MEDIA RELEASE
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Keeping people housed is cost-of living relief: 9 in 10 back funding to stop homelessness before it starts

New RMIT research shows strong support for homelessness prevention and government partnerships with charities and the private sector to tackle housing insecurity and cost-of-living pressures.

Helping people keep their homes before they fall into crisis is the top homelessness priority for Victorians surveyed in new research commissioned by St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies) and conducted by RMIT University.

Released as Victoria heads to the 28 November state election and as Victorians feel the compounding effects of five interest rate rises this year, the research confirms that housing security is increasingly a cost-of-living concern. Nearly two in three Victorians (65%) believe cost-of-living is a leading cause of homelessness, while half (50%) said it was their most important voting issue.

“Keeping people housed is cost-of-living relief, and we need a long-term plan for it,” said Ray Kelleher, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria.

“Homelessness is a vote-shifter for nearly two in three (64%) Victorians telling us they would be more likely to vote for a party with a commitment to increasing investment into homelessness, and prevention programs are the leading priority for funding,” he said.

Nearly nine in 10 (89%) supported increased government investment in prevention programs. Almost half of respondents (49%) ranked preventing homelessness before it occurs as their highest priority for what governments should do to address homelessness, more than double the 23% who ranked building more social housing first.

“Sometimes the difference between keeping a home and losing it is a broken fridge, a rent bill that lands the same week as a car repair or a landlord who just needs someone to sit down and talk it through,” Mr Kelleher said.

“Prevention means helping people meet short-term housing costs, resolve tenancy problems and access assistance before they hit crisis point. Our members and volunteers are in local communities, listening and supporting with everything from a food hamper or bill relief to referring to our expert financial counselling and no-interest loan services, helping people to rebuild their lives with stability.

“Getting help in at that moment means a family stays in their own home, close to their school and their community. Waiting until they’ve lost everything helps no one.

“Our members are meeting parents working two jobs who are still skipping meals. They’re meeting women who had long careers and are now facing homelessness. The problem hasn’t changed, but the faces have. Mr Kelleher said.

Report co-author at RMIT, Associate Professor Meg Elkins, said the findings demonstrate an understanding that homelessness is not simply an individual problem or the responsibility of charities.

“Governments at all levels, working alongside community organisations, have important and complementary roles,” Elkins said.

“The research provides new evidence on community views in Victoria about homelessness policy, government responsibility and alternative approaches to addressing homelessness. These insights can inform policy advocacy, strengthen public communication and support conversations with government and other stakeholders.”

Strong leadership needed to support state in crisis

Victorians expect the State government to lead on policy and funding solutions to address the homelessness crisis, ahead of Federal and Local government responsibility.

Respondents backed a funding approach that encourages more partnership between government, charities and the private sector. More than four in five respondents (84%) supported increased government spending on homelessness services when funding required partnerships with charities and the private sector.

“Whatever people’s politics, this research shows they want government, charities and business working together on homelessness. No one can solve this alone. We’re asking every party to commit to a housing strategy that outlasts any single term of government.

“Social housing and emergency accommodation is just one small part of the solution. Through services like financial counselling, domestic violence support, and access to healthcare and legal services, the not-for-profit sector is an essential partner to help the state government solve Victoria’s housing crisis,” said Mr Kelleher.

Vinnies is calling on Victoria’s political parties to commit to a three-year Homelessness Prevention Package ahead of this month’s election, to help people keep the homes they already have.

“Our One Big Ask is for every party to commit to a long-term housing strategy that outlasts any single term, built with the people already doing the work. We’re ready to work with Victoria’s next government towards a meaningful solution for Victorians experiencing, or at risk of homelessness.”

- ENDS –

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

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ONE BIG ASK:

The St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria Strategic Advocacy Plan 2026–2030 is built on a clear conviction: homelessness and poverty in Victoria are preventable and solvable. To learn more about our One Big Ask visit https://www.vinnies.org.au/vic/advocacy/advocacy-our-plan.

SURVEY RESULTS:

- 78% of Victorians rate homelessness as a very or extremely important issue.
- Nearly two in three (64%) say a commitment to significantly increase investment to address homelessness in Victoria would make them more likely to vote for a party.
- Two in three Victorians (65%) say cost-of-living is a major cause of homelessness.
- Cost-of-living the top voting issue for half (50%) of Victorians surveyed.
- 85% of Victorians support a Housing First model that provides a secure home first, then the support to keep it.
- 86% say the State Government should have a major or primary responsibility for funding homelessness services, well ahead of federal (73%) and local government (54%).
- 84% support funding that brings government, charities and the private sector together
- Prevention is the public's top choice for what governments should prioritise to address homelessness, with 49% prioritizing this over alternative investment. This was more than double the next option, which saw 23% of Victorians prioritise building more social housing.
- 89% of Victorians support more investment in prevention programs, alongside other funding supports.

METHODOLOGY:

Commissioned by St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria, this online research was conducted under RMIT Ethics approval #31054 through Prolific in October 2026. The opt-in survey measured the views of 650 Victorian residents on the causes of homelessness, government responsibility, service priorities, funding approaches and the political salience of the issue. The sample is balanced across male and female genders, and income levels, with majority in owner-occupying and rental properties. Note that respondents are younger, more educated and more metropolitan than the 2021 Census Victorian population.

ABOUT 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 10,500+ 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 http://www.vinnies.org.au/vic.