



Vinnies
good works

SOCIAL JUSTICE
NETWORK

Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for April 2022

Federal Election

With just 40 days until the next Federal election, can you help make it about ending poverty and exclusion for hundreds of thousands of people? Too often, politics of personalities or an emphasis on self-interest eclipses the common good. Last week, National Council President Claire Victory therefore called for a [stronger electoral focus on people in real need](#). But to achieve this, current and aspiring politicians need to know that the policies that could create real change are backed by people in their communities.

The Society's National Council outlines five such priorities in their recently released election statement [A Fairer Australia](#). This statement will be distributed to party officials, sitting MPs, and key candidates across the country. But those seeking election are much more likely to take note if they also hear directly from people in their own communities.

To support people to meet their candidates, we've developed [one-page briefing notes](#) with statistics on the number of people in each NSW electorate impacted by inadequate income support and lack of social and affordable housing. We also held a series of one-hour online workshops on engaging with candidates and have put together a [handy guide here](#). If you'd like to be linked to others in your electorate looking to take action, need a hand working out how to contact candidates in your area, or are interested in attending a future workshop, please email social.justice@vinnies.org.au



Build Homes, Build Hope next steps

With floods in Northern NSW and other parts of the state exacerbating an already dire shortage of affordable housing, the need to invest in a stronger housing safety net has never been greater.

Daily, we hear reports of [families on the verge of homelessness](#), sleeping in [tents or caravans](#), and being [forced to leave their communities](#). Without significant and sustained action to address the lack of affordable housing, these trends will continue. And for the people and families who find themselves without a place to call home, the health and social impacts will last a lifetime and beyond.

In recent weeks, Vinnies NSW CEO, Jack de Groot, has had the opportunity to raise the pressing need for greater investment in social housing, and the scale of investment required, with both the Minister for Homes, Anthony Roberts, and the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, Natasha Maclaren-Jones. While these meetings were a chance to share an abundance of evidence about the high and growing levels of housing need across NSW, it is the stories of the people we assist that really cut through. At a visit to Vincentian House, Minister Maclaren-Jones also met the mother of two young children, working to give her two children the brightest future possible, but who has found herself completely unable to afford a home.

In coming months, as we reinvigorate our Build Homes, Build Hope campaign we will continue stories like these before our decision-makers. While the upcoming social justice forum will be an opportunity to engage in local campaign planning, we'll also hold a briefing session for keen housing advocates in the first half of May. Email social.justice@vinnies.org.au if you'd like an invitation



Upcoming Inquiries - Homelessness, floods.

Public inquiries are opportunities to better understand a situation, trend or event, why it is happening, and identify what could be done differently. In NSW, inquiries into two important issues are currently underway.

The Parliamentary Inquiry into homelessness amongst older people will examine the available evidence, what responses are needed, and the impact this is having on individuals and communities. [More information is available here.](#)

At the same time, the NSW Government has announced an [independent inquiry into the causes of the 2022 catastrophic flood events](#), the response, and recovery. Separately, the Legislative Council has moved to establish a [Select Committee on the response to major flooding events across NSW](#). In both processes we will seek to bring greater focus to the impacts these events had, and continue to have, on people experiencing or at risk of poverty and exclusion. In particular, we will raise the critical need for responses that meet the medium-term housing needs of people who have been displaced, and ensure a focus affordable housing remains central throughout the recovery.

To provide input into our submissions to these inquiries, please email social.justice@vinnies.org.au. If you, or someone you know, would like to share a personal story about how you've been impacted by these issues, we can also discuss ways in which we can support you to do this. Thank you in advance for your contributions.



Register for our social justice forum!

On May 28, the Saturday immediately after the Federal election, our social justice forum will be opportunity to come together, reflect on our new political landscape, learn more about key social justice issues, and consider what next. The day will include a panel discussion with decision-makers and the advocates who influence them. and workshops on issues such as the Uluru Statement from the Heart, the social justice impacts of climate change, and responses to domestic violence. We'll also learn more about key elements of grassroots advocacy campaigns - ethical story-telling, community organising, and engaging with decision-makers. And there'll be opportunity to start putting this all into action when we launch Part 2 of our Build Homes, Build Hope campaign for more social housing, and begin planning local campaign actions. You can [register for the forum here](#). We look forward to seeing many of you there!



Modern Slavery

While slavery is often thought of as something that happened in the past, it remains endemic today. The International Labour Organization estimates 40.3 million people are victims of modern slavery on any given day, with [15,000 people living in conditions of modern slavery in Australia](#). Yet it is often hidden from view.

The Modern Slavery Act 2018 therefore requires large organisations to develop Modern Slavery Statements to help identify and respond to the risk of modern slavery within their operations.

Since we launched our [first Modern Slavery Statement in 2020](#), the Society in NSW has mapped our supply chain, identified key risks, and put in place measures to help eliminate modern slavery within our business operations and supply chains. When engaging suppliers, we now seek to ensure they, too, have practices in place to uphold human rights within their own operations; work that is gradually influencing broader policies and practices. Recently, in working with a major financial services provider, we requested our agreement include a modern slavery clause reflecting a shared commitment to detecting and eradicating modern slavery. This was not only agreed, but the provider will now use this approach with other organisational clients, describing it as 'ground-breaking'.

While organisations can do much to ensure they do not inadvertently support modern slavery practices, individuals can also play a role. Many everyday goods and services - such as coffee, chocolate, fish and clothing all carry a notoriously high risk of unfair and exploitative practices. In the lead-up to Easter, ACRATH have therefore [compiled resources and advice](#) to help people consider the ethical dimensions of their purchases. And you can find a list of [fairtrade chocolate brands here](#).



Reconciliation

In the lead up to National Sorry Day and [National Reconciliation Week \(27 May - 3 June\)](#), we join with Reconciliation Australia in encouraging people to consider how they might mark these events in their own homes, workplaces or communities.

Within Vinnies, our actions will continue to be guided by our [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#), with local launches planned for [Wyong](#), [Bankstown](#) and [Bonnyrigg](#) in May.

Our RAP outlines how we will work with First Nations people to build stronger relationships, deepen respect, and deliver more opportunities. It also includes a commitment to supporting campaigns led by First Nations people, including the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#), in our social justice advocacy. Constitutional recognition is a key priority in [National Council's election statement](#), and will be the focus of one of the workshops in our upcoming [Social Justice Forum](#), held during National Reconciliation Week.

If you plan to organise an event in your own community, or to find out what other events are happening near you, visit the [National Reconciliation Week website](#).



Upcoming events

The Big Housing Debate

*Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre,
597 High Street, Penrith*

9:30am - 12pm, Thursday 21 April

[Registration to attend via Live Stream](#)

[Registration to attend in person](#)

Vinnies Bankstown Reconciliation Action

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

10am - 12pm, Wednesday 18 May

[Register here](#)

Uniting Pasifika Climate Change Pre- Election Forum, Penrith Panthers

7pm Wednesday 27 April

[Register here](#)

Vinnies Bonnyrigg Reconciliation Action

**Plan Morning Tea, 248 Humphreys Road,
Bonnyrigg**

10am - 12pm, Tuesday 24 May

[Register here](#)

Parramatta Federal Candidates

Forum, Parramatta Mission

6:30pm, Friday 6 May

Focus on affordable housing, cost of living,
refugees, and climate action. [Register here.](#)

Baulkham Hills Sorry Day Event, St

Joseph's Conference Centre Baulkham Hills

9:45am, Thursday 26 May

RSVP to info@hillsyarning.com

Vinnies Wyong Reconciliation Action

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

10am - 12pm, Tuesday 10 May

[Register here](#)

Vinnies Social Justice Forum. Mary

Mackillop Place, North Sydney

9:30am, Saturday 28 May

[Register here](#)

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

CONTACT US