



MEDIA RELEASE

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HomeBuilder package misses the mark

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council acknowledges the leadership of the Prime Minister and the National Cabinet in continuing to navigate Australia through the COVID-19 pandemic. We particularly praise the Prime Minister for looking after many low-income people by providing additional safety nets during these times.

However, the Society expresses disappointment that not one cent of the Australian Government's \$688million HomeBuilder package will go towards strengthening social housing. Investing in social housing would have delivered long-term good will beyond the pandemic.

The package, which is restricted to substantial renovations and requires recipients to spend at least \$150,000, also fails low income home-owners.

CEO Toby oConnor said that the Society has been advocating for the last four years for a Social and Affordable Housing Fund and the development of a National Housing Plan.

'We've been going backwards on the social housing front for the last 15 to 20 years. No national government has demonstrated leadership.

Right now, there's an estimated shortfall of at least 438,000 dwellings and that's before the anticipated COVID-19 recession fully hits and unemployment peaks in the next few months,' said Mr oConnor.

The Society is especially concerned about the welfare of those who have been temporarily housed but are likely to end up back on the streets if nothing is done to address the affordable housing shortage.

'We believe the Government can do better. It can boost economic activity in the building sector and address the chronic shortage of social housing at the same time,' said Mr oConnor.

'We and other social housing organisations have land available and have lined up building and maintenance projects that are ready to go. All we need is the funds. We know we can't do this alone but, together, with governments, industry, the private sector and other charities, we can make this happen,' said Mr oConnor.

The Society believes housing is a human right and would like to see all governments agree to halving the rates of homelessness and housing shortfalls by 2025.

'Action was taken during the global financial crisis to build 20,000 new social housing units and renovate existing social housing. If we could do it then, we can do it now. We remain optimistic our leaders will do the right thing and commit funds to address the housing shortage,' said Mr oConnor.

The Society's 2016 Ache for Home report is accessible [here](#).

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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