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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **The Face of Homelessness in Australia is Changing – National Homelessness Week 1-7 August 2021**

This year in National Homelessness Week, the National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia said the Federal Government must intervene as a matter of urgency as house prices soar, wages stagnate and the housing affordability crisis creeps towards middle Australia.

National President Claire Victory said the Great Australian Dream is fast moving beyond the reach of minimum income earners, placing pressure on a limited, overheated rental market.

‘At least 650,000 social and affordable homes are needed right now, with over 116,000 people experiencing homelessness on any given night.

‘The Society has repeatedly called for the Federal Government to establish a social housing fund of \$10 billion to augment the efforts of the states and territories to address the chronic and growing shortage.

‘Homelessness is no longer that stereotypical person sleeping rough.

‘It’s people like you and me, just one life event away from a devastating change in circumstances – illness including mental ill health, relationship breakdown, loss of a spouse, domestic violence, or the loss of a job. Older women are now the fastest growing group of people facing homelessness.

‘Older people who do not own their own home, and women and children affected by domestic violence are particularly vulnerable.

‘Of 74,000 rental listings in Anglicare’s 2021 annual survey, only three were affordable for a person on Jobseeker and none for a person on Youth Allowance.

‘And two thirds of 170,000 vulnerable private renters are currently in rental stress with less than \$250 a week to live on after paying rent.

‘Governments have left housing to the market and the market has failed.

‘In the face of the economic facts, it’s difficult to understand the lack of political will to invest urgently.

‘High housing costs suppress demand for other goods and services. Supported housing saves \$13,100 per person annually in reduced use of overall government services, even while factoring in the cost of supports.

‘Without a significant investment, supply will remain limited while negative gearing and low interest rates attract investors, boosting house prices.

‘The Commonwealth must drive the implementation of a 30-year national housing strategy.

‘Every day charities like St Vincent de Paul provide support to people who have nowhere to call home. It’s easy to blame people who haven’t got anywhere to live, but if we continue to neglect the deteriorating supply of affordable housing, a rising tide of homeless families will be forced to seek help from our charities just to survive,’ Ms Victory said.

*The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.*

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