



Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for November 2020

Social housing announcement doesn't go far enough

Last week, the State Budget committed to deliver 1,280 additional social housing homes across NSW. There will be 580 new social housing homes at 50 identified sites in metropolitan and regional areas; 500 new homes that had already been announced for the Airds-Bradbury and Claymore housing estates; and 200 new Aboriginal housing homes.

The St Vincent de Paul Society recognises that any new social housing is welcome but we are disappointed that the commitment fails to adequately respond to the significant and growing need for social housing.

More than 51,000 families – or more than 110,000 people – are on the waiting list right now and some families will have to wait for more than 10 years. A commitment to build 1,280 new homes falls significantly short of what is needed.

The Society is urging all members, volunteers and supporters to contact your NSW MP to express your disappointment that the NSW Government didn't take this opportunity to invest in significantly more social housing.

To find which electorate you live in please [click here and enter your suburb](#) and then [click here to find the phone number and email address for your MP](#).

The Society will continue our advocacy in the lead-up to the May 2021 Budget, urging the NSW Government to invest in the social housing necessary to ensure everyone has a safe, secure and affordable place to call home.

[Click here to read our media release in response to the 2020 Budget.](#)



Vinnies responds to the NSW Budget

While this year's NSW State Budget failed to invest in new social housing at the scale required to address the growing housing crisis, it did contain some welcome news.

The St Vincent de Paul Society was pleased to see investment in community-based mental health services, including the establishment of up to 12 Community Wellbeing Collaboratives in communities with high risk of suicide, as well as a commitment to continue funding for independent disability advocacy. Initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of children – including access to free preschool, in-school tutoring, school-based nurses and funding for evidence-based early intervention programs – were also warmly welcomed, as was the Social Sector Transformation Fund to help charities adapt and respond to COVID-19.

The Budget also saw an expansion of the Together Home initiative to help rough sleepers into secure housing. This program is already giving new hope to hundreds of people through the provision of a place to call home, together with wrap around support. With safe, secure and affordable housing the foundation needed to improve health, education and employment outcomes, we will continue to work with the NSW Government to secure the investment needed to make this a reality for everyone.

To hear more about the 2020-21 Budget and its impact on people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, join the [NCOSS Post-Budget virtual event](#) this Thursday at 10am.



Register for our advocacy webinar this week

The St Vincent de Paul Society seeks to speak out clearly wherever there is injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion as a result of our economic, political or social structures. How do we do this in ways that best effect positive change?

This Thursday from 7pm-8.30pm we will deliver our popular *Advocacy: Speaking out against injustice* webinar. This online session will outline advocacy skills and techniques, and the theory of change guiding our growing social justice network's approach to shaping a more just society.

A limited number of places are available. Please [click here to reserve your place!](#)



NAIDOC Week

The theme for this year's NAIDOC Week - *Always Was, Always Will Be* - recognised that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years.

Held during November 8-15, the week was an opportunity to celebrate the oldest continuing culture on the planet and acknowledge the hundreds of Nations and cultures across Australia prior to colonisation. Members, volunteers, staff and supporters of the St Vincent de Paul Society did so in a variety of ways – coming together for shared meals, creating art, reflecting on the [importance of acknowledging country](#), and raising awareness in parishes and schools through short talks, articles and activities. A number of Vinnies Services also [unveiled plaques of acknowledgement](#), inviting a local Elder to conduct a Welcome to Country or smoking ceremony.

While NAIDOC Week brings a particular focus to celebrating the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, there are many other opportunities to do so. Planning ahead for next year? [Click here for a list of important dates and cultural events](#) in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calendar. And if you would like to discuss ordering a plaque of acknowledgement for a St Vincent de Paul Society site, please email reconciliation@vinnies.org.au.



Next steps for Raise the Rate campaign

As Christmas edges closer, more and more people on JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and parenting payments are wondering how they will make ends meet once the Coronavirus Supplement is cut by a further \$100 per fortnight in the New Year. With unemployment now at an almost 20-year high, there is currently only one job vacancy for every 12 people looking for work.

While early in the pandemic, the introduction of the coronavirus supplement lifted thousands of people out of poverty, modelling by the Australian National University suggests that the cumulative effects of recent cuts to income support will push 1.6 million people back below the poverty line.

To help build understanding of the need for permanent and adequate income support payments, members of the social justice network are looking to invite Federal MPs to share morning tea with some of these people, to hear their stories. To find out more, email social.justice@vinnies.org.au. In the meantime, we encourage you to add your voice to the call for income support payments that don't trap people in poverty, [send a Raise the Rate Holiday Card](#) to your Federal MP, or use [ACOSS's online tool](#).

RAISE
THE RATE
FOR GOOD

Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

The Federal Government recently turned hundreds of recognised refugees, brought to Australia for medical care, out of community detention. While this release is welcome, they will be given no support to find employment, and cannot access any form of income support. To take action, [please click here](#).

At the same time, more than 290 people are still being held in Papua New Guinea and Nauru. And of the 1000 women, men and children who were transferred to Australia for medical support, over 200 remain in locked immigration detention centres and “alternative places of detention”. The Refugee Council of Australia has developed a petition, telling the Federal government that it is “time for release from detention, time for a permanent resettlement solution, time for a home”. [You can find the petition here](#).

In more positive news, NSW Health recently released a new policy directive to improve access to healthcare for people seeking asylum who are living in our community but who are ineligible for Medicare. The policy outlines the services that attract a waiver of fees – including emergency care for a range of conditions, ambulatory and outpatient care for acute and chronic health conditions, maternity services, mental health services (inpatient and community-based), and ambulance services for emergencies. [You can review NSW Health’s policy directive here](#).



Productivity Commission report on mental health

On 16 November 2020, the Australian Government released the Productivity Commission's report into mental health and announced that the Commonwealth's health portfolio expenditure on mental health is expected to reach a record high of \$5.7 billion in 2021. With almost half of all Australian adults meeting the criteria for mental illness at some stage in their life, the report suggests a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention, and the need to extend mental health responses beyond the health system, into schools, workplaces and the housing and justice sectors. [You can read the report here.](#)



Upcoming dates and events

Advocacy webinar

6pm-7.30pm Thursday 26 November

[RSVP here](#)

Managing Energy Costs Webinar

COTA NSW

10.30am Tuesday 1 December

[RSVP here](#)

Radical Help for Radical Times

Sydney Policy Lab

6pm Wednesday 25 November

[Click to register](#)

National Homelessness Conference

Tuesday 1 and Wednesday 2 December

[Click to register](#)

Do you know of a local social justice event or news item that you'd like everyone to know about?

CONTACT US

