

# FACTSHEET: SOCIAL JUSTICE



St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*

## ACTIVITY: BUST SOME MYTHS!

Ask the group to stand in the middle of the room. When you share the following statements, get them to stay standing if they think it's a fact or duck down if they think it's a myth. Then share the correct answer.



- Everyone in Australia has the same life expectancy. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a life expectancy 10-17 years less than other Australians.* **myth**
- Indigenous people only make up 2.5% of Australia's population, but 26% of adult males in prison are Indigenous. **fact**
- The top 1% of Australia's wealthiest has nearly a quarter of the Australian total wealth. *They have over 22% of the total Australian wealth.* **fact**

## VINNIES SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION



The Society is committed to alleviating immediate need, but also to challenging structures and government policy that contribute to inequality. The Society advocates for policy reforms leading to a more just, compassionate and equitable society, with the aim of eliminating the root causes of poverty.

We begin by providing immediate assistance and building trusting relationships with the people we assist. This trust helps us to uncover the causes of disadvantage in order to offer a hand up to people in need.

**The Society calls for solutions to injustice by engaging government, working with other organisations and raising awareness across the community. Your group can help with these initiatives.**



**TRANSFORMATION**  
Shaping a more just and compassionate society



**IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE**  
Addressing urgent needs



**HAND UP**  
Build trusting relationships



**RAISING OUR VOICE**  
Empowering people to advocate for change

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

Ask the group questions then discuss the facts.

### WHAT DOES SOCIAL JUSTICE MEAN TO YOU?

Broadly, it means everyone has equal economic, social and cultural rights – like access to education, employment, safety, health and social fulfilment – regardless of their ethnicity, religion, class, disability, gender, sexuality, age or race.

### WHAT SOCIAL INEQUALITIES HAVE YOU SEEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Local issues might include poverty, racism, ageism, or when someone is treated unfairly or denied access to opportunities because they are seen as different.

### WHY DO YOU THINK SOCIAL INEQUALITY EXISTS?

Generally, social inequality falls into two groups that have two different causes:

- Unequal treatment of people by other people due to a personal belief about someone's race, sex, age, faith, etc, or;
- Unequal regulations and laws made by government that intentionally or unintentionally discriminate against a group, and leave them without the same opportunities and resources afforded to others.



## ACTIVITY

### IMAGINING A BETTER WORLD

Social equality, is a good aim for society, however addressing social issues can often be controversial and difficult. In small groups, imagine one of you has just been made Prime Minister, and the rest of you are their support team. You have been given the opportunity to create new policies for your country. Keeping in mind that you have limited money to make these changes, what kind of society would you create and how would you deal with these social justice issues:

- There are more than 100,000 people experiencing homelessness in Australia today.
- Indigenous people only make up 2.5% of Australia's population but figures show 49% of young people in juvenile detention are Indigenous.
- 24 million people are seeking asylum from persecution. Can Australia help more people?

**Share your ideas as a group, and then share your ideas with the real decision makers in your local government office.**

*"Our social security system was built in very different structural circumstances. The labour market is different. Work is different. We should be embarking on a serious reframing of how we can, collectively and with common resources, achieve social and economic security for everyone. We need, for example, to explore how government might play a leading role in achieving full employment instead of harassing the people who have been structurally excluded from jobs."*

– John Falzon, CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society Australia.

## CHALLENGE

### WHAT IS THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS?

**Find the declaration online and identify five rights that you enjoy but that students in other countries (or those seeking asylum) do not. Discuss your findings as a group.**

As a group, talk about the options you have to advocate for people in other countries who do not enjoy the same rights as you. As a group:

1. Research and contact an organisation which is working to address the issues you've identified.
2. Ask how you can contribute.
3. Commit to an achievable but worthwhile goal, aimed at advocating for those who go without the rights you have.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

### BE ADVOCATES

**Talk to your family, friends, classmates, and community to help raise awareness about social justice issues in your community and beyond.**

Research the issues. See what Vinnies is doing in your local area and how they're advocating to government. Collect signatures for a Vinnies petition, start your own or invite a local MP or Mayor to your group meeting or event so you can share your concerns with them – and let us know about it!

### BE AWARE OF YOUR PRIVILEGE

**... and how others aren't as fortunate.** Think about how your actions could change to be more inclusive of others, and then change those actions.

## CONNECT WITH US



**@vinniesnsw**

[vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au)  
[un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/](http://un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/)  
[justreinvest.org.au](http://justreinvest.org.au)  
[humanrights.gov.au](http://humanrights.gov.au)

