

SUBMISSION

2024 ACT BUDGET CONSULTATION

BY

**ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY
CANBERRA/GOULBURN**

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St Vincent de Paul Society
CANBERRA/GOULBURN

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INTRODUCTION

The St. Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn (the Society) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission as part of the ACT Government's 2023-24 Budget consultation. As an organisation, we seek to address social injustice within our community and have tailored our program delivery around empathy and compassion.

The Society is a member based lay Catholic organisation that has been assisting people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in the region since 1895. We seek to shape a more just and compassionate society by working to address the causes of poverty and injustice, with a focus on prevention and early intervention.

As a registered charitable not for profit organisation, we operate in the Australian Capital Territory and surrounding southern and western regional areas of New South Wales. Volunteer members of the Society's conferences undertake visits to the homes of people experiencing disadvantage, including those at risk of homelessness. Members refer those at risk to our homelessness services, where specialist staff provide case management, support services, and referral to other agencies to help prevent people becoming homeless.

There are presently 520 Members, 1482 volunteers and 242 employees working to deliver person-centered assistance to those most in need in our community. We thrive in the partnership we have built with the community and welcome the opportunity to inform the ACT Government's Budget decisions.

BUDGET SUBMISSION & RECOMMENDATION

The Society makes its submission on the thematic areas of Housing/Homelessness, Cost of Living, Climate Energy, Indigenous Justice, Migrants, and people seeking asylum.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Data on public housing according to the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services¹ in the ACT indicates a decrease in Public Housing dwellings from 11181 units in 2018 to 10827 units in 2023 (Table 18A.3). The report also shows a substantial addition to the community housing units over the last year. The number of community housing rental tenancy rental units increased from 958 units in 2022 to 1695 units in 2023. Other data sets presented in the Report on Government Services Report indicate that, as of June 2023:

- For public housing, there are 3174 households (2227 households in 2019) on the waiting list, of which 2188 households (1384 households in 2019) were on the greatest needs list. (Table 18A.5)
- For community housing, there are 661 households (411 households in 2019) on the waiting list, of which 509 households (252 households in 2019) are on the greatest needs list. (Table 18A.7)
- The proportion of public housing dwellings occupied in the ACT is 94.8% (96.2 % for Australia) (Table 18A.10)
- The proportion of community housing dwelling occupied in the ACT was 86.4% (95.9 % for Australia) (Table 18A.12)

¹ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services 2023: G Housing and homelessness](#), Productivity Commission, Australian Government, 2023. accessed 25 January 2024

- The proportion of overcrowded households in public houses in the ACT in 2023 is 4.7%, as compared to the Australian national figure of 4.1%. (Table 18A.30)
- The proportion of overcrowded households in community housing in the ACT in 2023 is 2.8 %, an increase from 0.3% in 2022 (Table 18A.32)
- Low-income households in community housing, spending more than 30% of their income spent on rent increased from 4.6% in 2022 to 10.2%. (Table 18A.25)
- 11% of clients accessing specialist homelessness services return to homelessness after achieving housing (Table 19A.38)
- 24.7% (686 out of 2781 clients) of clients accessing specialist homelessness services have their need for accommodation services unmet. (Table 19A.7)
- 1082 (45.0%) clients accessing specialist homelessness services experienced persistent homelessness (Table 19A.39)
- 2407 clients accessing specialist homelessness services experienced homelessness for at least 1 month (Table 19A.38)

The data indicates higher demand for affordable housing units in terms of the usage (occupancy rate) and intent of usage (waiting list), however there has not been a significant addition to these units over the years. The ACT Government's allocation of \$177.1 million for Housing ACT operations, repairs, maintenance and the \$55.9million earmarked to deliver 140 new public housing dwelling in the 2023-24 Budget Statement² is therefore a welcome step in the right direction.

In the 2021 Census report³, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that on Census night in the ACT, 1777 people (59% Male; 41 % Female) were homeless. This is an increase from the 2016 estimate of 1596 people (60% Male; 40 % Female) (Table 1.1). The same report indicates 862 people were in supported accommodation for the homeless (Table 1.3), and that 661 people in supported accommodation for the homeless were under 44 years old. (Table 1.6). Additionally, 76.9% of all people (1368 people) experiencing homelessness were under 44 years old. (Table 1.3). This is an indication of younger people experiencing homelessness and seeking assistance. The Society's data sourced from our homelessness programs between 2018 to 2022 indicates a rise in the number of younger women within the age cohorts of 24 to 40 years rough sleeping or resorting to couch surfing with friends and family. These women are dealing with the threat of homelessness as a compound effect of the current cost-of-living crisis.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) specialist homelessness services annual report 2022–23⁴ indicates that 1 in 119 people in the ACT received homelessness assistance (National rate 1 in 95 people). The AIHW reports that homelessness services supported 3,800 clients across the ACT in the 2021/22 year. Further it estimates that almost 9 in 10 (85%) clients at risk of homelessness were assisted to maintain housing. The top three reasons for seeking this service were housing affordability stress (49%, compared with 33% nationally); housing crisis (48%, compared with 38% nationally) and financial difficulties (47%, compared with 40% nationally).

According to our internal data, in 2023, the demand for material aid through our Conferences significantly increased on the previous year. This is in response to the rising cost of rents and utilities,

² Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. [Australian Capital Territory Budget 2023–24 Increasing Housing Choice, Access and Affordability](#), ACT Government. Accessed January 18, 2024

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), [Estimating Homelessness: Census](#), ABS Website, accessed 17 January 2024.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022–23](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 18 January 2024.

which is impacting people's ability to purchase food for their families. Throughout the year, we have experienced an escalating demand for our emergency relief support and services. Our Crisis Helpline receives between 400 and 600 calls per week.

RECOMMENDATION

The Society strongly recommends the following considerations in the 2024-25 ACT Government Budget under the housing and homelessness thematic area.

- **Recommendation 1: Increase in the Percentage share of Housing in the Budget:** In our 2023 Budget submission, the Society advocated an across the board increase in the overall budget allocation for the housing sector from the 4% in the 2022-23 ACT Budget⁵ (\$265million) to 8% in the 2023-24 ACT Budget. The Society advocates for more funding in the 2024-25 Budget to be committed to the provision of affordable housing – public and community – in the ACT. This is a fundamental part of the solution to Housing and Homelessness in our Territory.
- **Recommendation 2: Provide more Transitional Housing Facilities:** The Samaritan House Program with its 13-bed crisis housing facility continues to face a practical challenge of the lack of exit points for many of the residents. For an emergency accommodation unit for men, this means that residents have no options other than to remain in Samaritan House. This in turn reduces the available beds for emergency accommodation. Throughout the year 2023, the program supported 63 men⁶, of whom 42 were supported into permanent accommodation. The Government should consider providing up to 6 transitional properties to the program to enable a more secure medium-term pathway out of homelessness for men in the ACT.
- **Recommendation 3: To Increase the Capacity of Crisis Accommodation Option:** The Society believes that there is an opportunity to develop the Samaritan House building, to increase the number of crisis beds available on the site. The Society would be happy to participate in a consultation to develop a plan for such a re-development.
- **Recommendation 4: Continue to Fund Food and Engagement Services:** The Blue Door Program⁷ had approximately 1,800 drop-ins per month and provided over 30,000 free meals throughout the year 2023. Increasing the funds and extending the funding beyond its current duration will ensure that the growing cohort in our community who rely on the program will continue to be provided for.
- **Recommendation 5: Renovate the Ainslie Village⁸:** The dining hall and commercial kitchen at Ainslie Village require renovation. These substantial areas are currently closed due to damage and disrepair. Both the dining hall area and the commercial kitchen could be utilized to substantially increase the food and engagement services work of both the Society and Argyle Housing on the site.
- **Recommendation 6: Provide Onsite-Case Management:** We encourage the ACT Government to consider the provision of on-site case management and social support services in local multi-unit estates including Jerilderie Court (62 units), Kanangra Court (78 units) and Oaks Estate (77 units). The co-location of significant numbers of public housing units in these

⁵ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, [Australian Capital Territory Budget 22-23: Delivering for Canberra: Now and into the Future](#), ACT Government. Accessed April 21, 2023

⁶ St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn. [Impact Annu Report 2022-2023](#). Page 35. Accessed January 29, 2024

⁷ The St. Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn, [The Blue Door Program](#). Accessed on April 24, 2023

⁸Argyle Housing, [Ainslie Village](#), Accessed on April 24, 2023

estates presents a wide range of challenges, with the vast majority of tenants only receiving tenancy support but not access to case management and social support services.

- **Recommendation 7: Re-purpose blocks earmarked for redevelopment:** Increase the supply of low-cost housing by making available monthly rental units from apartment blocks slated for redevelopment but now left vacant for long periods.

COST OF LIVING, ENERGY AND CLIMATE SMART MEASURES

Cost of living concerns have gained both media and political attention in the last year⁹. According to the ABS Monthly Household Spending Indicator released¹⁰ in December 2023, household spending in the ACT increased by 8.2 per cent through the year to September 2023. Through the year (TTY¹¹), spending on food increased by 4.9 percent, clothing and footwear by 3.0 percent and transport by 8.9 percent.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Annual Consumer Price Index (CPI)¹² inflation was 5.4 per cent in the September 2023 quarter. Prices for most goods continued to be higher than they were 12 months ago. The most significant price rises were Automotive fuel (+7.2%), Rents (+2.2%), new dwelling purchase by owner-occupiers (+1.3%) and Electricity (+4.2%). Additionally, gas tariffs have seen a recent increase of as much as 7% in the ACT¹³.

In Canberra rent remains high in comparison to other states and territories. This is highlighted by the latest PropTrack Market Insight Report¹⁴ released in January 2024, which has Canberra as the second most expensive city to rent a house in Australia. The median price rose by 3 per cent across the quarter to sit at \$680 per week, only behind Sydney at \$750. The report states that in the December 2023 quarter, the median advertised rental price in Canberra was \$610 (houses and units combined), unchanged compared to a year ago. For poor and low-income families, this high cost of houses on the rental market reiterates the need for more affordable housing in the ACT. For individuals and families that can afford, this takes more dollars out of their spending budget, increasing the pressure to meet other equally essential needs.

Between January 1, 2023, and December 31, 2023, St Vincent de Paul Household Energy Efficiency Officers:

- Assisted 1608 households in the ACT and provided 767 households with home energy and water assessment, education and retrofit.
- Served 306 Housing ACT and 230 Community Housing tenants.
- Installed draught sealing for 748 clients.
- Installed 1335 curtains for 245 clients.
- Delivered curtains for an additional 100 rental households under the ACT Government's Renters program support initiative.
- Distributed 725 heated throw rugs.

⁹ H Frost, [“The cost of living is dominating ACT politics. Can the government ease the pain?”](#), *The ABC News*, 12 Feb 2023, accessed on 21 April 2023.

¹⁰ Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. [ABS Monthly Household Spending Indicator- Household Spending - September 2023](#). *ACT Government*. Accessed January 17, 2024.

¹¹ Through the year growth is the percentage change from the same period in the previous year.

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics (Sep-quarter-2023), [Consumer Price Index, Australia](#), ABS Website, accessed 17 January 2024.

¹³ D Jervis-Bardy, [“Origin customers in Canberra to face price rise in February”](#), *The Canberra Times*, 19 January 2023, accessed on 21 April 2023.

¹⁴ Newstime Media. [“Canberra second most expensive city to rent a house after Sydney.”](#) *Canberra Daily*. January 9, 2024, accessed on 17 January 2024.

Our Energy Efficiency Officers have visited many ACT households where occupants no longer use their heating and have turned off their hot water; are accessing food banks and going to bed early in winter; wake up in temperatures that are below zero; and have no other option than to suffer through increasing heatwave temperatures in summer. In these households the fear of not being able to pay energy bills is more than a physical discomfort, it's energy poverty.

The ACT Government has demonstrated commitment to supporting Canberrans to better understand their energy use, reduce this use and support households to access cleaner energy. The ACT Government's "Everyday Climate Choices"¹⁵ initiative provides residents of the ACT with information that clearly explains climate change and ways to reduce energy use on its website.

RECOMMENDATION

To address this energy poverty, the Society advocates to support those most in need in particular Housing ACT households, households that are supported by government concession cards and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households. Complementarily, the specific recommendations below will make a positive impact on the lives of families dealing with this energy poverty amidst the high cost of living.

- **Recommendation 8: Increase funding for Frontline and Support Services:** A direct effect of the rising cost of living crisis and the lack of affordable housing in the ACT is the significant increase in the number of people presenting for emergency relief services from Community sector organisations such as ours. We are also seeing an increase in people in need of specialist homelessness services. Our front-line teams and drop in centres are absolutely stretched. In December 2023 alone we saw a 40% increase in the number of calls to us for help. The majority of these requests are for accommodation support to prevent individuals and families becoming homeless and for food. Community organisations providing specialist homelessness services are all experiencing a significant increase in demand. Until there is adequate affordable housing available, our front line teams and specialist case workers will continue to bear the load of this growing unmet need and are already stretched beyond reason. For homelessness services to be able to respond to everyone in need of assistance, and to provide the professional level of support required, we require a significant increase of new investment into those services.
- **Recommendation 9: More Funding for Thermally Efficient Curtains for Vulnerable Households in the ACT:** Home Energy Efficiency Programs for low-income households currently provide limited funding for efficient curtains. Unfortunately, current funding is inadequate as out of 700 families we contracted to provide energy assessment, only 250 households received curtains.

The Housing ACT (HACT) tenants are more than sixty per cent of the households we provide services to each year. Most HACT tenants do not have appropriate curtains suitable for the Canberra weather. Many HACT tenants request curtains when they move into a new property as they have no curtains or inadequate curtains. As we move Canberra to a more resilient climate change society, we must provide thermally efficient curtains to all vulnerable households in Canberra.

¹⁵ ACT Government, "Everyday Climate Choices" <https://www.climatechoices.act.gov.au/>, accessed on 18 April 2023.

- **Recommendation 10: Increased Budget for Maintenance and Management of ACT Housing Stock:** Better management of current ACT Housing stock when preparing homes for new occupants will help reduce the turnaround time and hence make housing units available more quickly. For example, by not removing working, usable curtain tracks when preparing for new tenants and referring new occupants to the Home Energy Efficiency Program on sign up.
- **Recommendation 11: Reintroduce the Doona Replacement Program:** Upgrading doonas for 250 households per year would cost \$104,225 p/a. With the rising cost of living in Canberra, our participants are unlikely to prioritise buying a good quality doona over a poor quality low-cost one. Replacing their old doona with thick high quality doonas encourages participants to turn off portable heating overnight which can save as much as \$300 per month (based on inefficient heaters costing \$1 per hour and running for 10 hours a night).
- **Recommendation 12: Increased Funding for Energy Efficiency Programs:** It is important to continue and increase funding for programs such as the Home Energy Efficiency Program which support vulnerable households to reduce their energy use.
- **Recommendation 13: Increased Awareness and Publicity:** There is the need to increase awareness about ACT Government's programs and initiatives such as the Everyday Climate Choices website, Sustainable Home Advice Program and Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme

INDIGENOUS JUSTICE

The continuing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the child-detention centres and institutions comes through in the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services. The report highlights that, for 2021-22, the average daily rate of detention across Australia was 2.8 per 10 000 young people and the average daily rate of community-based supervision was 10.7 per 10 000 young people. Both rates have fallen nationally since 2014-15, although rates of young people in detention increased in Queensland, the ACT and the NT.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT are 12 times more likely to be under a community corrections order than non-Indigenous people: a rate of 2,789 Indigenous people per 100,000 adults, compared to only 233 non-Indigenous. This is the third highest rate in the country. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up only a quarter of the prison population at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, Indigenous people are 20 times more likely to be in prison in the ACT: 1,770.3 Indigenous detainees per 100,000 adults, compared to 86.5 non-Indigenous.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Recommendation 14: Continue to prioritise and implement the 28 Recommendations from the "Our Booris, Our Way Report":** We note the "Our Booris, Our Way Six Monthly Report January – June 2022"¹⁶ submitted to the Legislative Assembly. We also note the appointment of the first ACT Commissioner for First Nations children as a step in the right direction. The Society supports the principle that the best outcomes for any child, but particularly for

¹⁶ ACT Government, [Our Booris, Our Way Six Monthly Report January – June 2022](#) ACT Government Community Service Website, accessed on 18 April 2023

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for whom culture is so important, are gained if the child can be safely supported within his or her birth family.

- **Recommendation 15: Prioritise Actions that Seek to Reform Justice and Prison Systems:** The Society supports the adoption of the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission in its 2017 report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration rates¹⁷ and would encourage the ACT Government to prioritise implementation of the key targets contained within the recently signed National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap¹⁸
- **Recommendations 16: Establish the Royal Commission into Indigenous Justice in the ACT:** The Society supports the call among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities for the establishment of the Royal Commission to conduct an inquiry into the justice delivery system and how it interfaces with their communities.

MIGRANT, REFUGEE AND PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

In the 2021 Census report¹⁹, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that on census night, 28.7% of the 454,000 residents in the ACT were born overseers. This is an increase from the 2016 percentage of 26.4%. Essentially, 1 in 3 people in the ACT come from a culturally diverse background. In 2015, when Canberra was officially declared a “Refugee Welcome Zone”²⁰, there were nearly people of 200 different nationalities²¹ resident in the ACT. In 2019, the ACT Government officially joined the Welcoming Cities Network. This is a network of cities, shires, towns, and municipalities committed to an Australia where everyone can belong and participate²².

The ACT joined the Safe Haven Enterprise Visa Scheme (SHEV)²³ in 2016 and this allowed people who arrived in Australia without a visa and wanted to seek asylum, to live, work and study here temporarily for 5 years²⁴. As the waiting period between applying for protection visas and seeking asylum can be lengthy, the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS)²⁵ has been an avenue of support from the Federal Government in support of people seeking asylum.

Unfortunately, the current Federal Government has continued the harsh policy of the previous Federal Government by severely limiting the eligibility of SRSS to these asylum seekers, leaving thousands of people across Australia and at least 50 households in the ACT in destitution.

Since 2018 St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn has been working with Companion House, and Canberra Refugee Support to assist these vulnerable people. We are grateful for the ACT

¹⁷ Australian Law Reform Commission, [Pathways to Justice—Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples](#), Final Report No 133 (2017) accessed on April 14, 2023

¹⁸ Council of Australian Governments [Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2019-2029](#) accessed on April 14, 2023

¹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (28 June 2022), [Snapshot of Australian Capital Territory](#), ABS Website, accessed 31 January 2024.

²⁰ A *Refugee Welcome Zone* is a local government area which has made a commitment to welcoming refugees into the community, upholding their human rights, demonstrating compassion for refugees and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in the community.

²¹ Yvette Berry, MLA Ginninderra [“Australia’s capital city officially declared a refugee welcome zone”](#) published on 18 June 2015. Accessed on January 31, 2024.

²² ACT Government. [“Canberra accredited as an Advanced Welcoming City”](#) Published on 30 July 2023. Accessed on 31 January 2024.

²³ Rachel Stephen-Smith, MLA [“ACT Strengthens Efforts to Welcome Refugees”](#) ACT Government Media Release. Published on 22 June 2017. Accessed on January 31, 2024.

²⁴ Australian Government. [“Safe Haven Enterprise Visa: Subclass 790”](#) Department of Home Affairs Website. Accessed on January 31, 2024

²⁵ Refugee Council of Australia [“Status Resolution Support Services”](#) Accessed on January 31, 2024.

Government's Discretionary Funding Support²⁶ to complement our own support. Since 2021, an annual allocation of \$195,000 has been provided generously by the ACT Government as discretionary funding for asylum seekers, primarily those eligible for the ACT Access Card and who are not in receipt of any other income. This funding forms an essential part of support jointly delivered with the three community organisations.

Last year the three agencies, collectively referred to as the Acute Rental Support Coordinating Committee (ARSCC) and St Vincent de Paul Society National Office advocated for the Federal Government to take up its clear responsibilities for the welfare of these vulnerable people. Unfortunately, the Federal Government made no commitment to easier access to or increased funding for SRSS in its 2023-24 Budget, nor has it since given any indication of providing any sort of financial safety in the future. We will continue to advocate for this coming Federal Budget but are not hopeful.

The Society's Migrant and Refugee Program team visits schools to work 1:1 with primary and secondary students from a migrant or refugee background and who need additional support with their learning. In 2023²⁷, the program ran 424 sessions across six schools, which supported 50 students with tutoring on a weekly basis. We also run a homework club at Gungahlin Library. Through our engagement with families sending children to these programs, we have become aware of the discrepancies between supports that are available to students in different schools and school systems. For example, students entering the Catholic Education system do not have access to the Introductory English Centres that their peers in the public system do. However, if they start by enrolling in the public system, attend an IEC and only then enroll in the Catholic system, they will be able to access the IECs. This is critical information that parents should know about before they enroll their children in school.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Recommendation 17: Continue to provide the Discretionary Funding:** ARSCC requests the ACT Government to continue to provide discretionary funding at the current level of \$195,000 per annum. In the absence of Federal Government funding, and without ACT funding, the ARSCC agencies will be unable to sustain the level of support we are currently providing.
- **Recommendations 18: Provide Support for parents on School Enrolment:** A key area of challenge common to parents who are migrants, refugees or seeking asylum is the ability to quickly understand the educational system in Australia. This has a lot of influence on how their children enrol into schools and access support services available to them. The Society therefore advocates for more support services around the educational system for parents of these backgrounds. This can be tied into existing services currently being delivered as part of the commitment under the Refugee Welcome Zone initiative.

²⁶ RASH Coordination Committee. "[Seeking Rash Coordination Committee's Feedback on Discretionary Funding Support To Act Services Access Card Holders ACT](#)" Office for Multicultural Affairs. Community Services Directorate. Published on 233 Marh, 2022. Accessed on 31 January 2024

²⁷ St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn. [Impact Annual Report 2022-2023](#). Page 40. Accessed January 31, 2024

ABOUT THE ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY CANBERRA / GOULBURN

The Society implements many programs that deliver services to a cross section of the vulnerable population within the ACT, some of which are outlined below.

Street to Home Program supports people who are 'sleeping rough' and/or experiencing long term chronic homelessness through case management and assertive outreach. The program provided case management to 75 rough sleepers and outreach to 184 more in the last year.

Families and Youth Program provides outreach support services to families and young people in the ACT currently at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness to enable them to access and maintain safe, secure, independent, and affordable housing. The program supported 112 families throughout the year.

Samaritan House is a 13-bed facility in Canberra that provides crisis accommodation and support for men experiencing homelessness, working to break the cycle of chronic and acute homelessness. The service supported 79 men throughout the year.

Blue Door Program is a drop-in centre located in the middle of Ainslie Village in Canberra. It provides support to those living in the village and beyond in the form of meals, emergency relief material aid, information, referral, and support. The service had about 1,500 drop-ins per month and provided some 34,000 free meals throughout the year.

Night Patrol operates across Canberra and Queanbeyan on every night of the year from its 2 vans and with the support of 300 volunteers. It provides food, material items such as jackets, sleeping bags and hygiene items, and most importantly, an opportunity to engage socially with companions who are experiencing homelessness and/or social isolation. It served 7,992 companions throughout the year and provided 5,212 material items.

Community Inclusion Program, which operates out of the Oaks Estate and is designed to offer support for people living with psycho-social disabilities who are ineligible for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding. It is funded by an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Grant from the Australian Federal Government. It exists to build innovative ways to increase the independence, social and community participation of people with a psychosocial disability who are ineligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It provides advocacy, support, information, referral case management and the development of activities in response to identified needs. The program supported 276 companions throughout the year.

Justice Housing Program provides accommodation options for individuals who otherwise would remain in detention due to a lack of suitable community-based accommodation. The program also provides accommodation support services to women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved with the criminal justice system, with a focus on trauma informed, gender-informed and culturally safe practices. Funded by the ACT Government, the program is a core element of its Building Communities Not Prisons initiative, which seeks to address the lack of available and affordable housing for people released from custody.

CONTACT DETAILS

Kwadwo Owusu, Social Justice and Policy Coordinator, Kwadwo.Owusu@vinnies.org.au

Mobile: 0491 022 398, **Tel:** 02 628 2722