



Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for December 2020

### Raise the Rate for good this Christmas

The St Vincent de Paul Society is deeply concerned that people who receive the JobSeeker Payment will see their incomes reduced by \$100 a fortnight after Christmas and face the prospect of returning to \$40 a day from March next year.

If you are in this situation we know this may be a difficult time for you. We will continue to advocate for a rate that allows everyone to cover the basics; but if you need assistance, help is available. You can call Vinnies Assist on 13 18 12 or visit [askizzy.org.au](http://askizzy.org.au) to find information about services and supports in your area.

The old rate of \$40 a day was not enough to live on. It forced people to choose between essentials such as putting food on the table, paying bills, or accessing vital healthcare.

Following the introduction of the coronavirus supplement we saw a marked reduction in requests for assistance from people receiving the JobSeeker Payment, even while the number of recipients more than doubled. The higher rate has allowed people to afford a healthier diet, pay their bills, and share a cup of tea or coffee with family or friends. As one person told us, it has meant she has once again been able to 'live like a human being'.

We are already seeing an increase in calls for assistance, and anticipate much greater levels of need if the supplement is removed as currently planned in March 2021.

In response, Social Justice Representatives across NSW are writing to their Federal MPs to urge the Australian Government not to reduce JobSeeker over the months ahead. If you'd like to write to your MP too, please [email us to let us know](#) and we'll send you a template letter that you can amend and email to your MP.



## Vinnies seeks your views on NSW property tax proposal

In the recent Budget, the NSW Treasurer, Dominic Perrottet, announced that our State Government is considering giving home buyers the choice to pay either stamp duty or an annual property tax.

To inform our response to this proposal, the St Vincent de Paul Society is keen to hear from members and supporters about whether and how you think the introduction of this option would assist people experiencing poverty and disadvantage across NSW.

To read more about the proposal head to the [NSW Treasury website](#) and then email us at [social.justice@vinnies.org.au](mailto:social.justice@vinnies.org.au) to share your views.



## Update on the Modern Slavery Act

In June 2018 the NSW Parliament passed the Modern Slavery Act. Despite receiving royal assent, this legislation has never been proclaimed into law. While there is a Commonwealth Slavery Act, the NSW Act is more robust in that it provides for an Anti-Slavery Commissioner, awareness raising about modern slavery, creation of new slavery offences, support for victims and appropriate penalties for businesses not meeting their responsibilities under the Act.

In response to the delay, the Legislative Council Committee on Social Issues recommended that the Act be implemented on or before 1 January 2021. Yesterday, the NSW Government advised that it has commenced discussions with the Commonwealth to ensure harmonisation between the State and Commonwealth legislation. NSW will then seek to amend the NSW Act before commencing components of the Act that are complementary to the Commonwealth Act.

Modern slavery is not as visible today as yesteryear, but is very much alive in modern society and businesses. Pope Francis has spoken out very strongly against these actions in his two encyclicals *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW will continue to monitor progress and will review and respond to the revised Act in the new year. We'll share more information as available.



### **Next steps for *Build Homes, Build Hope***

Last month, the NSW Treasurer, Dominic Perrottet, announced that the NSW Government would deliver just 1,280 additional social housing homes across NSW.

While any new social housing is welcome, with more than 51,000 applicants on the waiting list right now, the St Vincent de Paul Society was disappointed that this commitment fails to adequately respond to the significant need across NSW.

In the wake of this underwhelming NSW Budget, the [Catholic Weekly published an article by our Social Justice Representative for Broken Bay, Colin McKenna](#), reminding one and all why we need more social housing across NSW. Vinnies CEO Jack de Groot was also quoted in various national and local publications, from [Channel 7](#) to [SBS News](#), expressing our concern that the NSW Government had missed an invaluable opportunity to invest in more social housing. We also secured local media coverage across the state, from [Armidale](#) to the [Illawarra](#).

This week, Social Justice Representatives will meet with the Social Justice Team and other key Vinnies staff to consider the next steps for our campaign. Thereafter, we'll share further opportunities for members of our Social Justice Network to continue to press the NSW Government to invest in more social housing.



## Merry Christmas from the Social Justice Team!

As the end of a very challenging year approaches, Rhiannon, Mark and Sarah would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

We'd also like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has participated in our advocacy over the last twelve months.

We'll be working and contactable via [social.justice@vinnies.org.au](mailto:social.justice@vinnies.org.au) up until Christmas Eve but will then enjoy a few weeks' holiday with our families.

We look forward to working with you to make NSW a more fair, compassionate and just society in 2021.



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

**CONTACT US**