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SOCIAL JUSTICE
NETWORK

Welcome to the Social Justice Newsletter for April 2023

NSW State Election

NSW has a historic new Labor government with half of the Cabinet comprised of women. The Premier, Chris Minns, announced a reduced Cabinet of 22 Ministers with a senior leadership group comprised of Pru Car (Deputy Premier), Penny Sharpe (Leader in the Legislative Council), Daniel Mookhey (Treasurer), John Graham (Roads), Ryan Park (Health) and Michael Daley (Attorney-General). The full Cabinet Ministry is available [here](#). The Liberal Party has yet to elect a new leader.

The new Labour government will govern with a minority in the lower house, meaning it will need support of the cross bench, comprised of 3 NSW Greens and 9 independents, to pass legislation. The upper house is evenly split between conservatives and progressives.

The Society has written to congratulate the Premier on his Party's election to government and to seek a meeting to discuss how we can work with the new government on our shared priorities. We are now in the process of writing to the new Ministers and other newly elected members of parliament.

The Premier has signalled that the government's immediate priorities are to help families and households deal with the increasing cost of living, the energy crisis and to fix schools and hospitals. The Society will continue to advocate for the right of everyone to have a safe, healthy and affordable home, in particular [more social homes](#) and increased [specialist homelessness services funding](#), as an urgent priority.

We encourage all of our members, volunteers and allies to contact their local member to congratulate them on their election and establish yourself as a trusted source of local advice, and to follow up on any commitments made during the campaign.



Clear pathway to Voice referendum

Following months of consultations with the Referendum Working Group, the Federal [Government announced](#) on 23 March the wording of a referendum question and draft Constitutional amendment for the proposed Voice to Parliament. The question the Parliament will now consider to be put to the Australian people will be:

"A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice."

A Constitution Alteration Bill has been introduced to Parliament and the Government hopes to have approval by the end of June, with the referendum to be held between October and December.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul in NSW and across the nation supports the call for a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution. This support is a matter of social justice - not politics. The Voice will help break the vicious cycle of hardship and lead to better laws and policies for First Nations families and communities.

Resources on the *Uluru Statement From the Heart* and Constitutional recognition are on the Society's Social Justice [website](#). If you would like hardcopies of any of these resources, please contact us at: social.justice@vinnies.org.au

Now is the time to get informed about Constitutional recognition and the Voice to Parliament. It's time for open and respectful conversation on this important social justice issue with your family, friends and community.



New homelessness figures released

New homelessness data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows a long-term trend towards growing numbers of people estimated to be experiencing homelessness. Across Australia, homelessness rose by over 5% from 2016 to 2021, with more than 122,400 people going to bed each night without a secure place to call home.

The situation in NSW is more nuanced. The new Census data shows there were over 35,000 people who were homeless in 2021, a rate of 43 persons for every 10,000 persons. This is a decline of 7% over the five years since the previous 2016 Census. However, the long-term trend is still concerning with a 27% increase in the numbers of people who are homeless over the past decade.

The ABS notes the 2021 figures may reflect the impact of governments' COVID measures at the time of the 2021 Census. This certainly appears to be the case in NSW where there was a 63% reduction in the numbers of people living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out. The NSW government targeted support to this cohort during the height of the pandemic through programs such as Together Home and the Social and Affordable Housing Fund.

The overall figures also hide the situation for certain population groups. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness in NSW increased by 10% from 2016 to 2021. Children under 12 years old also increased by nearly 7% to over 4,200 children in the same period.

With the housing and rental crisis and cost of living pressures worsening since the Census, the Society's homelessness services are seeing growing demand for support and accommodation services. The Society is calling on all levels of government to address the homelessness and housing crisis through [greater investment in social housing and funding for Specialist Homelessness Services](#).



Events

Just adaption and the role of social capital

18 April 2023

Sydney Environment Institute

[Register here.](#)

Building Cultural Safety in Times of Change

18 May 2023

NSW Council of Social Service

[Register here](#)

Redefining normal - mental health workshop

20 April 2023

Sydney Archdiocese Justice & Peace Office.

Croydon.

[Register here.](#)

Refugee Week 2023

18 - 24 June 2023

[Click here](#) to learn more

Is there a local social justice event or news

item you'd like everyone to know about?

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