



Social Justice

'Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is the role of justice to prevent the attack'.

– Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Principle founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society



What is social justice?

We know that not everyone in the world is as fortunate as us. Many people struggle to survive from day to day, while we live in comfort, with three meals a day and a bed to sleep in each night.

Social Justice - means that everyone has equal opportunities in life

and access to basic resources that enable them to flourish. We know this is not true, but we aim to achieve this through our good works.

Every person in your Mini Vinnies group is helping make small steps towards there being Social Justice for everyone in the world.

Stats

Global poverty: More than one billion children worldwide live in poverty. The richest 2% of adults in the world own more than half of all household wealth.

Asylum seekers: Last year 4,750 people successfully applied for asylum in Australia; less than 4% of them arrived by boat. Most illegal immigrants were U.K travellers who had overstayed their visas, yet boat arrivals continue to be persecuted.

Homelessness: 104,700 Australians were counted as homeless in 2006. In 2001, the figure was 99,900. Nearly half of the homeless population are under 25. More than half of those seeking emergency accommodation are turned away due to a lack of resources.



Social justice issues...

Global poverty

"My mother died last year when soldiers came to our village. Since then, I have to look after my brothers and sisters. I want to take care of them but I'm sad that I can no longer go to school. Sometimes we don't have enough to eat and the little ones cry."
- Safiya (Aged 16)

Asylum seekers

"I couldn't stop thinking of my father. He had been taken by the government and tortured. Although he was missing, he had arranged to get me, my mother and my sister out of the country. Our boat held

about 30 people, even though it was only meant to carry eight. It was three weeks in open water before we were picked up; by that stage, six children had died of starvation.

- Na'eem (Aged 11)

Homelessness

"The worst thing about homelessness isn't the cold, the hunger, the violence or anything else. It's the loneliness that is the hardest. That's what gets you in the end. Nobody wants to know you. People cross the street to avoid talking to a homeless person.

- Mitchell (Aged 23)



★ We work to eliminate the problem...

Sometimes it can be hard to think about the actual people who are experiencing an injustice like homelessness.

The St Vincent de Paul Society is very active in social justice advocacy.

This means that Vinnies not only supports people who are experiencing hardship but we also work to eliminate the problem all together. One of the keys ways Vinnies does this is by researching the problems to learn more about them to hopefully assist in eliminating the problem all together.

The Society's most recent social justice research report, an investigation into regional homelessness, achieved positive results for people experiencing homelessness. The report was called 'Known Territory' and it outline the individual stories of people experiencing homelessness in Katoomba in NSW.

For a copy of this report and others, go to www.vinnies.org.au and follow the social justice links.

★ Social justice principles...

'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.'

Article 1: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949)



'Where injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion are due to unjust economic, political or social structures or to inadequate or unjust legislation, the Society should speak out clearly against the situation, always with charity, with the aim of contributing to and demanding improvements.'

The Rule of the St Vincent de Paul Society (2005)

★ What can I do to help?

"The knowledge of social well-being and reform is not to be learned from books, nor from the public platform, but in climbing the stairs to a poor man's apartment, sitting by his bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces him, and sharing the secret of his lonely heart and troubled mind." Blessed Frederic Ozanam

How can I help? Record and act on the social justice issues you encounter.

- Keep a journal, diary or visual account.
- Write to tell a group like Vinnies who can bring up your ideas in the media and help spread the word even more.

- Talk to your friends and family.
- Read newspapers and watch the news sources.
- Challenge negative stereotypes and stigma.
- Have faith and believe that change begins with you.



Activity

Thinking about Social Justice can often lead us to thinking about what our ideal world would be like.

For this activity think about your ideal world, and think about the following questions:

- Would there be rich and poor people?
- Would there be illness like cancer or AIDS?
- Would there be any suffering?
- Would there be any war?
- Would anyone have an enemy?
- Would there be any racism?

Once you have thought about these questions and answered them use your answers to either write a story or draw a picture of your world. It may help to do some research about countries that you think sound like they are pretty ideal.

Tell the rest of your Mini Vinnies about your ideal world. Explain all the different parts of it. Also explain how you could apply some of your ideas to the world we all live in.

For more information go to:

Vinnies: www.vinnies.org.au
and follow the social justice links

