STRONGER FAMILIES STRONGER FUTURE

Advocacy and Social Justice

Positioning and Messaging

June 2026

The St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland is committed to working in partnership with government and the community to improve the lives and livelihoods of families and children ensuring that with a hand up, families are stronger and children have a stronger future.

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INTRODUCTION

Advocacy is how the St Vincent de Paul Society lives out its commitment to social justice, standing alongside people experiencing hardship and working to create lasting change. It is central to the Society's mission of offering not just immediate assistance, but a genuine hand-up grounded in dignity, hope, and solidarity.

Advocacy happens at both the personal and systemic levels, whether a Member, Employee or Volunteer is speaking up in support of a Companion, or seeking changes to policies, systems and processes that perpetuate disadvantages.

This document outlines the Society's advocacy positions and intended outcomes in alignment with its mission and strategic priorities. It provides a value-based foundation for engagement with local, state and federal governments, and establishes the key messages for the Society's internal and external communications.

BACKGROUND

Supporting families and children sits at the heart of the Society's mission. Every child should have the opportunity to grow up safe, nurtured and hopeful, and every family should have the support they need to thrive. Yet across Queensland, too many families are being pushed deeper into hardship and denied the foundations they need for a secure future.

In Queensland

- 10,511 families are stuck on the social housing waitlist
- 61% of parents are struggling with day-to-day costs
- 14% of parents have run out of food at some point in the last 12 months
- The number of children in residential care has increased by 85% over the last five years

These figures reflect growing pressure on families, increasing insecurity for children, and systems that are too often failing to respond early enough. Stronger action is needed now to build stronger families and a stronger future.

In 2024–25, SVdP QLD walked alongside Queenslanders experiencing hardship by providing:

- $507m in services and support
- 238,555 Queenslanders assisted through our Members' frontline community support
- 126,922 emergency assistance calls answered from Queenslanders in need
- 1,299 Queenslanders experiencing homelessness helped to secure sustainable housing
- 333 parents and children helped to escape family and domestic violence and secure safe emergency accommodation
- 163,000 nights of accommodation provided for vulnerable Queenslanders
- 5,607 children assisted through our Children's Education Fund

RAISING QUEENSLAND CAMPAIGN

The Society's support of the Raising Queensland campaign, led by the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS), is one way the Society is advocating to support stronger families and a stronger future.

The campaign seeks to address the high cost of living and lack of services that make it difficult to raise children, with reports showing nearly 25% of Queensland kids are not hitting developmental milestones.

Raising Queensland provides an opportunity to collaboratively advocate for collective actions to drive significant changes that will improve the lives and livelihoods of families and children.

Raising Queensland is underpinned by a University of Queensland authored report, funded by Hand Heart Pocket, to identify key priorities for supporting vulnerable children, young people, and families in Queensland. The report considered State government policy focused on families and children over time and shows Queensland's children are worse off than other states, and that families are often not considered when efforts are made to support kids.

Six Core Asks

The Raising Queensland report identifies key priorities for supporting vulnerable children, young people, and families in Queensland. From this report, QCOSS has developed Six Core Asks for the Raising Queensland campaign.

1	**Develop a Families Strategy** Develop a whole-of-government Families Strategy that includes both universal and targeted commitments, coordinating efforts across government, including education, health and housing. This portfolio area should also have responsibility for overseeing data collection, data linkage, and integrated policy responses for children and families.
2	**Secure Housing for Families** The Queensland Government should act as a matter of urgency to ensure all families with children have unconditional access to stable housing. This includes fixing access and eligibility for social housing, reducing wait times, and reforming the Immediate Housing Response so no family is pushed into homelessness.
3	**Ensure all kids are learning** Queensland must ensure that every child can learn, thrive and stay engaged in education, no matter their postcode or circumstances. This requires investment in wraparound, community-connected school hubs, accessible and flexible, culturally safe schooling models that keep children engaged rather than excluded.
4	**Improve access to health services** Queensland must ensure that every child and family can access the health care they need, when and where they need it. This includes expanding universal school and community food programs and embedding GPs, nurses and allied health professionals in schools. Government must also urgently improve access to mental health services by funding high intensity, sub-acute mental health services for children, young people and parents.
5	**Increase income support** Over 90,000 families with children in Queensland access income support payments (single and partnered parenting payments) for their daily living needs. The Commonwealth Government must lift income support payments above the poverty line.
6	**Invest in community services** Strategic, long-term investment in Queensland's social infrastructure is required to ensure that all children, families and communities are thriving. As a priority, the Queensland Government should implement the community service procurement principles as committed to before the 2024 election and develop a community services workforce strategy.

SVDP QLD POSITIONING AND MESSAGING

Our advocacy positioning and messaging needs to be firmly grounded in the Society's mission, purpose and strategic priorities and clearly aligned with the intent of the Raising Queensland campaign.

FRAMING PRINCIPLES

- Supporting families and children are at the heart of what the Society does.
- A focus on prevention and early intervention.
- Founded on dignity, hope and providing a hand up.
- Developing long-term relationships and long-term investment.

POSITIONING

- Raising Queensland is about building systems that support families early, restore dignity, and enable children to flourish.
- Raising Queensland seeks to provide a hand-up to families and children by removing the barriers that keep families trapped in hardship and creating the conditions for them to thrive.
- Raising Queensland is about creating hand-ups that last so families can raise their children with dignity, security and hope.

OUR KEY MESSAGES AND ADVOCACY ASKS:

INDEPENDENCE, NOT DEPENDENCE

A hand-up starts with the basics family's needs to stand on their own feet.

KEY MESSAGE

Families can only get back on their feet when they have a safe home, enough income to cover essentials, and access to health and education. SVdP QLD is focused on ensuring these foundations are in place, so families don't have to keep seeking emergency help.

A HAND UP MEANS

- Stable housing and adequate income to reduce reliance on crisis relief
- Strong foundations enable families to plan, work, learn and parent with confidence
- Independence, not dependency

ADVOCACY

Empowering young people and families is central to strengthening community wellbeing, social inclusion and long-term outcomes for children.

Policies must recognise that young people thrive when they have access to safe spaces, trusted relationships, culturally responsive support and opportunities to actively shape the world around them.

SVdP ADVOCACY ASKS

1. **Strengthen Whole-of-Family Approaches**

   Family context is critical. Young people's wellbeing improves when their family systems are supported. There needs to be whole-of-family approaches embedded in youth programs, including parent coaching, intergenerational engagement, and wraparound supports that address material, relational and emotional needs.

2. **Strengthen Regional and Culturally Diverse Youth Support Models**

   Young people in regional areas, as well as those from migrant, refugee, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, face compounded barriers. There needs to be tailored, place-based youth empowerment strategies designed and delivered by local communities, including bilingual, trauma-informed and culturally safe mentors.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Supporting families early is the most effective hand-up we can offer.

KEY MESSAGE

When families receive support early — before hardship becomes crisis — they are far more likely to stay together, stay housed and stay connected to education and work.

A HAND-UP MEANS

- Prevention and early intervention stop problems escalating
- Early support respects families' strengths and capacity
- It prevents children from being pulled into harmful systems unnecessarily

ADVOCACY

Early identification and integrated support systems are essential to break cycles of intergenerational insecurity. This includes embedding support across family, education, housing, health and social service systems.

The SVdP Qld Goodna Integrated Family Support Program demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach, helping parents strengthen their relationships, build capability, and create safe, stable environments for their children.

EDUCATION

There needs to be a secure base for play, learning and development that upholds the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A strong early educational foundation is critical to ensuring every child can thrive, participate, and reach their full potential.

SVdP ADVOCACY ASKS

1. **Universal, Inclusive and Culturally Safe Early Childhood Education**

   There needs to be universal, inclusive and culturally safe early childhood education, including access for non-citizen children. Educational settings should integrate health, mental health, perinatal and allied health supports to ensure coordinated, wraparound support for families.

   Immediate priorities include:

   - Expanding low and no cost early childhood education places for families experiencing disadvantage
   - Ensuring early learning programs are culturally safe and responsive, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
   - Embedding multidisciplinary supports within early learning and school environments to identify needs early and strengthen family wellbeing

2. **Enhanced Education, Training and Employment Pathways**

Young people experiencing poverty often face systemic barriers to education and employment that compound across generations. Targeted interventions are needed to remove these barriers and build pathways to lifelong learning including:

- Expansion of community-based tutoring, homework clubs and digital literacy programs
- Targeted assistance for young people transitioning out of care
- Funded paid traineeships and work-readiness programs, co-delivered with community organisations
- Financial assistance for transport, school uniforms, technology, and essential learning materials

3. **Strengthened Support for Migrant, Refugee and Newly Arrived Families**

   Migrant and refugee families experience distinctive and often complex barriers, including language, cultural adjustment, and challenges navigating education, training and visa systems.

   Advocacy priorities include:

   - Investment in culturally responsive youth programs, supported by bilingual mentors
   - Removal of visa-related barriers that prevent participation in education and training
   - Support for whole-of-family settlement and integration, recognising that empowered and well-supported parents create the conditions for empowered children

HEALTH

A strong health system is one that ensures all children and families, particularly those experiencing vulnerability, can access the support they need to thrive. Health services must be proactive, connected, and embedded in the community, recognising that early intervention is essential to long-term wellbeing.

This requires:

1. **Embedded health support in early learning and schools**

   Early learning and school settings should embed health professionals, including GPs, nurses, allied health providers and mental health specialists, to enable early identification of need, timely intervention and coordinated, preventative support. As trusted and accessible environment for families, these settings are well placed to deliver integrated supports before issues escalate into crisis.

2. **Expanded perinatal and child mental health services**

   Access to perinatal, infant and child mental health services remains limited, particularly in regional and remote communities. Expanding service coverage is essential to ensure families can access timely assessment, therapeutic support and early intervention close to home.

3. **Integrated, Multidisciplinary Community Health Models**

   A well-functioning system requires integrated, multidisciplinary community health services that combine child health, mental health, developmental supports, parenting assistance and social care. Such approaches ensure families experiencing disadvantage receive coordinated care without navigating complex or fragmented systems.

This needs to be delivered by a statewide commitment to:

- equitable access to health and mental health supports regardless of location
- strong referral pathways between early learning, schools, health services and community organisations
- community-based models that meet families where they are and reduce barriers to engagement

FAMILIES-CENTRIC SYSTEMS

A families strategy is a hand-up that fix broken systems, not just broken moments.

KEY MESSAGE

A hand-up for families requires systems that work together. A whole-of-government Families Strategy would align housing, health, education and income supports so families don't fall through the cracks.

A HAND UP MEANS

- Families shouldn't have to navigate disconnected services
- Joined-up systems support long-term stability, not short-term fixes
- This shifts responsibility from families to systems that must serve them better

ADVOCACY

Strong, transparent governance arrangements are required to ensure clear accountability for improving outcomes for children and families, particularly those experiencing entrenched disadvantages.

SVdP ADVOCACY ASKS

1. **Strengthen the Families Portfolio**

   The Families portfolio should be established as the central agency with clear authority and accountability for leading whole-of-government policy development, oversight and coordination of integrated responses for children and families including responsibility for setting outcomes, monitoring performance and driving cross-agency action.

2. **Enhanced Government Framework and Funding Stability**

   The Families portfolio should establish a whole-of-government framework to drive improved child and family outcomes, supported by stable, long-term funding arrangements. This should include a requirement for agencies to report against child wellbeing outcomes rather than service outputs alone; mandated cross-agency accountability mechanisms to prevent responsibility being shifted between departments; independent oversight to monitor progress and enforce accountability where targets are not met; and multi-year commitments to the child and family wellbeing agenda, including funding cycles of at least five years for essential community services.

3. **Develop linked, longitudinal data systems**

   Linked state and national data systems are essential to enable government and community partners to monitor progress, identify service and policy gaps, and support evidence-based decision-making. Government must also facilitate genuine cross-sector partnerships that enable data to be safely and appropriately shared, improving service design and delivery and embedding shared measurement of child and family wellbeing outcomes.

4. Full Implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The Queensland Government must fully implement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including the establishment of clear, measurable child wellbeing KPIs and regular, public reporting on progress. Transparent and consistent reporting, particularly on efforts to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, is critical to rebuilding trust, strengthening accountability, and ensuring policy commitments deliver tangible improvements for families and communities.

SECURE HOUSING

Secure housing is the strongest hand-up for children and parents alike

KEY MESSAGE

Housing is not just shelter — it's the platform families need to rebuild their lives. Without stable housing, no amount of effort or support can deliver lasting change for children.

A HAND UP MEANS

- Secure housing restores dignity and control
- It enables parents to focus on work, parenting and wellbeing
- It breaks cycles of crisis and service dependence

ADVOCACY

A Housing First approach that recognises secure housing is the bedrock for access to all other services and a prerequisite for family stability and child wellbeing is a priority.

Evidence from the University of Queensland showing 91% tenancy sustainment demonstrates that stable housing empowers individuals and should be recognised as a success, not misinterpreted as stagnation.

Policies must be grounded in the principle that housing security shapes family formation, so no family is ever evicted into homelessness.

SVdP ADVOCACY ASKS

1. Implement a Housing First Approach with Wraparound Supports

Provide unconditional, stable housing paired with integrated supports including financial counselling, parenting support, and improved pathways to health and education. Evidence from the University of Queensland showing 91% tenancy sustainment demonstrates that stable housing empowers individuals and families.

2. Review Social Housing Eligibility to Prevent Family Homelessness

Eligibility settings must reflect real-world pressures, including rising rents and broader cost-of-living increases. Reforms should ensure vulnerable families, particularly those with children in care are not excluded from social housing due to income thresholds that no longer reflect market conditions.

3. Strengthen Immediate Housing Responses for At-Risk and Evicted Families

Families facing eviction require rapid intervention to avoid entering the homelessness system. Policies required include:

- Financial incentives for landlords and real estate agents to retain families, including bonuses for lease renewals or longer extensions
- Legislative protections to keep families housed wherever possible

4. Improve Housing and Support for Families in Regional and Remote Communities

Regional Queensland faces acute housing shortages, compounded by workforce challenges and limited-service availability. Policies required include:

- Targeted regional housing strategies with dedicated family accommodation
- Incentives for builders and community housing providers to service remote areas
- Housing models adapted for cultural and community contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions

COMMUNITY VALUE

Community services provide a relational hand-up, not transactional assistance.

KEY MESSAGE

Local community services walk alongside families over time. They are trusted, relational and flexible — providing the encouragement, advocacy and practical support families need to move forward.

A HAND UP MEANS

- Relationships, not transactions, drive lasting change
- Place-based services recognise each family's circumstances and strengths
- Proper funding enables services to focus on outcomes, not throughput

ADVOCACY

Local, place-based services consistently deliver the strongest outcomes for children and families. However, communities cannot meet rising demand without a supported and sustainable workforce. Investment in a statewide, long-term community services workforce strategy is required to strengthen local capability and ensure services are culturally responsive and trauma-informed, enabling communities to respond effectively to current and future need.

SVdP ADVOCACY ASKS

1. Increase Investment in Local Training Pipelines and Pathways

Increase investment in local training pipelines and pathways to address critical workforce shortages, particularly in regional and remote areas. This includes strengthening locally delivered training, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce participation, and creating clear, supported pathways into secure, well-paid roles.

2. Increased Funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations hold the cultural knowledge and local leadership essential for meaningful change, delivering integrated health, family support and early childhood services. Government should invest in long-term partnerships that build an evidence base for effective place-based practice.

3. New Funding Models to Support Long-Term, Flexible and Outcome-Focused Service Delivery

Funding models must be redesigned to support long-term, flexible and outcome-focused service delivery. For example, the SVdP Contact Centre responded to 126,922 calls in 2025, connecting people across Conferences and external services through a 'no wrong door' approach — yet this impact is not captured within traditional

service-specific funding models. Sustainable funding must support the infrastructure that enables this coordination.

INCOME ADEQUACY

Income adequacy is a hand-up that lets families meet their own needs.

KEY MESSAGE

When income support is too low, families are forced into crisis. Adequate income is a hand-up that enables families to budget, plan and provide for their children with dignity.

A HAND UP MEANS

- Families want to meet their own needs
- Adequate income reduces stress, instability and service reliance
- Children benefit when parents aren't choosing between rent, food and bills

ADVOCACY

SVdP Qld recognises that reducing financial stress is essential for family wellbeing and stability. When families have access to adequate income support and effective mechanisms for managing or reducing debt, they are better positioned to meet their basic needs, maintain secure housing, and support their children.

Research from the University of Queensland demonstrates that a liveable income substantially reduces reliance on charitable assistance, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic when temporary increases in government payments significantly lowered demand for emergency relief.

SVdP Qld advocates for income support payments that lift and sustain families above the poverty line, reducing socioeconomic stressors that negatively impact children's development and family functioning.

SVdP ADVOCACY ASKS

1. Income Support at Levels That Meet Basic Living Standards

Income support payments should be set at a level that enables families to meet essential living costs, including housing, food, utilities and participation in community life. This requires increasing the adequacy of working-age payments such as JobSeeker and Youth Allowance, lifting parenting and family payments to at least the poverty line, and increasing the Remote Area Allowance to reflect higher costs faced by families in regional and remote communities. Adequate income support is a foundational element of family wellbeing, reducing financial stress and helping to create the stability children need to thrive.

2. Targeted Supports to Address Everyday Inequities Affecting Children

Inadequate household income can limit children's access to essential items and opportunities, including school excursions, digital technology, school uniforms and adequate nutrition. These forms of material deprivation can adversely affect child development, educational participation and overall family functioning.

3. Expanded, Targeted Energy Concessions

Debt is a significant driver of financial stress for families already experiencing hardship, underscoring the importance of debt reduction pathways as a key component of income support policy. Expanding programs such as SPER can help interrupt cycles of escalating fines and debt, enabling families to focus on stability and long-term wellbeing rather than ongoing crisis.

4. Expansion of Debt Reduction Pathways

Debt is a significant driver of financial stress for families already experiencing hardship. Expanding programs such as SPER can help interrupt cycles of escalating fines and debt, enabling families to focus on stability and long-term wellbeing rather than ongoing crisis.

5. Improved Access to Crisis Payments and Emergency Relief Pathways

Families experiencing sudden crises, including domestic and family violence, eviction or health emergencies, require timely access to financial assistance and emergency relief. Simplifying eligibility processes, expediting approvals, and introducing automatic crisis payment triggers linked to verified events could improve responsiveness and ensure families receive support when it is most needed.

INVESTMENT

Raising Queensland is about hand ups that last not handouts that repeat.

KEY MESSAGE

A long-term, 'hand-up not a hand-out' approach to support helps to build resilience and independence that can last for a lifetime, while reducing reliance on emergency relief.

A HAND UP MEANS

- Long-term solutions reduce repeat need
- Prevention costs less and achieves more
- Children raised with stability have better lifelong outcomes

ADVOCACY

To shift outcomes for children and families, government investment settings must better support prevention, flexibility and system coordination. Current funding and commissioning arrangements too often prioritise crisis response over long-term stability, constrain community organisations' ability to respond holistically, and overlook the value of coordination and lived experience. The following advocacy asks focus on reforming investment frameworks, so funding decisions drive early intervention, integrated responses and sustained pathways out of hardship for families.

SVdP ADVOCACY ASKS

1. Reform funding and commissioning models to prioritise prevention

Redesign commissioning and procurement frameworks so funding decisions explicitly prioritise early intervention and demand-reduction outcomes, rather than crisis throughput.

2. Enable flexible use of funds across service silos

Remove restrictive funding rules that prevent community organisations from flexibly responding to emerging family needs across housing, income, health and family support.

3. Fund coordination and navigation functions as core infrastructure

Recognise and fund coordination, intake and navigation functions as essential system infrastructure, rather than unfunded add-ons, to prevent families cycling through crisis services.

4. Embed lived experience in investment decisions

Establish mechanisms for children, families and frontline services to inform investment priorities, ensuring funding decisions reflect real pathways out of hardship.

The St Vincent de Paul Society of Queensland is committed to work in partnership with government and the community to improve the lives and livelihood of families and children to ensure, with a hand up, families are stronger and there is a stronger future for families and children.