organisations, including St Vincent de Paul Society NSW are seeking people across NSW who are willing to form, or be part of, a local group to start a community conversation about affordable housing. Local government elections are being held on 14 September 2024 and this provides an ideal opportunity to demonstrate public support for more affordable housing. Your group will determine the advocacy approach that's best for your local area - whether it be a petition or letter to your local councillor or an in-person meeting asking your local councillor for more affordable housing. To get involved, contact us at social.justice@vinnies.org.au or the Sydney Alliance at: admin@sydneyalliance.org.au.

- Read the Society of St Vincent de Paul National Council's **Housing and Homelessness Paper**: <https://www.vinnies.org.au/advocacy/housing-and-homelessness/policy-paper>
- Read the Australian Catholic Bishops' **2018-19 Social Justice Statement: A Place to Call Home – Making a home for everyone in our land**: <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2019/11/19/social-justice-statement-2018-19/>

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES AND RESOURCES:

- Homelessness NSW: <https://homelessnessnsw.org.au/>
- Shelter NSW: <https://shelternsw.org.au/>
- Faith Housing Alliance: <https://fha.org.au/>
- Tenants' Union of NSW: <https://www.tenants.org.au/>
- NSW Rental Commissioner: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/fair-trading/about/rental-commissioner>

