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SOCIAL JUSTICE
NETWORK

Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for October 2022

Federal Budget

Last night's Federal Budget included what sounds like an ambitious goal - one million new homes by the end of the decade. The Government's new Housing Accord, announced yesterday, is designed to bring institutional investors, governments and industry together to tackle the growing housing crisis. This [recognition of the need for action](#), together with the initial \$350 million allocated over five years from 2024 to support this goal, are welcome.

Recent history, however, shows that new supply alone is no guarantee of affordability for people on low incomes. While the Housing Accord seeks to deliver more homes that are well-located, efficient and affordable, details on how affordability will be defined, and what mechanisms will support this, are limited.

The Housing Accord is in addition to the Federal Government's election commitment to establish the \$10 billion Housing Australia's Future Fund to fund 20,000 new social housing homes and 10,000 affordable housing dwellings for frontline workers. Last night's budget confirmed that the Fund will also seek to draw investment from state and territory governments as well as private capital providers.

If these initiatives succeed in attracting comparable investments from state governments, this will represent significant progress towards delivering new social and affordable homes at the scale required to start reducing waitlists and arrest the increase in homelessness.

In responding to the Federal Budget, [community sector peak body ACOSS also welcomed the Budget's \\$560m investment in community services](#), as well as funding for frontline workers to support women and children escaping violence, and for aged care, paid parental leave and child care.

While delivering tax cuts that will benefit people on higher incomes, the Budget, however, was a missed opportunity to lift people on income support above the poverty line. JobSeeker payments are set to remain at \$48/day despite predicted increases in the cost of essentials such as energy, housing and food. [Read more here.](#)



Rosalie Rendu Forum

As extreme weather events occur more frequently and with greater intensity, last week's Rosalie Rendu Forum highlighted *Climate Justice: working together for a more equitable and sustainable future*.

More than 90 people from across New South Wales and beyond joined the annual forum, named in recognition of Sister Rosalie Rendu, to hear from an acclaimed group of women who are leading the way in responding to climate change.

Kellie Caught from the Australian Council of Social Service commented "people experiencing poverty and disadvantage are being left worse off and [climate impacts] can drive people into poverty. [We need to be] putting people with the least at the front and centre of these policies".

Dr Kim Loo from Doctors for the Environment spoke of how increased living costs linked to climate change are directly impacting people's health and well-being. "People who are already depriving themselves of energy are trying even harder - taking fewer showers, going to bed earlier - I'm seeing my patients having to choose between turning on their air conditioning or paying for their medication. People are living in precarity."

Issues raised during the course of the 90-minute discussion included the relationship between humans and the environment, the impacts of climate change on disadvantaged communities and on health and wellbeing, the response of St Vincent de Paul Society members in disaster-affected areas, and government policies that should be enacted to address these issue.

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW would like to thank Professor Anne Poelina, Dr Kim Loo, Ms Kellie Caught, Ms Suzanne Nichols, Ms Saimi Jeong, Ms Yvonne Weldon and Ms Jacinta McGrath for their involvement in another important and thought-provoking Rosalie Rendu Forum.

If you would like to view the 2022 Rosalie Rendu Forum, email social.justice@vinnies.org.au to access a recording.

Sydney-siders who would like to continue the discussion are invited to attend upcoming climate listening events in Bankstown (2 Nov) and Parramatta (23 Nov). [Email us for more information.](#)



Healthy Homes for Renters Parliamentary Briefing

During October, the Society supported a parliamentary briefing on the Healthy Homes for Renters campaign co-hosted by the NSW Minister for Fair Trading, Victor Dominello, the MPs for Sydney and Newtown, Alex Greenwich and Jenny Leong, and the Shadow Minister for Energy and Climate, Jihad Dib. The briefing, led by the Tenants' Union of NSW, Better Renting and Sweltering Cities, outlined the need for minimum energy efficiency standards in rental homes.

Parliamentarians heard stories and statistics about the many renters in NSW who can't keep their homes warm in winter, cool in summer, or free from mould. Poor quality rental housing is affecting thousands of people, and this is particularly concerning for people who can't afford rising energy bills, and those that find it hard to regulate their body temperatures - many people with disability, people on anti-depressants, older people and young children.

Mandated energy efficiency standards are needed to improve the quality of rental homes, and jurisdictions that have introduced these are seeing significant energy and health savings.

Parliamentarians also heard about the importance of replacing no grounds evictions clauses in tenancy legislation with a list of reasonable grounds, so that renters can assert their rights without fear of losing their home.

Jenny Leong MP, Greens Housing Spokesperson, has introduced a bill to NSW Parliament to end no grounds evictions and set out the reasonable grounds by which an eviction can occur to tackle the escalating rental crisis. By coincidence the Bill had its second reading on the same day as the healthy homes briefing, and Ms Leong is pushing for a vote on the Bill before the end of the year.

Vinnies NSW has worked closely with the Tenant's Union and other partner organisations in advocating for these policies over the last couple of years, and will continue to champion them in the lead up to next year's election.



[Join the online launch of our Election Statement](#)

As the housing crisis escalates, the Society wants to help ensure the solutions needed for people on low incomes are a priority for the next NSW Government.

To this end we've brought together a suite of recommendations focused on delivering homes that work for everyone, improving the private rental market, and making sure people who do experience homelessness get the support they need. In the lead-up to the March 2023

election, we hope you will help us bring these recommendations to the attention of those who aspire to represent our communities in Parliament over the next four-year term.

[Join us on Monday 14 November at 12pm](#) to learn more about our election statement and how you can use it to help advocate for housing justice - a home for everyone.

[Register for the event here.](#)



Report on homelessness amongst older people

The shortfall in social and affordable housing is the single greatest challenge for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness according to the findings of a Parliamentary Inquiry into homelessness amongst older people released this week.

The Inquiry report therefore recommended both State and Federal Government increase investment in social housing supply.

To help ensure the private rental market delivers more homes that are secure and affordable, the Inquiry also recommended an increase to rental subsidies, the extension of the National Rental Affordability Scheme, and stronger protections for renters, including longer leases.

And recognising that specialist homelessness services play a critical role in helping people find and keep a place to call home, but that the level of need far outstrips current capacity to respond, the report also recommended more funding be allocated to these services, including services tailored to the needs of older people.

The St Vincent de Paul Society welcomed the report's findings and recommendations, which if acted on, would make an enormous difference to people already experiencing homelessness, and to the growing number of older people who will be at risk of homelessness in coming years.

[You can read The Society's media release here.](#)



Conference Reflection & Action Kit - *Build Homes, Build Hope*

The Social Justice Team is developing a series of Reflection & Action Kits to assist Conferences in considering key social justice issues affecting their communities. The first - Addressing the Housing and Homelessness Crisis - looks at everyone's right to a secure and affordable home. It discusses the impact of the housing crisis, particularly for those individuals and families who face homelessness. [The kit can be downloaded here.](#)

The call to action is for more social housing - 5000 new social housing homes built each year for the next 10 years - through the Build Homes, Build Hope letter writing campaign. Thanks to all Members, volunteers, employees and supporters who have already written to the Premier calling for a real commitment to increasing the availability of social housing. Here are some excerpts from four letters:

I am increasingly concerned about the high cost of housing, the availability of affordable rentals and the lack of social housing in one of the fastest growing areas of the State.

- Vinnies Member

The uncertainty of living without shelter is one of the greatest existential threats a person can face... It leaves a person exhausted and in a constant state of surviving rather than living.

- Vinnies employee

I currently work as a Social Worker in a regional hospital... I have seen the devastating impact insecure housing has on people's health and wellbeing.

- Vinnies supporter

I believe shelter is a basic human right. I call on you and your Government to see this urgent need and to respond to it.

- Vinnies Member

Can you and your Conference members and friends join the call? Use the [Conference Reflection and Action Kit](#) to raise awareness.

Here is the [Build Homes, Build Hope Campaign Letter Writing Guide](#). Find out more about the Campaign [here](#).



FAQs about the Uluru Statement and First Nations' Voice

If you've been wondering why we need a First Nations Voice and how it would work, you are not alone. The Society has developed responses to these, and many other, frequently asked questions about the Uluru Statement from the Heart and a First Nations Voice to Parliament.

The FAQs are the fourth in a series of resources to support our networks learn more about the Uluru Statement and its calls for Voice, Treaty, Truth. It is part of our commitment to reconciliation and upholding the rights of First Nations people. Read our FAQs [here](#) or learn more at <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/>.



New reports spotlight the deepening housing crisis

Two new reports released in October have again highlighted the dire state of housing security and affordability in NSW and Australia.

The Productivity Commission released a highly critical [study report on the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement](#) (NHHA). The Commission found the NHHA was not improving access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing, and preventing and addressing homelessness as intended. It states that Australia has a housing affordability problem, centred around the private rental market. It notes that steep increases in rents have squeezed public and community housing, increased waiting lists, prevented people from leaving, and over-stretched homelessness services.

The Commission recommends the proposed new National Housing and Homelessness Plan improve private rental affordability and targeted assistance, including through a review Commonwealth Rent Assistance, setting targets for new housing supply, redirecting first home buyers grants and trialling new models of housing assistance. The report also noted the need to increase incomes and income support to improve affordability for low-income households.

Focusing specifically on NSW, [Aftershock: Addressing the Economic and Social Costs of the Pandemic and Natural Disasters](#), highlights the disproportionate impact of [COVID, bush fires and floods on housing security](#) for vulnerable and low-income people. This third report by NCOSS and a coalition of peak organisations shows that 54,000 households in NSW have entered or experienced a worsening in housing stress since the start of the pandemic. In regional NSW, the number of low-income households in severe housing stress has increased by 52 per cent. In the same period, there has been a 10 per cent increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness seeking specialist support services.

The report urges the NSW Government to building at least 5,000 new social housing dwellings per year to keep up with growing demand, implement stamp duty reform to improve the efficiency of the housing market, and provide greater protection to tenants. The Society has long advocated for these measures and will continue to call for urgent change in the lead up to the next state election in 2023.



Events

Affordable Housing in the Shire

Tuesday 1 November, 7-2:30pm

[Register here](#)

Climate Listening in Parramatta

Wednesday 23 November 2022, Parramatta

Mission. [Email for more info.](#)

Climate Listening in Bankstown

Wednesday 2 November, Australian National Imam's Council Office, Chullora.

[Register here](#)

Sydney Street Feast

Friday 18 November at St Mary's Cathedral, 12-2pm.

To volunteer, [register your interest here](#).

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Friday 25 November 2022

Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace online event, [Register here](#)

Alliance Assembly with NSW Treasurer Matt Kean

Wednesday 30 November 2022

Parramatta, venue tbc. [Email for more info](#).

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

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