



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Human Rights Act would protect ‘everyday essentials’

As the world marks UN Human Rights Day 2025 (10 December) under the theme ‘Human Rights: Our Everyday Essentials’, the St Vincent de Paul Society is renewing calls for an Australian Human Rights Act to enshrine protections for the basic rights everyone in Australia deserves.

‘A family should have access to stable housing; a person should be able to see a doctor regardless of their bank balance; every child should have access to a quality education regardless of their postcode – but sadly, that’s not the case in Australia in 2025,’ said the Society’s National President, Mark Gaetani.

‘Housing, health and education are not aspirations; they are everyday essentials and should be protected by law.

‘The Society’s founder Blessed Frédéric Ozanam taught us that we must do more than offer a hand-up to those facing poverty and disadvantage; we must address the injustices that cause such hardship,’ Mr Gaetani said. ‘Across Australia, people experiencing homelessness, inadequate healthcare, poor education and economic insecurity deserve more than charity – they deserve rights, dignity and justice.’

The Society advocates that an Australian Human Rights Act would: protect fundamental rights including housing, healthcare, education and economic security that are essential to people thriving; hold government accountable by ensuring human rights are considered in all laws, decisions and services; empower people to challenge injustices when their rights are violated; and foster a rights-respecting culture built on the values of fairness, respect, dignity and compassion.

‘We know from communities we serve every day that many people’s human rights are at risk, especially the almost 4 million people living in poverty in Australia today,’ Mr

Gaetani said. 'When families can't afford rent, when children miss school because they're hungry, or people avoid seeking medical treatment because they're afraid of costs, we are failing as a community to protect people's human rights.'

The Society joins a coalition of more than 130 not-for-profit organisations and legal experts calling on the Australian Parliament to act.

'This is not a partisan issue; it is about building a fairer Australia where the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted nearly 80 years ago, becomes a reality for all who live here,' Mr Gaetani said.

'On Human Rights Day, we remember that human rights are positive. They bring safety, joy, dignity and hope. Now is the time to enshrine them in Australian law and to create a Human Rights Act that protects our everyday essentials and holds the government to account.'

*\* Photo of National President, Mr Mark Gaetani, is available on request.*

*The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 45,000 Members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.*

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