



## Take action this Federal Election!

As members and supporters of the St Vincent de Paul Society, we cannot witness injustice and leave it unchallenged. This April or May, the Federal election presents us with an invaluable opportunity to raise our voices in solidarity with the people we assist and break down the barriers that trap people in poverty and disadvantage.

We can do this by **meeting with the main candidates in our electorates** and urging them to adopt our policy recommendations, if elected. Vinnies National Council has identified the key issues we can bring to the attention of candidates—including addressing the housing crisis and the inadequacy of income support—and has prepared some resources to help us to meet with candidates. Vinnies NSW is also producing some briefing notes with electorate level statistics, available at <https://socialjustice.vinnies.org.au/campaigns/federal-election-2022/>

Below is guide to steps you can take to organise to meet with your local candidates:

### 1. Find out which electorate you live in

Call the Australian Electoral Commission on 13 23 26 and ask them to confirm your federal electorate. You will need to share your full residential address.

### 2. Connect with others in your electorate

Let the Social Justice Team and your Central Council Social Justice Representative know that you are keen to engage with candidates and ask them if there are other Vinnies members who live in the same electorate who are keen to do so. Also, ask fellow Conference members, parishioners and other local people interested in social justice whether they are interested in engaging with candidates. Where other people are keen, take the steps below together!

### 3. Locate your main candidates

Search online for the main candidates vying to be the MP in your electorate or contact the Social Justice Team and ask them to do this for you. The [ABC website is a useful source of information](#).

### 4. Write to your candidate

Write an email or letter to each of the main candidates asking them to meet with you to discuss some important social issues that impact your local community. You may list the issues, but do not need to provide details. If you are writing on behalf of other individuals or groups let the candidate know. Alternatively, you could arrange for fellow Vinnies members, parishioners and others interested in social justice who live in the electorate to co-sign your letter. The more signatures, the better!

### 5. Prepare for your meeting

Agree on which of our issues (outlined in the resources to come) you would like to focus on. Plan who will say what during the meeting and who will take notes too. You might like to role play the meeting with fellow members! Please remember that Vinnies is a non-partisan organisation so your preparation and approach should not favour any party or candidate.

### 6. Meet

Introduce yourselves by letting the candidate know your name, where you live and your role with Vinnies. Emphasise your experience with the local community. Use the information contained in the resources to share your concern about one or more of the identified issues. Share a couple of

examples that demonstrate how the issue impacts your local community in particular. Then share our recommendations (also in the recourses) and directly ask your candidate to commit to make this happen, if elected. They may not be in a position to respond on the spot. Hand them a copy of the briefing note before you leave, thank them for their time, and advise that you look forward to hearing how they'll respond to the issue before the election.

## 7. Follow up

Immediately after the meeting, send the candidate an email to thank them for meeting with you, reiterate your issue of concern and your recommendation, and let them know you look forward to hearing whether, if elected, they will deliver your recommendation. If you don't hear back from them after 2 weeks, send them a follow up email. If you still don't hear back from them, give them a call.

## 8. Share what you've learnt

Let your Social Justice Representative, Central Council and Conference know how each of the candidates responded to your issue and recommendation. If a particular candidate didn't respond to a request for a meeting or didn't follow up regarding your recommendation, share this too!

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## Other options

If you don't have capacity to meet with local candidates, you could include more information about the issue of concern in your letter, including our recommendation, and ask them to advise you whether they'd deliver this recommendation if elected.

If you have capacity to do more than meet with candidates separately, you might like to organise a public meeting with all the candidates, Vinnies members and other local residents interested in the issue.

Either way, please contact the Social Justice Team at [social.justice@vinnies.org.au](mailto:social.justice@vinnies.org.au) for support.

Thank you for taking action!