



## Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for March 2022

### Housing crisis set to worsen

Our homes are central to our capacity to live with dignity and lead fulfilling lives. They give us stability and control, they enable us to build relationships and invest in our communities, and they provide us with a place to belong.

With [the homes of thousands of people having been destroyed or damaged during recent floods](#), it is hard to comprehend the scale of devastation, and the physical, social and emotional toll this will take. And coming on the back of a [chronic and worsening housing crisis](#), the impact will be felt far beyond those directly impacted.

The challenge of responding to events such as the Black Summer Bushfires, the pandemic, and major floods in 2021 and 2022 has been made all the greater by a housing system that has for too long failed to deliver affordable housing when and where it is needed, and which fails to provide a strong safety net for people in crisis. Access to social housing is an integral part of such a system, yet proportionally, social housing has been in steady decline.

Through the [Build Homes, Build Hope campaign](#), Vinnies NSW has been advocating for significant and long-term investment to boost the supply of social housing. To achieve the scale of the response required, both the State and Federal Government must play a role. In the short-to-medium term, social housing stock could be increased both through acquiring existing homes, as well as new construction; including the more than 2,500 shovel ready homes identified during a recent member audit conducted by [Community Housing Industry Australia](#), NSW.

A long-term commitment would also give the construction industry the certainty needed to scale-up and recover from the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, [creating thousands of new jobs](#).

More importantly, however, an ambitious and long-term commitment to social housing would help mitigate future need for crises responses to housing - such as the [Together Home initiative](#) during COVID, the planned delivery of [75 new women's refuges](#), and the more recent [\\$285 million temporary housing support package for the Northern Rivers](#) - and would

help ensure these responses translate into long-term and sustainable outcomes for people who find themselves experiencing, or on the edge of, homelessness.

More information about how you can play a role in the Build Homes, Build Hope campaign will be available shortly.



## Federal Election

Thank you to everyone who has expressed interest in taking action to champion our social justice agenda in the lead-up to the Federal Election. In their policy platform, the Society's National Council has identified five priority areas for action:

- increasing housing options and reducing homelessness,
- increasing working age payments,
- helping people seeking asylum,
- First Nations self-determination and,
- improving work conditions and options for people without paid work.

To help interested members, volunteers, supporters and employers bring these issues and our proposed solutions to the attention of aspiring parliamentarians, the social justice team will host a series of small online workshops in the week beginning March 28. If you haven't already done so, you can register your interest by emailing [social.justice@vinnies.org.au](mailto:social.justice@vinnies.org.au). At

these workshops we'll brief you on key issues, share electorate-based resources, and where possible give you an opportunity to connect with fellow Vincentians in your electorate, as well as members of other organisations who share our values, so that you can work together.



## Social Justice Forum

Join us for our Social Justice Forum on 28 May 2022!

The Social Justice Forum is an opportunity to connect with others who share a passion for more just and inclusive communities. We will learn more about the root causes of poverty and the unjust structures that perpetuate it, and how we can work together for change. You will also have the opportunity to share your thoughts and experiences and help shape our social justice advocacy agenda.

All members, volunteers, employees and supporters of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW are welcome to attend. This is a free event, with lunch and refreshments provided, but registrations are essential.

To register, please [click here](#). Registrations close 14 May 2022, or when spaces are filled.



## A crisis-resilient renting system?

During the pandemic, the NSW Government introduced a range of measures to help renters manage the financial impact of the pandemic and reduce the number of avoidable evictions. With the pandemic throwing into stark relief the relationship between our homes, our health and our safety, there was broad community support for these interventions. So why aren't they permanently available to people during periods of crisis, regardless of its cause?

In a recent report, [Eviction, Hardship and the Housing Crisis](#), the Tenant's Union examines the true cost of evictions, and makes the case for a crisis-resilient renting system. The report outlines what changes are needed to reduce the number of unnecessary evictions and support renters to stay safely housed through crisis and recovery. With more people renting, and renting for longer, it argues that we should learn from our experience during Covid-19 to create a renting system that helps better realise everyone's right to a home.





## Reconciliation

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) give organisations a framework through which they can take action towards practical reconciliation. Last year, Vinnies NSW launched our [second Innovate RAP](#), setting out a two-year plan for how we will build stronger relationships with First Nations people, organisations and communities; increase economic equity; and support First Nations self-determination.

Our RAP is governed by a Statewide Working Group, and Regional Committees have also been set up to support local implementation. In May, the Metro Reconciliation Committee will host a series of gatherings to celebrate First Nations culture and renew Vinnies' commitment to reconciliation through action. All employees, members, supporters and community partners are invited to attend these events at [Wyong on 10 May](#), [Bankstown on 18 May](#) or [Bonnyrigg on 24 May](#). Registrations are free but essential.

Also in May we will mark [National Sorry Day \(26 May\)](#) and the beginning of [National Reconciliation Week \(27 May - 3 June\)](#). This year's theme - Be Brave. Make Change - challenges us to tackle the unfinished business of reconciliation. Resources are available on [Reconciliation Australia's website](#) and in the lead-up to the week, conferences, Vinnies services, schools, and community groups, are encouraged to consider how they might use

the occasion to learn more about our shared histories, cultures and achievements, and explore how we can each contribute to achieving reconciliation.



## People seeking asylum

As the war in Ukraine continues, over 2.5 million people have already been forced to flee their homes. In Afghanistan, it is becoming increasingly difficult to know what is happening on the ground with The Taliban controlling the media, and families hearing very little from their friends and relatives in Afghanistan.

Last year, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, together with other organisations, Catholic parishes, leaders and members of the Catholic community, called on the Australian government to:

- Accept an additional 20,000 Afghan refugees (extending our existing humanitarian program),
- Expedite family reunion pathways for families of people from Afghanistan in Australia,
- Grant permanent protection to all refugees on Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas, particularly the approximately 5,000 Afghan refugees on these visas.

This community effort led to more than 50 media stories, over 600 Catholic Church leaders across 15 electorates writing to their MPs, and several meetings between MPs and their constituents.

In January 2022, the Australian government announced they would resettle 15,000 refugees from Afghanistan over a four-year period. But disappointingly, these places will come from within Australia's existing annual humanitarian intake of 13,750 places, meaning others will miss out.

To help draw attention to the need for the Australian government to do more for people seeking asylum, there will be a **Rally for Refugee Justice** this Sunday the 20th of March, from 2pm at Sydney Town Hall, 483 George Street, Sydney. Join members of the Catholic community for a **reflection and lunch** before the rally at 1pm. Please contact Zoe from Jesuit Refugee Service for more information and to RSVP: [zoe.grant@jrs.org.au](mailto:zoe.grant@jrs.org.au)



## Upcoming events

### **Rally for Refugee Justice**

Sydney Town Hall

2pm Sunday 20 March

To attend a Catholic reflection and lunch at 1pm, prior to the rally, please email [zoe.grant@jrs.org.au](mailto:zoe.grant@jrs.org.au)

### **A Community Conversation about Housing (Parramatta Roundtable),**

*Northmead Uniting Church Hall*

6:20pm Tuesday 22 March

If you are interested, please email [ernest.jilg@gmail.com](mailto:ernest.jilg@gmail.com)

### **Vinnies Wyong Reconciliation Action**

**Plan Morning Tea**, *47 Howarth Street, Wyong*

10am - 12pm, Tuesday 10 May

[Register here](#)

### **Vinnies Bankstown Reconciliation Action**

**Plan Morning Tea**, *2A East Terrace, Bankstown*

10am - 12pm, Wednesday 18 May

[Register here](#)

**How are services providing care for people with co-occurring AOD and mental health needs?**

11am Thursday 31 March

[Register here](#)

**Uniting Pasifika Climate Change Pre-Election Forum, Penrith Panthers**

7pm Wednesday 27 April

If you are interested, please email

[janice.stokes@vinnies.org.au](mailto:janice.stokes@vinnies.org.au)

**Vinnies Bonnyrigg Reconciliation Action Plan Morning Tea, 248 Humphreys Road, Bonnyrigg**

10am - 12pm, Tuesday 24 May

[Register here](#)

**Baulkham Hills Reconciliation Action, St Joseph's Conference Centre Baulkham Hills**

Thursday 26 May

To learn more, please email

[Ann.Love@sosj.org.au](mailto:Ann.Love@sosj.org.au)

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

**CONTACT US**