

**23 March 2023**

## **24% rise in Victoria's homelessness rate confirms SVDPV's concerns**

On Census night 2021, the number of Victorians who counted as being without a home rose by a staggering **24 per cent** than in 2016. More than 30,000 Victorians were considered without a home – nearly 6,000 more than five years ago.

The number of Australians counted as being without a home on Census night grew by five per cent in five years since the last Census in 2016. **According to the ABS data:**

- **The top reason for homelessness in Victoria is financial difficulties** (46%, compared with 39% nationally).
- **In Victoria, one in 64 people received homelessness assistance, higher than the national rate (one in 94)** and 60% of people who seek help from homelessness services are women.
- **Victoria had the highest proportion of people living in boarding houses (28.0%)** and other temporary lodgings (5%) – unstable, unsafe and exploitative living is something Vinnies volunteers and support workers see every day.
- **The rising number of women experiencing homelessness across the nation is alarming.** Between 2016 and 2021 these numbers rose by over 10%, accounting for almost 90% of the overall increase since 2016.

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (SVDPV) Group CEO, Paul Turton, said: “The latest ABS statistics confirm what our volunteer-run and specialist services here at SVDPV have been seeing on the ground – the cost of living is biting hard in Victoria and the flow-on effects are measurable and devastating.

“We also have a housing crisis to address and, as we move into the colder months of the year, this is an urgent priority to address. We know that keeping a roof over people’s heads is just the start. It is a long road to living safely if people don’t have that most fundamental of human rights in place.

“That’s why we at VincentCare Community Housing (VCCH) are proud to be working with the Victorian Government to build social housing in metropolitan Melbourne (Footscray and Epping) and Bendigo. The first project in Footscray, the construction of 92 units, is currently underway with a proposed mid-2024 completion date.”

Our specialist homelessness agency VincentCare Victoria (VCV) has a respected track record of supporting people on sustainable pathways out of homelessness alongside VCCH and our local volunteer groups. We do this with a raft of programs and personalised care, such as health and mental health support, financial counselling and family violence specialist programs – and more. Currently, VCV is supporting more than 2,500 people across the state of Victoria.

“Across Victoria, there is simply not enough social housing to meet demand – or the right support to keep vulnerable people in housing,” added Mr Turton. “We’ve seen first-hand the transformation that happens in people’s lives when their housing situation is resolved. With support, they are often soon on the road to education, employment and improved health – which benefits everyone in society.

“Without the ongoing support of business and our individual donors, we would not have the resources to contribute to tangible, collaborative measures to resolve housing issues. We have long said that no one service provider can ‘solve’ homelessness, but we are proud to provide a vital link between people in need, government and the corporate sector, to positively impact people’s lives.

“Our crisis services and volunteer groups see the emotional toll of the housing crisis across Victoria every day. We know that action on homelessness is needed now – and we know what works. We each have a role to play in being part of the solution, and we’re calling all concerned Victorians to join us.”

*For any further inquiries about this story or to arrange an interview with Paul Turton, please contact our media office via the details below.*

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#### **ABOUT THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY:**

*The St Vincent de Paul Society and its wide network of members and volunteers provide practical frontline support, advocacy and friendship for the most vulnerable members of our community. Key services include home visitation; Vinnies Shops; youth programs; soup vans; assistance for asylum seekers and refugees; education and tutoring; and professional accommodation and health services through VincentCare. The St Vincent de Paul Society in Victoria has more than 10,000+ members and volunteers, and more than 60,000 across Australia. Internationally, the Society operates in 149 countries and more than 950,000 members. To find out more visit [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au).*