



NSW SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT

**ENDING DOMESTIC
AND FAMILY VIOLENCE**

OUR VISION

Everyone should be able to live safely within their own homes and be treated with respect in their relationships. Working towards a society where people are protected from violence and abusive relationships means reducing the pressures that heighten the risk of domestic and family violence.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW fundamentally believes in this through the social principle of dignity of the human person, which enables life and human flourishing. This principle ensures that people have a safe, secure, and affordable place to call home and have fair and equal access to the support and services they need. More broadly, we can work together to shift attitudes within our communities that may perpetuate domestic and family violence, uniting to forge healthier relationships where all parties are considered equal, are respected, and are empowered to realise their future.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Society NSW calls on the NSW Government to help people to have safe relationships and better support those impacted by domestic and family violence by:

- Increase funding for specialist domestic and family violence services to meet the gap in services relative to demand.
- Invest in sexual, domestic and family violence primary prevention and early intervention initiatives.
- Invest in programs, including in remote and regional areas, that are tailored to meet the diverse needs of communities that experience domestic and family violence and higher rates, including First Nations communities.
- Improve access to justice for victim survivors by investing in a trauma and gendered violence-informed approach in the justice system. This includes better coordination and timely referral between law enforcement and domestic and family violence services, and by better recording and reporting on domestic violence-related data.
- Substantially increase supply of social and affordable housing (see our related Social Justice Statements).

OUR CONTRIBUTION

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is a leading provider of frontline services with 100 services state-wide. We operate 12 domestic and family violence services to support victim-survivors and their families to build new lives. This includes access to crisis, transitional and long-term housing pathways, and comprehensive case management support. In 2022-2023 our domestic and family violence services supported approximately 2,200 people fleeing violence.

Our members and volunteers respond to the immediate needs of people at-risk or experiencing domestic and family violence through financial and material support such as food, assistance paying energy and other bills, no-interest loans, and clothing and household items. Members and volunteers also offer friendship and emotional support, connecting victim-survivors into services, and walking alongside them as they shape their future and start their new lives.

THE CHALLENGE

Domestic and family violence is a widespread issue, with approximately 20% of the Australian population having reported physical and/or sexual family and domestic abuse since the age of 15.¹

While anyone can experience violence and abuse in a relationship, women are three times more likely to experience violence from an intimate partner than men,² with one in four Australian women having experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by a current or former partner.³ A victim-survivor is most at-risk of violence from the perpetrator/s when they decide to leave,⁴ and yet all too often they cannot access the support they need to be safe when they do decide to end the relationship.

Over a quarter of victim-survivors surveyed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics stated they wanted to leave their violent relationships but felt they were unable to do so because of a lack of money or financial support.⁵ Women are more likely than men to live in rental housing,⁶ but skyrocketing rental prices and a lack of vacant properties mean that women and children affected by violence may be forced into unsafe, unaffordable, or otherwise inappropriate living situations. With only three rental



homes across the country being affordable for a single person on the JobSeeker payment,⁷ more than 57,000 households waiting for social housing, and social housing wait times that exceed 10 years in parts of NSW,⁸ a fresh start in a new home is out of reach for many victim-survivors.

Domestic and family violence is the primary reason women seek support from refuges and other specialist homelessness services,⁹ but finding emergency accommodation when in crisis can be overwhelmingly difficult. Specialist Homelessness Services are having to turn away thousands of people in need every year, with one in three women and children escaping family violence missing out on essential services.¹⁰ To give victim-survivors the confidence and support to leave unsafe relationships, governments at all levels need to adequately resource homelessness services to provide specialised support and continuity of care.

Many victim-survivors who report their abusive or violent partners face challenges navigating the criminal justice system, including sharing their experiences of

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [Society NSW's reports and submissions](#)

THE FACTS

- One in four Australian women have experienced violence by a partner.
- Over a quarter of victim-survivors don't leave their violent relationships due to a lack of money or financial support.

violence multiple times and difficulty accessing up-to-date information about their case. Government and non-government agencies need to better coordinate services and share information to keep victim-survivors safe and improve their access to justice.

Some groups are at greater risk of experiencing domestic and family violence and face additional barriers when trying to access support. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women¹¹, temporary visa holders,¹² people living with disability, people who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and individuals experiencing problematic alcohol or other drug use. These at-risk groups require tailored programs and support.

Children and young people are also impacted by domestic and family violence, placing them at a higher risk of experiencing other forms of child abuse and psycho-social problems in youth and adulthood.¹³ To protect future generations from the impacts of domestic and family violence, we must recognise children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right, not as 'secondary victims', and provide responses to meet their specific needs.

Ultimately, to stop domestic and family violence from occurring in the first place, governments need to sufficiently invest in prevention and early intervention initiatives such as programs that teach respectful relationships and/or address community attitudes, to address the underlying socio-cultural norms and attitudes that perpetuate violence and abuse.

¹ AIHW (2022) *Physical and/or sexual family and domestic violence*, Family, domestic and sexual violence web article.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). *Personal Safety, Australia*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). *Personal Safety, Australia*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>.

⁴ Common Grace (n.d) *Leaving an abusive relationship: Safer Resource*.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020) *Partner Violence – In Focus: Crime and Justice Statistics*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/focus-crime-and-justice-statistics/partner-violence-january-2020>.

⁶ Women's Health Goulburn North East '*Climate change affects health and wellbeing, both directly and indirectly.*'

⁷ Anglicare (2024) *Rental Affordability Snapshot – National Report 2024 / Fifteenth Edition*

⁸ Communities and Justice (2024) *Social Housing – Expected Waiting Times* (as of 31 March 2024).

⁹ AIHW (2022) *Clients who have experienced family and domestic violence*, Specialist homelessness services annual report 2020-2021.

¹⁰ The Salvation Army (2022) *Social Justice Stocktake – Taking Stock of Our Communities in NSW*

¹¹ Council of Australian Governments (2019) *National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*;

Productivity Commission (2011) *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*

¹² Lu, M; Mangaha, X & Nimmo, J (2020) *Domestic and Family Violence in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities*, Pro Bono Centre – The University of Queensland, 26 March 2020

¹³ Australian Institute of Family Studies (2015) *Children's exposure to domestic and family violence*.

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.

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is a lay-Catholic member and volunteer-based organisation that has been assisting people experiencing disadvantage and hardship in NSW for over 140 years. Our aspiration is an Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice.



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NSW SOCIAL JUSTICE
NETWORK

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