



# MEDIA RELEASE

6 December 2019

## Religious Freedom Legislation

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society issues this statement today to clarify some of the public comments being made about the Society and its charitable works in the context of discussion about the religious freedom legislation which is currently before the Federal Parliament.

National President Claire Victory said the Society exists to serve people living with poverty and other forms of disadvantage.

'The St Vincent de Paul Society is Australia's largest lay Catholic organisation, which aspires to live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

'We do this by respecting the dignity of every individual, by sharing our hope, and by encouraging people to regain control of their lives.

'The Society engages a diversity of people of good will – staff and volunteers – to work in its shops and across a wide range of services.

'In engaging staff and volunteers, the Society does not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, disability, gender or sexual orientation. It is not our intention to do so, even in the event of a change in legislation.

'Our shops and services are places of welcome. We engage a large number of staff and volunteers from all walks of life who are committed to offering assistance to anyone in need.

'We have not made a submission with regard to the religious discrimination legislation and do not intend to. As an organisation committed to human dignity and respect, we strive to ensure that everyone feels welcome and comfortable in approaching Vinnies to serve or seek a helping hand in times of crisis,' Ms Victory said.

*The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 conferences located in individual parishes across the country.*

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