



**Vinnies**  
good works

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
**NETWORK**

## Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for May

### Social housing investment vital

[Research released this week](#) shows that the NSW social housing waiting list would be cut by three quarters if the Government were to build 5,000 new social housing dwellings per annum over the next decade. The research, commissioned by the Society and conducted by the Centre for Social Impact, also shows that this investment would house 1,619 people experiencing homelessness each year. Rising house prices and low vacancy rates have seen safe, secure and affordable housing become increasingly out of reach for a growing number of people. With the situation set to worsen unless Government intervenes, investment in social housing - which provides a vital safety net for people doing it tough - has never been more crucial.

[As Paul Burton, NSW State Council President said:](#) "Our members help people experiencing disadvantage including poverty and homelessness every day. We try and get people back on their feet.... But if we can't find homes for people we, as a community, are sentencing them to subsistence living indefinitely."

The Society will continue to add its voice to calls for both the NSW and Federal Governments to prioritise investment in social housing. You can [invite people to sign up to the Build Homes, Build Hope campaign here](#). As the dust from the Federal Election settles, and with a NSW State Budget around the corner and a State Election just over 10 months away, our upcoming Social Justice Forum on May 28 will be an opportunity for us to come together to plan how we might all help build support for action on social and affordable housing in our communities.

[We hope you can join us!](#)



## Last chance to register for the 2022 Social Justice Forum!

With the Social Justice Forum on 28 May fast approaching, we encourage you to [register as soon as possible](#) if you are able to join us. The Forum is an opportunity for members, volunteers, employees and friends to learn more about issues impacting our communities, and how we can work together to address structural issues and shape positive change.

The Forum will include workshops on domestic and family violence, climate justice, and the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We will also discuss how we can better lift up the voices of those in our communities with lived experience of poverty and disadvantage, and how we can build relationships for change in our communities.

The Social Justice Forum is a free event that is open to all members, volunteers, employees of the Society, and interested friends and supporters. Lunch and refreshments are provided but registrations are essential and will close once places are filled. To ensure you don't miss out, to register [please click here](#).



## Federal election - 10 days to go!

With less than two weeks to go until the Federal Election, members of the Society have been meeting with, or writing to, candidates about the priorities outlined in [the Society's election statement, A Fairer Australia](#).

We've heard about candidate meetings in key marginal seats such as Gilmore, Reid and Lindsay, efforts to build stronger relationships with sitting MPs in seats such as Whitlam (see

photo below), members highlighting the Society's priorities at candidate forums in Hume, Robertson, and North Sydney, and letter-writing actions in many other parts of the State.

These interactions have been an opportunity to explain why key policy changes are needed, share information about how issues such as inadequate income support and the lack of social and affordable housing are impacting people in our communities, and tell the stories of individuals and families whose lives have been made more challenging due to unfair policies and lack of government investment. In many cases, candidates have committed to meeting again should they be elected - an opportunity for ongoing dialogue to help shape positive change.

If you've contacted your local candidates in support of [A Fairer Australia](#), thank you. Please let us know how it went by emailing [social.justice@vinnies.org.au](mailto:social.justice@vinnies.org.au). And if you are still planning to do this, email us if you'd like a hard copy of the election statement, or visit the [Social Justice website for facts and figures relevant to your electorate](#).





## Housing needs in the Northern Rivers

In NSW, the Society's Social Justice Committee is made up of representatives from each of the ten central councils across the State. Prior to each meeting, representatives usually submit reports about what is happening in their area - what actions have been taken, and what emerging issues they see on the ground.

Last month's report from Lismore Central Council painted a distressing picture of the impact of the floods on people who already faced significant challenges in their lives. Where the housing crisis had already had a significant impact, communities are now dealing with the loss and damage of thousands of homes.

While the NSW Government has announced a suite of responses, we are concerned that these will not meet the level of need in all parts of the community. Significant investment is also needed to guarantee access to social and affordable housing in the future. To help better understand the situation, the Society has joined forces with other service providers and peak bodies to commission research that will help shape policy recommendations to bolster the housing response. We will share this research when it is available.

This research, together with the experiences of our volunteers, members and employees who distributed cash grants and responded to people's social and material needs early in the flood response, will inform our submissions to the two flood inquiries currently underway. To support our ongoing response to the floods, [you can donate here](#).



## The Impact of Climate Change on Mental Health

Recent severe weather events have caused much damage and destruction. And for decades now, science has predicted that we can expect these events to become more severe and more frequent over time. Less well-understood has been how the prospect of a changing climate is impacting our mental health. In the lead-up to the Federal Election, Mental Health Australia (MHA) released a series of discussion papers including [The Impact of Climate Change on Our Mental Health](#) and [The Impact of Natural Disasters on our Mental Health](#).

These papers note how climate change will hit vulnerable Australians harder, exacerbating pre-existing social and economic inequalities. People experiencing financial or social disadvantage are impacted by climate change first, worst and longest because they have fewer resources to cope, adapt and recover. The fires and floods of recent years show how rural communities are particularly vulnerable to the physical and mental ill-health impacts of climate change. Like Vinnies NSW, MHA is joining the growing call for more concerted action on climate change, recognising its significant impact on mental health and well-being more broadly.

You can learn more about these issues in the Vinnies NSW Social Justice Statements on [Climate Equity](#) and [Mental Health and Wellbeing](#). [Headspace](#) and [Sane Australia](#) also have some really useful guides.

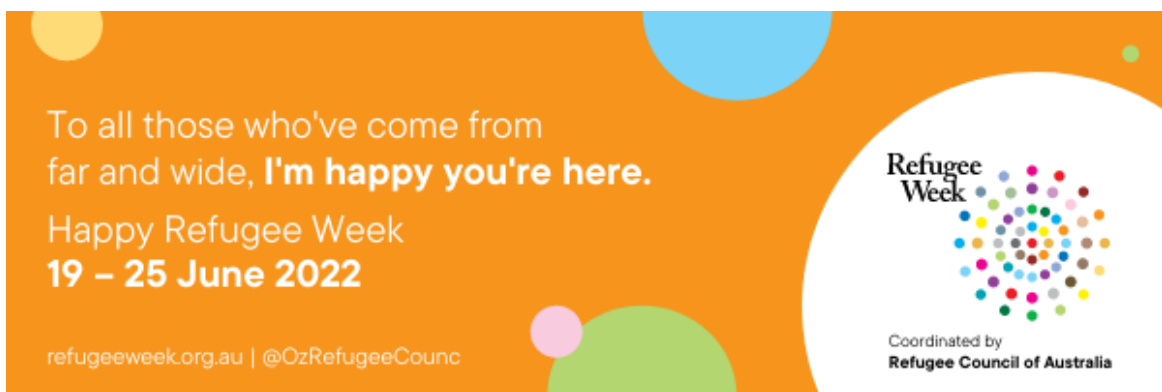


## Refugee Week 2022

Refugee Week takes place each year from the 19th to the 25th of June. This year's theme is "Healing", and the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is a proud sponsor.

The pandemic has taught us many lessons about shared hardship and resilience, but it also provided us with an opportunity to come together in order to move forward and heal. Like many people around the world, refugees and people seeking asylum have also struggled to maintain employment, financial stability, and safety. There is much that we can learn from one another as we pave a path towards a more inclusive and compassionate Australia.

In the lead up to Refugee Week 2022, we encourage you to visit the [Refugee Week website](#) to better understand the experiences of refugees, and [attend events](#) that are an opportunity to learn about, and from, one another. For additional Refugee Week resources, please [click here](#).



## Events

**Vinnies Bankstown Reconciliation Action Plan Morning Tea**, 2a East Terrace, Bankstown  
10am-12pm, Wednesday 18 May.  
[Register here](#)

**A Voice in 2023: Supporting the call for a referendum**  
Surry Hills  
7pm, Thursday 19 May.  
[Register here](#)

**Vinnies Bonnyrigg Reconciliation Action Plan Morning Tea**, 248 Humphreys Road, Bonnyrigg  
10am - 12pm, Tuesday 24 May  
[Register here](#)

**Baulkham Hills Sorry Day Event**, St Joseph's Conference Centre Baulkham Hills  
9:45am, Thursday 26 May  
RSVP to [info@hillsyarning.com](mailto:info@hillsyarning.com)

**Vinnies NSW Social Justice Forum**  
Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney  
Saturday 28 May  
[Register here](#)

**Refugee Week 2022**  
Sunday 19 June - Saturday 25 May  
[Click here](#) to learn more

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

**CONTACT US**