



Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for May 2020

Supporting National Reconciliation Week

The theme for this year's National Reconciliation Week – In this together – resonates in so many ways as we navigate the shared challenges presented by COVID-19.

Running from 27 May to 3 June, National Reconciliation Week commemorates two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey – the successful 1967 referendum, and the High Court Mabo decision. It also immediately follows National Sorry Day on 26 May, which this year, is also the third anniversary of the Uluru Statement of the Heart.

Although physical distancing requirements will this year limit our capacity to come together for physical events, the week still presents an opportunity to reflect on our history, and turn our minds to the contribution each of us can make towards reconciliation.

To learn more about Reconciliation Week and find out how you can get involved head to [Reconciliation Australia](https://www.reconciliation.org.au). For more ideas on actions that you, your team or your conference could take during the week, [see these suggestions from the Vinnies NSW RAP Committee](#).



Register for our webinar on the Uluru Statement

On Wednesday 27 May 1967, the Australian people overwhelmingly voted yes to formally counting Indigenous Australians as part of our nation's population. More than 50 years later, the Uluru Statement from the Heart calls us to again come together to effect change: 'in 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard'.

This coming Wednesday, Vinnies members, volunteers, supporters and staff are invited to join our Wednesday Webinar to learn more about the Uluru Statement, understand its importance, and find out what you can do to support it. There are a handful of places still available – [please click here if you'd like to register](#).

Over the Wednesdays that follow we're hosting webinars on [Drug Law Reform](#), [People seeking asylum: Protection and the pandemic](#), and [Raise the Rate: Towards a stronger social security system](#). Due to popular demand, we'll also repeat our first webinar, [Advocacy: Speaking out against social injustice](#). Please click on the links to register.

To everyone who has registered for an upcoming webinar already, thank you for your interest and enthusiasm. We look forward to seeing you one coming Wednesday!



Ramping up our advocacy for more social housing

Vinnies is concerned that, over the months ahead, as people lose employment and income, there will be a significant increase in the number of people sleeping rough and relying on emergency accommodation.

Social housing should be a safety net that supports people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. But there isn't nearly enough. More than 100,000 people are already on the waiting list and, in some parts of NSW, the waiting time is more than 10 years.

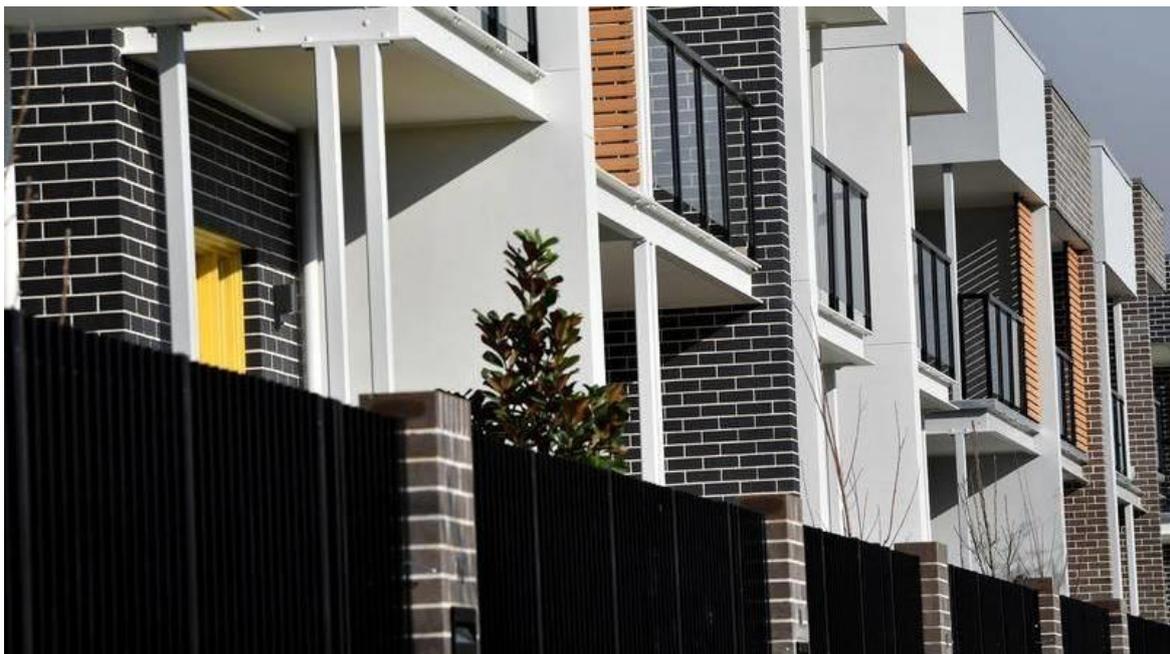
[Recent research by Equity Economics](#), commissioned NCOSS, Homelessness NSW, Tenants Union NSW and Shelter NSW also highlights the benefits to the economy from investing in more social housing.

With the above in mind, Vinnies NSW is accelerating our [campaign asking Government to build 5,000 new social housing homes every year for the next 10 years](#).

In recent weeks we have written to the NSW Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Housing and Minister for Families & Communities. We have met with the Minister for Families & Communities too, and will be meeting with the Minister for Housing over the weeks ahead. Vinnies National Council has also communicated with the Federal Assistant Minister for Housing.

At the same time, Vinnies members and supporters have been busy writing to their local MPs and signing our new online petition for more social housing. If you have taken one of these actions already thank you for doing so!

If you would like to support our advocacy for more social housing, [please click here to join almost 8,000 people who have already signed our petitions](#) or [email us if you can write to your MP](#) and we'll share a template letter you can use.



Register for the CEO Sleepout

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home. That's why Vinnies raises money to provide people experiencing homelessness and people at risk of homelessness with vital access to food and accommodation. We also provide education, counselling, employment and health services to help people overcome poverty in the long term.

This year the [Vinnies CEO Sleepout](#) is transforming into an interactive online event. Participants will nominate an alternate sleeping option and will share the experience through an interactive live stream program, logging in with others all around the country.

Last year the CEO Sleepout raised almost \$8 million and made a huge impact. To support Australians who are doing it tough this year [please consider either donating to the Vinnies CEO Sleepout or nominating a CEO to participate.](#)



Support required for people seeking asylum

Vinnies NSW has been advocating for much needed support for people on temporary visas during the coronavirus pandemic. While we welcome the NSW Government's recently announced \$20 million support package for international students, we are concerned about other vulnerable migrants on temporary visas and people seeking asylum who have been left behind.

Vinnies conferences in Western Sydney have seen an increase in the number of people on temporary visas seeking support, with people losing their jobs, being unable to feed their families, pay their rent or utility bills. A financial safety net and access to Medicare are vital to the health and well-being of all, including people seeking asylum and other temporary visa holders.

Our friends at Jesuit Refugee Service are distributing food packages to more than 630 people in their homes each week and more support is needed. If you are able to donate food to assist the Jesuit Refugee Service please call 02 9356 3888 or email jrsreception@jrs.org.au. If you can volunteer packing food, making phone calls or driving, please call 02 9098 9336 or email jane.turner@jrs.org.au.

Vinnies also encourage you to join more than 5,500 other people who have signed the [Catholics for Refugees](#) petition and to learn more about the [Refugee Council of Australia's #NobodyLeftBehind campaign](#) which we have joined along with more than 180 other organisations. Thank you to the many people who've already written to their local member of parliament, calling for a more compassionate response.

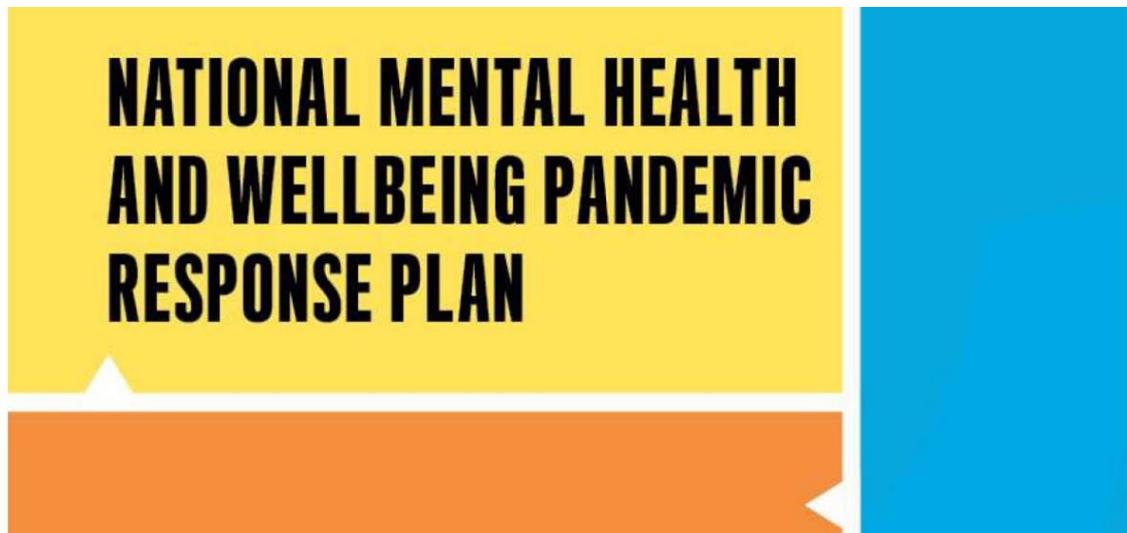


Vinnies welcomes new mental health funding

Vinnies was pleased to see the Federal Government's \$48.1 million investment to support the delivery of the [National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan](#) last week.

The Plan includes a \$7.3 million investment into research and 'real-time' data collection, \$29.5 million in outreach to vulnerable communities and \$11.3 million to communication and outreach. \$10.4 million will go towards a national campaign to remind Australians that "It's OK to not be OK". There is also funding to support vulnerable communities including ageing Australians, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and those with pre-existing mental health conditions.

More information can be found by visiting the [National Mental Health Commission](#) website.



Upcoming webinars

The Uluru Statement: Time to be heard

12pm-1.30pm Wednesday 27 May

[Register here](#)

Drug Law Reform

12pm-1.30pm Wednesday 10 June

[Register here](#)

People seeking asylum: Protection and the Pandemic

12pm-1.30pm Wednesday 17 June

[Register here](#)

Raise the rate: Towards a stronger social security system

12pm-1.30pm Wednesday 24 June

[Register here](#)

Do you know of a local social justice event or news

item that you'd like everyone to know about?

[CONTACT US](#)