

MEDIA RELEASE

VINNIES CALLS FOR URGENT NATION-WIDE INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL HOUSING

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St Vincent de Paul Society National Council calls on the Federal Government to establish a social housing fund of \$10 billion to address the chronic shortage of safe, affordable housing in Australia.

Speaking at the start of National Homelessness Week, CEO Toby oConnor said a National Housing Strategy is needed to address the shortfall of over 400,000 dwellings nationally.

'Such a strategy will bring consistency, commitment and accountability to tackling housing stress and homelessness in Australia,' Mr oConnor said.

'The Commonwealth Rent Assistance Scheme has fallen behind average rents over the past two decades. It should be increased by at least 30 percent and appropriately indexed.

'In the face of unprecedented projected unemployment, all governments must work to urgently address chronic housing shortage, rental stress and homelessness which have been on the rise for the last two decades but will escalate as the impact of COVID-19 deepens.

'Such a move will stimulate the economy and provide homes for thousands of people, many of whom have lost or will lose their livelihood overnight.

'Access to safe, secure, affordable housing is widely recognised as a vital determinant of wellbeing – it is associated with better outcomes in health, education and employment, as well as economic and social participation.

'The provision of public and community housing has fallen from 7.1 percent in 1991 to a shameful 4.2 percent in 2016.

'The Society supports programs such as the [Social Housing and Renovation Program](#) and the [National Coalition of Organisations who Work with Renters](#) to increase social and affordable housing stock and protect at-risk tenants through national standards.

'Currently in Australia 190,000 households are on waiting lists for social housing. There are currently more than one million low-income households (2.65 million people). This figure has doubled over the past two decades.

'Two-thirds of vulnerable private renters are currently in rental stress, and 170,000 households have less than \$250 to survive on each week after paying rent.

'The specialist homelessness service system is turning away 254 people each day.

'Half of households experiencing rental stress are still experiencing rental stress four years later.

'We join the chorus of a lot of other sensible people calling for this urgent investment which will stimulate the economy and provide sorely needed housing stock,' Mr oConnor 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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