



Vinnies
good works

SOCIAL JUSTICE
NETWORK

Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for April 2021

First Nations deaths in Custody

April 15 marked the 30-year anniversary of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, as well as the release of a new NSW parliamentary report into the high level of First Nations people in custody.

Since the 1991 Royal Commission, more than 470 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody in Australia. Many of these deaths were preventable. In 2021 alone, we have already had five deaths.

The [latest parliamentary report](#) acknowledged the appalling lack of progress made since the Royal Commission, recommending that the NSW Government immediately implement all outstanding recommendations within its jurisdiction.

Many of the other recommendations supported by the St Vincent de Paul Society in our [submission to the Inquiry](#) were also reflected in the parliamentary report, including more ambitious justice targets in the NSW Closing the Gap plan, raising the age of criminal liability from 10 to 14, support for justice reinvestment, and changes to policing and sentencing practices.

In response to the lack of action and ongoing over-imprisonment of First Nations people, the Aboriginal justice coalition, Change the Record, have called on governments to take [six immediate steps](#) to end black deaths in custody. You can [join the campaign here](#).

To learn more about the Royal Commission, and what still needs to change, you can also read [Stan Grant's reflection on the failure of reconciliation](#), Pat Dodson's thoughts on the [lack of political resolve](#), or [Teela Reid's call to acknowledge the hard truths of our nation's past](#) and look to a future in which First Nations' voices matter.

MPs visit Vinnies social housing developments

Vinnies was pleased to welcome the NSW Treasurer, Dominic Perrottet, and NSW Attorney General, Mark Speakman, to a recent visit to our Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) housing at Burraneer. Last month, the Federal Shadow Minister for Housing, Jason Clare, also visiting our Jordan Springs housing site.

The MPs were given tours of the developments and met some of our tenants. These visits were valuable opportunities to showcase the incredible efforts of [Amelie Housing](#) who have designed and developed more than 500 new social and affordable housing homes across 12 sites in NSW, as well as the tailored support coordination provided by Vinnies NSW.

Over the weeks ahead, Vinnies will invite other key MPs to visit more social and affordable housing developments and housing and homelessness services across NSW. We hope that these MP visits will help encourage both federal and state governments and oppositions alike to understand the value of social and affordable housing and commit to deliver even more of this critical social infrastructure.

A First Nations' Voice to Parliament

In support of a First Nations Voice to Parliament, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has responded to the Interim Voice Report to the Australian Government. [Our submission](#) the [Uluru Statement from the Heart's call for a Voice to Parliament](#) enshrined in the Constitution.

A Voice to Parliament would commit Parliament to hearing the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people before legislating and making decisions that affect them. As a mechanism that would enable everyone in our country to better learn from and celebrate the rich and diverse cultures and knowledge of Australia's First Nations people, it would benefit all Australians.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart calls for such a Voice to be protected in the constitution - ensuring a level of stability and certainty that cannot be guaranteed through legislation alone. The Constitution is an important cultural document that should reflect the identity, values, cultures and aspirations of the Australian people, a growing majority of whom describe the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia as very important for our nation.

Many of our members, supporters and friends who attended last month's webinar on a First Nations Voice to Parliament, run in partnership with the Indigenous Law Centre at UNSW, have already made a submission to this process. **With the [deadline now extended to the end of April](#), there's just over a week left to add your voice to the call.** If you'd like a template with further guidance and information, please contact social.justice@vinnies.org.au.



Time to register for the CEO Sleepout!

On 17 June 2021, leaders in business, community and government will sleep without shelter on one of the longest nights of the year to help change the lives of Australians experiencing homelessness.

Each [Vinnies CEO Sleepout](#) participant commits to raise thousands of dollars to help Vinnies provide essential services to the people who need them.

Last year, the Vinnies CEO Sleepout raised \$5.7 million for people experiencing homelessness and people at risk of homelessness. This year we can make an even bigger impact.

To support this important event, please [register for the Vinnies CEO Sleepout](#) or [make a donation today](#).



Federal Government cuts \$56 million from homelessness services

Vinnies NSW has joined more than 180 organisations across Australia in calling on the Federal Government to reverse \$56 million in funding cuts to homelessness services including domestic and family violence accommodation services.

Almost 10 years ago, the Fair Work Commission handed down the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) acknowledging that the community services sector had been historically underpaid because of the predominantly female workforce. Since then, the Federal Government has delivered additional funding to meet these long-overdue and appropriate wage costs. While they have committed to continue to pay the ERO payment for most community services from July 2021, so far they have refused to do the same for homelessness services.

This loss of funding will impact the capacity of organisations, including Vinnies, to provide support to people in need of housing and homelessness services. Homelessness Australia has estimated that the \$56 million funding cut will mean an additional 3,458 people will miss out on homelessness services every year.

Vinnies has [co-signed signed this letter](#) calling on the Federal Government to continue to fund the ERO payment, and the St Vincent de Paul Society's National Council has also written to the Treasurer and all relevant Ministers. We've also [supported calls to reverse the cut in the media](#).

To join us in urging the Australian Government to continue their ERO funding, please [sign the Australian Services Union petition](#) and [contact your Federal MP](#).

Homelessness in Australia is due to increase **by 9%** ...



...as the Government cuts **\$56 million** from homelessness services.



homelessnessaustralia.org.au/stop-the-cuts

Upcoming dates and events

Local Council election boot camp

Sydney Alliance

21 April, 22 April and/or 23 April

[Email for more information](#)

Parliamentary Inquiries Workshop

NCOSS

8.45am 11 May

[Register](#)

EWON Consultative Council

Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW

22 April

[Email for more information](#)

Laudato Si' Week

16-24 May

[More information](#)

First Nations Climate Justice panel

Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network

6.30pm 29 April 2021

[More information](#)

Parliamentary Inquiries Workshop

Reconciliation Australia

27 May - 3 June

[More information](#)

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

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