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MEDIA RELEASE

Vinnies and Salvos join forces on climate change

Prevention and early intervention, and people on low incomes must be a priority when developing the National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy according to the National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia and The Salvation Army.

In a joint submission to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's Taskforce the two national organisations said it will take national leadership and cooperation across all jurisdictions to address the mounting risks posed by climate change and to support communities to respond, especially the people who have the least means to build resilience and adapt.

The submission cites research and experiences of the two organisations, particularly during bushfires and drought crises.

National Council President of the St Vincent de Paul Society, Claire Victory said the increased risk of natural disasters and extreme weather conditions is associated with a rise in domestic and family violence, mortality, severe financial hardship, social isolation, poor physical and mental health and homelessness.

'The Australian Government response to climate change must provide for additional services including prevention and early intervention approaches such as improving home energy efficiency ratings for people vulnerable to heat stress, assisting vulnerable communities to move out of disaster-prone areas, and training more mental health professionals,' Ms Victory said.

'It should also provide for a post-disaster response including access to financial counselling services and specialised mental health support.

'Our combined drought funding delivery experience showed us that people continued to experience significant levels of hardship, even after receiving assistance through payments of up to \$3000 and access to other support services.

'This leads to increased and sometimes ongoing demand for costly crisis response services, such as emergency relief, homelessness and family violence support.

'Climate change is already limiting access to safe, affordable housing options, especially for First Nations people and people who do not have the resources to simply relocate.

'All governments must urgently increase the stock of social and affordable housing, establish a 'buy-back fund' for at-risk properties, increase access to Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessments for homeowners and landlords, and ensure that new housing developments are not built in areas of high risk,' Ms Victory said.

A copy of the submission is available [here](#).

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

MEDIA CONTACT

0475 068 209 or media@svdp.org.au

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