



Vinnies
good works



**HOUSING AND
HOMELESSNESS**
VINNIES NSW
SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect. May Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured. May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith, and reconciliation.

**To join Vinnies NSW in building a more
just and compassionate society visit
socialjustice.vinnies.org.au
or call 0448 832 400.**

OUR VISION

Everyone has the right to home. A home is not just the roof over your head. It provides light and warmth, food and comfort. It is where we raise our families, socialise with our friends, and become part of our local community. Home makes it possible to study to realise our potential, to maintain gainful employment, and to retire with dignity. Home is a place where we can belong.

Government plays a critical role in ensuring that all people—especially those experiencing poverty and disadvantage—have access to housing that affords them physical safety, protection from the elements, and security of tenure, at a cost that does not compromise access to other essentials like food and energy.

THE CHALLENGE

NSW is experiencing a housing crisis. The persistent high cost of housing means that purchasing a home remains out of reach for many people. This is particularly so for low-income households. Less than 3% of homes across our entire state are affordable to buy for those on very low incomes.¹

The high cost of buying a home means people are renting for longer periods of time. But rental properties are also unaffordable for many. Three quarters of lower-income renters in NSW—and nine out of ten very-low-income renters in Sydney—are experiencing housing stress*.² Less than 1% of rental properties are affordable to almost all families and individuals on low incomes in Sydney.³

At the same time, our housing system has not adapted to ensure that renters have the security they need. Of the two million people renting their home in NSW, nearly one in ten have been evicted with no grounds. And one in seven renters report not making a complaint or asking for a repair because they fear adverse consequences.⁴

When the private rental market is out of reach, people must be able to access social and affordable housing to meet their need for a home. But demand significantly exceeds supply. Currently, nearly 80,000 households across NSW need affordable housing, but their needs are unmet.⁵ Meanwhile, more than 50,000 households are waiting for social housing and wait times exceed 10 years in most NSW cities.⁶ Without significant additional investment, this chronic shortage of social and affordable housing across NSW will grow to 316,700 households by 2036.⁷

The high cost of private housing and ongoing shortage of social and affordable housing is contributing to escalating homelessness. Between 2011 and 2016 homelessness in NSW increased by more than 37%—significantly, greater than in any other state or territory—such that one in every 200 people is now homeless.⁸ Of these, some are sleeping rough – living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting and living out of their cars. Many more rely on temporary arrangements like supported accommodation, boarding houses, and the generosity of friends and family. Others are forced to live in severely crowded conditions.

People experiencing homelessness should be able to access crisis accommodation. But as homelessness has increased, so too has demand for these services, with many people now unable to access the help they need.⁹ A lack of practical alternatives compels many people to stay in dangerous environments, including women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Vinnies supports many people without a home. State, Federal and local governments also take significant action to address homelessness. But we are facing a housing crisis. And with more and more people living in chronic housing stress, facing poverty, or experiencing homelessness, much more needs to be done."



LESS THAN 1% OF RENTAL PROPERTIES ARE AFFORDABLE TO FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS ON LOW INCOMES IN SYDNEY.¹



THREE QUARTERS OF ALL LOW-INCOME RENTERS LIVE IN HOUSING STRESS.



OVER 100,000 PEOPLE IN NSW ARE WAITING FOR SOCIAL HOUSING.



WAIT TIMES FOR SOCIAL HOUSING EXCEED 10 YEARS IN MOST NSW CITIES.



HOMELESSNESS IN NSW JUMPED BY 37% BETWEEN 2011 AND 2016. ALMOST 38,000 PEOPLE IN NSW NOW HAVE NO PLACE TO CALL HOME.

* A household is described as being in housing stress if it pays more than 30% of its income in housing costs and falls within the bottom 40% of Australia's income distribution.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW welcomes the NSW Government's pledge to reduce rough sleeping by 50% by 2025, and is committed to working with Government and other partners to deliver this commitment.

To help achieve this outcome and ensure everyone has a safe, secure and affordable place to call home, we call on the NSW Government to:

- Build 5,000 additional social housing dwellings every year for the next ten years.
- Mandate affordable housing targets of 15% on all new residential developments on private land and 30% on all new residential developments on Government-owned land.
- Improve the security and affordability of rental accommodation by abolishing 'no grounds' evictions and mandating minimum energy efficiency standards for all public and private rental properties.
- Reform taxation arrangements to bring underutilised land and housing to the market, including introducing a tax on long-term vacant residential properties and transitioning from stamp duty to a broad-based land tax.

We call on the Federal Government to:

- Develop a National Housing Strategy to guide efforts to meet current and projected need for social and affordable housing.
- Adopt a national target to halve homelessness by 2025.
- Invest in building more social and affordable housing to meet unmet need.
- Increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance.
- Reform negative gearing and capital gains tax concessions.

The St Vincent de Paul Society also urges local councils to:

- Commit to and deliver meaningful affordable housing targets in local strategic and housing plans.
- Provide incentives for not-for-profit community housing providers to develop more social and affordable housing in their local government areas.

OUR PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

Every day, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW supports people experiencing poverty and disadvantage to access and maintain safe, secure, and affordable places to live.

Vinnies focuses on prevention and early intervention. Our members visit people in their homes where they can identify those at risk and refer them to our homelessness services. We then offer case management, support services, and referral to other agencies to help keep people at home. Specialist responses are provided for women and children wishing to leave family and domestic violence while retaining existing housing.

Where people do experience homelessness, Vinnies seeks to ensure they can move into permanent accommodation, supported by wrap-around services, as quickly as possible.

Through our community housing provider, Amelie Housing, we provide social and affordable housing with tailored support to meet the needs of the growing number of people locked out of the private rental market.

Vinnies also offers transitional accommodation with case management to support people to secure and maintain their own tenancies in the community. And we deliver crisis accommodation for those experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

In each instance, appropriate support services are available, including drug and alcohol programs, domestic violence services, independent living skills training, access to meals and laundry, and medical care. Those with more complex needs can access intensive support to help break the cycle of homelessness.

SHELLEY'S* STORY

As a happily married, devoted stay-at-home mother and community volunteer, Shelley never thought she would become homeless. But her life changed forever when her husband became violent. She took out an apprehended violence order to protect herself and three children under the age of four, and soon found herself without the safety and security of a home. “We lost our house, our possessions; it became a very desperate position within a week. I was beside myself trying to contact the government... but no one could help.

Every door seemed closed to us,” Shelley said. With no one to turn to she found valuable financial and emotional support from Vinnies before then moving into a tiny granny flat for what should have been a short-term stay. She applied for social housing but years later is still without a place of her own large enough to raise her growing children – one of whom lives with autism and intellectual disabilities. In spite of the hard road life has taken her down in recent years, Shelley remains positive in the face of adversity. “No matter your circumstance, everybody has value. You can’t predict what’s going to happen in life, so I choose to be positive,” she said.



*Name has been changed for confidentiality reasons

MARGARET'S* STORY

A talented girl who excelled at dancing, art and woodwork, Margaret's childhood was marred by horrendous abuse from the age of five. By 16 she was living in a tent after her stepfather decided there was no room for her at home. When she first reached out to Vinnies, Margaret was in an emotionally dark place and living in a cold and damp room with mould on every wall. But things began to change with regular support and companionship from the local Vinnies. “I'm so grateful to St Vincent de Paul, to the deepest core of my heart,” Margaret told us. “They [would ring] just to make sure that I was alright, just to say hi.” After years on the waiting list, Margaret was finally offered public housing. As moving day approached, Vinnies members helped Margaret sort and pack, removed old furniture and overgrown rubbish from the property, organised and paid for removalists, and sourced replacement furniture for her new unit from the local Vinnies Shop. Margaret loves her new home. Her health issues are ongoing, but with secure housing and the support and compassionate care from Vinnies, the future looks bright.

*Name has been changed for confidentiality reasons

REFERENCES

- ¹ Shelter NSW (2016) NSW housing: a fact sheet
- ² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) [Housing Occupancy and Costs 2013-14](#). Cat. No. 4130.0
- ³ Anglicare (2019) [Snapshot: Anglicare Sydney – Greater Sydney and the Illawarra](#)
- ⁴ Choice (2018) [Disrupted: The consumer experience of renting in Australia](#)
- ⁵ City Futures Research Centre (2019) Estimating need and costs of social and affordable housing delivery
- ⁶ FACS NSW [Expected Waiting Times](#)
- ⁷ City Futures Research Centre (2019) Estimating need and costs of social and affordable housing delivery
- ⁸ Amplify Insights (2018) [Housing Affordability and Homelessness](#)
- ⁹ Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (2019) [Specialist homelessness services 2017-18](#)



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