



Vinnies
good works

SOCIAL JUSTICE
NETWORK

Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for September

A roadmap to freedom?

The NSW Government has outlined its [roadmap to freedom for the fully vaccinated](#) but for many, the prospect of emerging out of lockdown is clouded with uncertainty.

As well as concerns that [vaccination targets will mask inequities in low-income communities](#), there are fears that the path ahead will lead to a protracted experience of poverty for people who have lost income or work, and for those locked out of employment before Delta hit.

Even as the economy notches up a gear, finding a new job or regaining lost hours will remain challenging for months to come. If disaster payments stop, thousands of people face the frightening prospect of being moved onto JobSeeker and [surviving on only \\$44/day](#). For people on temporary visas there is the very real fear that they will be left with no income at all.

This prospect is already damaging people's mental health; and the experience of poverty will cause further harm.

A social security system that provides a guaranteed income for people without work, set at a level that allows people to cover the basics, is needed now more than ever. This would leave fewer people struggling to navigate a complex system of ad hoc payments in order to make ends meet. And it would alleviate pressure on charities such as the St Vincent de Paul Society that step in to fill the gaps.

If you or someone you have assisted has been financially impacted by the pandemic, and are concerned about making ends meet in coming months, please email us at social.justice@vinnies.org.au to share your experience.

We can help make sure decision-makers hear these stories over the weeks ahead.

If you need help covering the basics now, call Vinnies Assist on 13 18 12.

Register for the Rosalie Rendu Forum 2021

As concerns about a shadow pandemic of domestic violence continue to mount, [this year's Rosalie Rendu Forum](#) will examine what this means for women and their experience of poverty.

Financial stress not only increases the likelihood of intimate partner violence, but women with low incomes often have no means of escape. The lack of safe and affordable housing sees thousands of women each year become homeless, while thousands more return to abusive and violent relationships.

At this year's forum, a panel of diverse female leaders will share their insights into the relationships between poverty and domestic violence and discuss what needs to be done to break these complex connections. We'll hear from panellists Annabelle Daniel OAM, CEO of Women's Community Shelters; Christine Robinson, Coordinator of Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Community Legal Centre; and Rosemary Kariuki, winner of the Local Hero 2021 Australian of the Year award. Lived experience advocate, Peita, will also share her own story and remarkable journey to recovery.

Facilitated by Padma Raman, CEO of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, the event is an opportunity to not only raise awareness of the relationship between poverty and domestic violence – and how the pandemic has increased the risk of both – but to reflect on how our communities can better keep women, and their children, safe.

In honour of Sister Rosalie Rendu, whose courage and convictions helped shape a worldwide movement for social justice, join the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW for this opportunity to hear from inspiring women responding to one of today's most pressing social issues.

[Register here to attend this event](#) which will be livestreamed on **October 21 from 6-7:30pm**. Should COVID restrictions allow, we hope some small groups and St Vincent de Paul Society conferences will be able to gather locally to watch the event together. Where that is not possible, you are also welcome to join us online for an informal discussion and networking opportunity immediately following the event. Email social.justice@vinnies.org.au for more information.

Action for Afghanistan and the 150 Days of Action Campaign

Thank you to everyone who took time to call an MP or Senator to talk about the devastating circumstances in Afghanistan, and to express your support for the Refugee Council of Australia's (RCOA) call for the Australian Government to provide safety for people from

Afghanistan and show leadership on the global stage. RCOA's letter - signed by by more than 300 organisations and sent to every MP - [can be found here](#).

Those of you who took this action told us that in most cases, the MPs and staffers they spoke to listened to their concerns and promised to pass them on.

The Society is now working with the Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) and the Jesuit Refugee Service to support leaders, schools, parishioners, faith-based organisations and members of the Catholic community to engage with key MPs in more depth. **If you live in the Federal electorates of *Mackellar, Berowra, Bradfield, Cook, Lindsay, Wentworth, Reid, North Sydney, Banks, Bennelong or New England* and would like to sign a joint letter to your MP, or get more involved, please email social.justice@vinnies.org.au before Wednesday 22 September 2021.**

If you live outside these electorates, you can sign the [Action for Afghanistan petition](#).

We also continue to support the 150 Days of Action campaign. An online [Call to Lamentation and Commitment vigil](#) will be held on Sunday 26 September from 7:00-7:30pm. And we hope you can join us for the *Hope out of Horror webinar* on Thursday 23 September 2021 from 7-8pm. **To register, [please click here](#).**

Wilcannia COVID crisis highlights the need for social housing

As COVID-19 spread to western NSW in recent weeks, a significant number and proportion of residents of Wilcannia, including many Aboriginal families, have been unnecessarily exposed to the pandemic because of overcrowded housing.

The lack of enough appropriate housing has long been recognised as an issue in Wilcannia. The local Aboriginal health service advised the Federal Government 18 months ago that urgent and drastic action was needed to prepare Wilcannia in the event that COVID-19 were to reach northwest NSW. Before the pandemic, the Society wrote to local state and federal MPs on multiple occasions to urge government to invest in much needed social housing across the Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese.

The Society welcomes the 30 new motorhomes that have since been transported to Wilcannia so that people living with COVID-19 do not have to isolate in overcrowded housing. But we continue to call on Government to invest in enough social housing across regional NSW—including Wilcannia-Forbes—to ensure everyone has a permanent, safe and appropriate place to call home, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.



Meanwhile use housing for NSW?

Last month, the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services called for submissions into options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage. The terms of reference sought feedback on the potential for 'meanwhile use' housing in particular. Meanwhile use housing is temporary accommodation in un-used buildings like hotels, apartment blocks, retail developments and office buildings, until they are either demolished or redeveloped.

In our submission, the Society argued that NSW must focus attention on reducing and responding to homelessness and housing stress by committing to invest in significantly more social housing. We also recommended that the NSW Government complement this investment by introducing targets for the delivery of new affordable housing and by boosting funding for our Specialist Homelessness Services.

That said, the Society acknowledged that meanwhile use housing has the potential to reduce homelessness in the short term and help prepare new tenants for more permanent housing thereafter.

Importantly, we advised that any investment in meanwhile use housing must include wrap around support services for tenants with complex needs. We shared that people on the social housing waiting list should not be required to accept an offer for meanwhile use housing that would take them from their community of choice. We noted that tenants of meanwhile use housing developments should never have to endure a lesser standard of accommodation

than that available to any other tenant. And we emphasised that tenants must be afforded the opportunity to transition to longer-term housing when required to vacate meanwhile use housing.

To read our submission head to the [Reports and Submission page on our website](#).



Events

Hope out of Horror webinar
Thursday 23 September 2021 from 7-8pm
[Register here](#)

Diocesan Conversation with Refugees and
People seeking Protection
Sunday 26 September 2021, 3-4.15pm.
[Register here](#)

Call to Lamentation and Commitment online
vigil - Migrant and Refugee Sunday
Sunday 26 September 2021 from 7-7:30pm
[Register here](#)

Shelter NSW Local Housing Forum - putting
housing on the agenda for Council elections
October 14
[Email Shelter for more information](#)

Anti-Poverty Week
October 17-23
[More information here](#)

Rosalie Rendu Forum 2021
Thursday 21 October 2021
[Register here](#)

Re-engage and Renew Forum - Western
Sydney (energy affordability)
October 6 from 9.45am-12.45pm

[More information here](#)

Re-engage and Renew Forum - Orange
(energy affordability)
October 13 from 9.30am-1.00pm

[More information here](#)

Global Race to Zero Summit:

A free online event hosted by the Smart
Energy Council

20 and 21 October 2021

[Register here](#)

**Is there a local social justice event or news
item you'd like everyone to know about?**

CONTACT US