



**Vinnies**  
good works

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
**NETWORK**

## Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for July 2021

### New COVID-19 supports

This week, the NSW and Federal Governments announced a range of supports for people and businesses impacted by the latest COVID-19 restrictions designed to help keep our communities safe.

COVID-19 Disaster Payments are now available through [Services Australia](#) to people who have lost income or jobs as a result of restrictions lasting more than seven days. People previously working more than 20 hours a week are eligible for \$600/week payments, while those who were working between eight and 20 hours are eligible for \$375/week. While these supports will help many who have lost paid work, they leave some people behind; again highlighting major flaws in our social security system.

People on income support are not eligible for the payments even if they have lost work. JobSeekers, in particular, will continue to struggle to make ends meet on the low rate of just \$315/week. If you are in this situation, the Raise the Rate campaign would love to hear from you via [this five-minute survey](#).

We welcome the Federal Government's decision to support more people on temporary visas than previously, and are currently seeking greater clarity around eligibility for a number of groups, such as people seeking asylum on certain types of bridging visas.

The NSW Government's support package includes additional funding for temporary accommodation for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and a boost to mental health services. A 60-day targeted eviction moratorium has also been introduced, with grants or land tax reductions for landlords who decrease rent for impacted tenants. You can find out more about these measures in the [Tenants' Union's handy guide](#).

## What's next for our social housing advocacy?

Over the last 18 months, the Society has been advocating for the NSW Government to invest in 5,000 new social housing homes every year for the next 10 years. We have collected more than 15,000 signatures on a petition that was then tabled and debated in NSW Parliament. We have had more than 250 engagements with NSW MPs about the need for more social housing. We've written submission after submission. And secured some useful media coverage too.

In spite of these efforts—and those of many other organisations—neither the November 2020 State Budget nor the June 2021 Budget included a significant enough boost in social housing investment. Most recently, the NSW Treasurer announced \$147 million for the construction and acceleration of new social housing properties across NSW; \$256 million to deliver around 250 new Aboriginal Housing dwellings; and \$57 million to expand the Together Home initiative. He also announced \$4.9 million in funding to help develop two Vinnies sites into specialist accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

But while these investments are welcome, they fall far short of meeting the level of need in the community. They also compare unfavourably with the recent \$5.3 billion commitment from the Victorian Government and the \$2.9 billion promise from the Queensland Government.

In light of the above, the Social Justice Committee of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has determined to come together to discuss whether and how best to continue our advocacy for more social housing. To inform this discussion, we are seeking input from our members, volunteers, employees and supporters. [Please click on this link](#) to share your observations and suggestions by COB on 23 July 2021.



## Register for our next Social Justice Webinar

At the last Census, more than 37,000 people experienced homelessness every day. Since then, the price of housing has skyrocketed, social housing investment has failed to keep pace with demand, and we continue to experience the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What has this meant for homelessness? Are our services coping with the increased demand? What can we do to turn this around?

This Homelessness Week, the Society is hosting a new Wednesday Webinar for members and supporters to hear from **Graham West, CEO of the End Street Sleeping Collaboration** (and former CEO of Vinnies NSW and President of our National Council) together with **Anna Scott, Manager of Pete's Place** and **Meghan Fisher, Manager of our Deniliquin Homelessness Service** to gain a better understanding of the state of homelessness in NSW and what we can do to make a difference.

The webinar will take place from 12pm on Wednesday 4 August and will run for 90 minutes. It is free to attend and places are limited. [Click here to register.](#)



## NAIDOC Week Wrap Up

Each year, NAIDOC Week in early July is an opportunity to celebrate the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This year's theme 'Heal Country!' shone a spotlight on the need for stronger measures to recognise, protect, and maintain all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture for all Australians.

[The NAIDOC website explains](#): "Country is inherent to our identity. It sustains our lives in every aspect - spiritually, physically, emotionally, socially, and culturally." It goes on to describe the lack of protections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands, waters, sacred sites and cultural heritage, and the lack of respect for First Nations cultural knowledge, understanding of Country, and traditional practices that protected Australia for centuries.

The Black Summer bushfires renewed interest in some of these practices. Through our Community Bushfire Recovery Grant Program, the Society is proud to have since supported Thungutti Local Aboriginal Land Council to establish a Cultural Burning Team ([you can watch a short video about the program here](#)).

Yet to truly heal Country, the NAIDOC Week Committee emphasises the importance of truth-telling, and the need for a fundamental change in the relationship Australia has with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"Healing Country means finally resolving many of the outstanding injustices which impact on the lives of our people... While we can't change history, through telling the truth about our nation's past we certainly can change the way history is viewed".

To this end, Vinnies NSW took the opportunity to launch our new Gan Na cultural awareness program during NAIDOC Week. Gan na is Bundjalung for 'deep thinking, hearing, feeling, and understanding'. The program is a three-part learning series that covers different world views, builds understanding of First Nations peoples and cultures, and focuses on the journey to recognition, respect, and reconciliation. Vinnies members and volunteers can access the program via the [Vinnies Learning Centre](#). To find out more, visit the [members website](#) or speak to your local Member Engagement Coordinator.



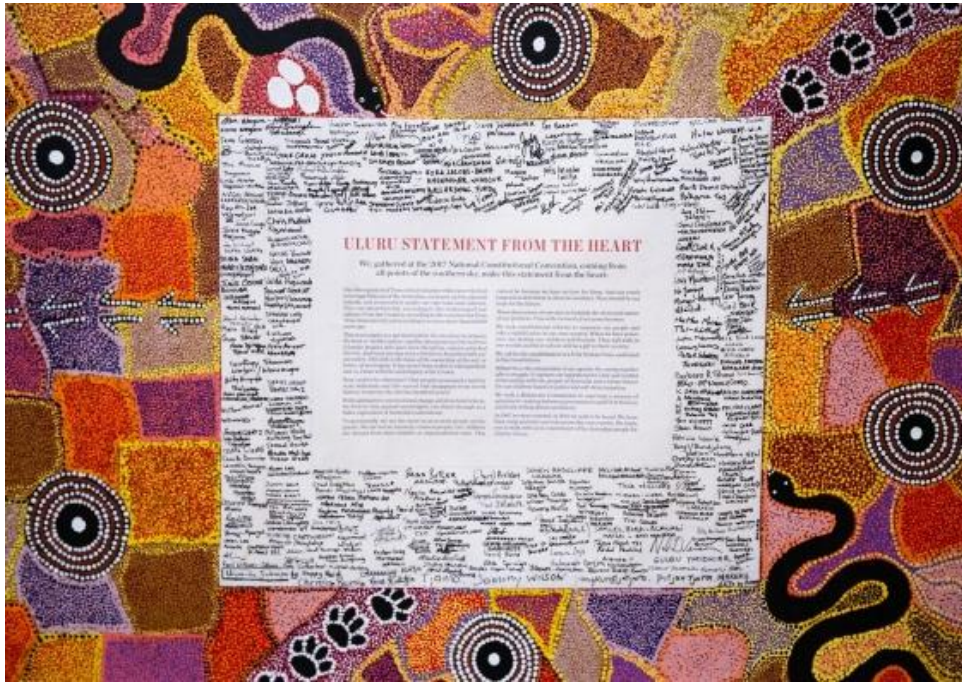
## First Nations Voice

Support for a referendum on a First Nations Voice to Parliament remains strong according to [an expert analysis of submissions to the Interim Voice Report](#) released by UNSW's Indigenous Law Centre earlier this month. The analysis found that ninety percent of the more than 2,500 public submissions to the process support constitutional enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice.

“People want the government to give them a say” said Professor Megan Davis, UNSW Balnaves Chair in Constitutional Law and Professor of Law. “They are asking the government to take this issue to a referendum. The Prime Minister should be confident from this process that there is a broad commitment across the Australian public.”

One third of submissions also said they did not support establishing a Voice via legislation rather than protecting it in our constitution. Emma Buxton-Namisnyk, a co-author of the report, said this means “The government is now on notice that the public wants them to lead on this issue, and a legislate-first approach will not cut it.”

Thank you to everyone in the Vinnies Social Justice Network who made a personal submission to this process, or a submission on behalf of their conference. You can [read the NSW submission here](#), and the submission from [National Council here](#)



## Join the Sydney Alliance Campaign for Children Seeking Asylum

In 2018, the Sydney Alliance launched a campaign for access to early childhood education and care for children seeking asylum in our community. Children seeking asylum on bridging visas – most of whom were born in Australia – are not eligible for the Federal Government childcare subsidy, which makes it out of reach for most, if not all these families. Without early education and care these children miss out on critical cognitive and social development in the years prior to school and are likely to begin school at a disadvantage.

Since 2019 six early education providers have come on board to provide free or subsidised places in their centres for families seeking asylum. The children and families who have participated in this initiative have spoken about the positive impact this has had on their children's development, well-being and social skills. However, there is still a great need for more places particularly in the LGAs of Parramatta, Cumberland, Liverpool, Blacktown, Fairfield and Canterbury-Bankstown. If you know any early education providers who might be able to provide spaces for children seeking asylum please contact the co-chairs of the campaign: Alex Hogan from Uniting ([ahogan@uniting.org](mailto:ahogan@uniting.org)) or Ruth Moraes from the Justice and Peace Office, Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney ([ruth.moraes@sydneycatholic.org](mailto:ruth.moraes@sydneycatholic.org)).



## Local Government Elections

With COVID-19 impacting communities across NSW in the lead up to Local Government elections (September 4), local groups working together under the umbrella of the Sydney and Hunter Alliances are now looking to shift planned candidate forums online.

These forums are an opportunity to ensure issues such as affordable housing and energy, and support for people seeking asylum, are top of mind for both voters and would-be decision-makers. For everyone who participated in Vinnies' Right to Home campaign, which helped secure affordable housing targets in Sydney's planning framework, this is an opportunity to check whether these targets have helped create more affordable homes locally. If not, what will your council commit to over the coming term?

Register your interest in being part of one of these events in [Lane Cove](#), [Parramatta](#), [Cumberland](#), [Blacktown](#), [Canterbury-Bankstown](#), [Sutherland](#), [Campbelltown](#) or [Hornsby](#).



## Rosalie Rendu Forum: Save the Date

On Thursday 21 October 2021 at 6pm we will hold our annual Rosalie Rendu Forum. This year the forum will explore some of the current debates in Australia related to women and violence, how poverty and inequity can increase a women's risk of domestic abuse, and how we can come together to reduce gender-based violence and abuse in Australia.

At this stage we hope to be able to hold the event in person, however live streaming options will also be available on the night.

## Events

Webinar: What do successful transitions to net zero emissions look like for people experiencing financial and social disadvantage?

1 July 2021 from 9-11am

[More information](#)

Homelessness Week 2021

1-7 August 2021

[More information](#)

Launch of the 2021-2022 Social Justice Statement - Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor

5 August from 5:30-6:30pm

[Register here](#)

Rosalie Rendu Forum

21 October 2021 at 6pm

More information to come

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

**CONTACT US**