



Vinnies
good works

SOCIAL JUSTICE
NETWORK

Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for June 2021

Investing to end homelessness

Last week's CEO Sleepout achieved a record result with more than \$8.19 million raised nationally in support of Vinnies homelessness services. \$2.81 million of this total was raised in NSW. This outpouring of generosity from business and community is incredibly heartening, especially given the increased demand Vinnies services are now seeing as a result of COVID.

On the night, NSW Treasurer Dominic Perrottet also announced \$4.9 million in funding as part of next week's State Budget to help develop two Vinnies sites into specialist accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence. He said "This is an investment and a testament to the work that Vinnies does".

While funds raised on the night, and the Government's welcome investment in our domestic violence services, will provide more opportunities for Vinnies to help people at risk of homelessness; the need for long-term safe, secure and affordable housing remains.

With 52,752 applicants on the NSW Housing Register, and in the lead up to the NSW Government Budget, we partnered with the Centre for Social Impact to better understand exactly how many new social housing homes are currently in the pipeline. Based on publicly available information, [the analysis found that the NSW Government's commitments since 2016 will deliver only 9,386 new social housing properties.](#) Further, following the investment made through the Social and Affordable Housing Fund, funding over the period 2015-16 to 2019-20 declined.

Recent budget announcements in other states have featured significant social housing spends - \$5.3 billion in Victoria and \$2.9 billion in Queensland. Will this week's NSW Government Budget (June 22) do the same?



Widespread support for more social housing

Recognising the dire need for more investment in social housing, many of you have actively campaigned for substantially more investment as part of the Build Homes, Build Hope campaign. But do voters across NSW similarly support our calls for the NSW Government meet the need for social housing housing?

In the lead up to the NSW Budget, we commissioned Essential Media Communications to find out. At our request, they undertook a poll of more than 500 voters and we are pleased to share that the results show incredibly strong support across NSW, support that holds true regardless of voting intentions.

- 81% of people agree the NSW Government should increase its funding to build more social housing in the upcoming budget;
- 80% of people surveyed agree that more social housing should be built for women and children experiencing domestic violence;
- 79% of people agree more social housing should be built for older people who can no longer afford to pay their rent;
- 77% of people agree that the NSW Government should invest in social housing to reduce homelessness; and
- 76% agree that building social housing right now is important for generating jobs and help our economic recovery.

We are incredibly heartened by these findings and have sent the results to MPs in advance of the NSW Budget as a reminder that investment in more social housing is not only necessary but would also be a popular initiative. To access a copy of the polling report please contact us at social.justice@vinnies.org.au



Join our Refugee Week Webinar

This week is [Refugee Week](#) and the theme, Unity – The Way Forward, reminds us that “the special brew of ideas from all over the world that created our great way of life can continue evolving if we work together...”.

It's also a call to action to continue working towards more cohesive communities that uphold the rights, freedoms and safety that refugees and people seeking asylum deserve in order to flourish in Australia.

During Refugee Week (20 – 26 June), and as part of the St Vincent de Paul Society's commitment to the 150 Days of Action for People Seeking Asylum, our [June Social Justice Webinar](#) is an opportunity to learn more about the challenges facing people seeking asylum, share stories about the power of collective action, and explore ideas for action in your communities.

The events of recent weeks have served as a reminder both of the lack of compassion in the Federal Government's responses to people seeking asylum (such as the decision to rush through 1,100 claims for protection by the end of June 2021) and of the importance of advocating for a more compassionate approach. Following immense public pressure, the Murugappan family has been transferred from detention on Christmas Island and reunited in

Perth. While this is a good first step, ongoing pressure is needed to achieve more lasting change. ([You can learn more about the Murugappan family's story here](#)).

Thank you to everyone who has taken action and raised their concerns with MPs and Ministers as these events have unfolded.

It is clear, however, that much more work is needed to reshape our national response. To discuss how we can work together to build empathy and reignite compassion in communities across Australia, [register to join our social justice webinar, which will take place at 12pm on June 23](#).



Local Government Elections

As Local Government elections approach (September 4) community members across Sydney and the Hunter are coming together to shape the agenda. Under the umbrella of the Sydney and Hunter Alliances, local groups are working to make sure issues such as affordable housing, energy, and support for people seeking asylum are top of mind for both voters and would-be decision-makers. So far, 12 local council assemblies have been organised across Sydney. To find out what's happening in your area, or to get involved, email social.justice@vinnies.org.au.

You can also register your interest in being part of one of these events in [Camden-](#)
[Wingecarribee-Wollondilly](#), [Lane Cove](#), [Parramatta](#), [Cumberland](#), [Georges River \(Blakehurst](#)

[Ward](#)), [Georges River \(Mortdale Ward\)](#), [Blacktown](#), [Canterbury-Bankstown](#), [Sutherland](#), [Campbelltown](#) or [Hornsby](#).

For those of you who, through your contribution to Vinnies' Right to Home campaign, helped secure affordable housing targets in Sydney's planning framework, this is also a great opportunity to check on progress. With targets not yet mandated, how many councils are now using the planning system to create more affordable homes in their LGAs? And will they commit to doing so into the future?



Audit of NSW Government's response to homelessness

Earlier this month, the NSW Audit Office released its [audit into the NSW Government's response to homelessness](#), informed by [submissions from stakeholders including the Society](#).

The audit found that the NSW Government effectively implemented a response to assist people experiencing homelessness during the height of the COVID-19 crisis. Vinnies concurs with this assessment. We welcomed the availability of hotel accommodation to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission to and between rough sleepers and the [introduction of the Together Home](#) initiative which seeks to provide medium-term housing and support services. We are partnering with the NSW Government and community housing providers to deliver the wrap-around support services that are building the capacity of tenants to maintain these tenancies.

Beyond COVID-19, unfortunately, the NSW Audit Office report found that the NSW Homelessness Strategy will have a limited short term impact on homelessness across NSW. It noted that the Strategy will have a narrow reach in terms of the number of people it assists and the locations that support is available across NSW. It also found that the Department of Communities & Justice received significantly less money than it needed to deliver the Strategy.

In response, the Society urges the NSW Government to invest in more homelessness services to support people who are homeless across NSW and to deliver significantly more social housing so that people at risk of homelessness have access to safe, affordable and secure housing when and where it is needed.



National Reconciliation Week wrap-up

During [National Reconciliation Week](#) (27 May - 3 June), members, volunteers and employees came together at events across the State to commemorate the week and reflect on the role we can each play to when it comes to reconciliation.

Taking place nearly three decades on from the landmark Mabo decision, which recognised the enduring land rights of Australia's First Nations Peoples, a virtual morning tea was an opportunity to share dialogue on the meaning of reconciliation. After opening the event with an Acknowledgement of Country, Leah Byrne, Tenancy Facilitator at Vincentian House, shared her perspective as a Kamilaroi woman.

“Reconciliation isn’t just a word; it’s an action that every person can put into practice. It is the cornerstone of any relationship – be that between people, nations, culture and language – it is what should unite us, not divide us.”

Our May Social Justice Webinar also gave members the opportunity to share actions taken under our current [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#) and discuss how we can strengthen our contributions in our next RAP. From the establishment of university scholarships, to advocacy support for the Uluru Statement, to the conscious cultivation of relationships, we hope members inspired each other with ideas for action into the future.

During National Reconciliation Week, [the Society also congratulated the Uluru Statement from the Heart for winning the Sydney Peace Prize](#), taking the opportunity to urge the Federal Government to embrace the Statement's recommendations in full by providing a constitutionally recognised First Nations Voice in Parliament and establishing a Makarrata Commission.

Events

Refugee Week

20-26 June

[More information](#)

Refugee Alternatives Conference

6-7 July 2021

[More information](#)

Finding Safety Webinar (supporting women on temporary visas)

23 June

[Register here](#)

NAIDOC Week

4-11 July 2021

[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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