



# Catholic Social Justice Council

Archdiocese of Perth

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## A Vote for Families

The Perth Catholic Social Justice Council works for justice in social structures based on Catholic Social Teaching. Current concern is felt for many WA families facing special challenges which require the consideration of our elected government.

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Statement for 2012-13 celebrates the role of families in our society and urges all Australians to consider the pressures and challenges that families face today. Families face increasing financial pressure, including the spiralling cost of housing: house prices grew by 147 per cent in the last decade and 690,000 households now spend more than 30% of weekly income on rent or mortgage payments.

Many families in our prosperous nation find themselves at the margins.

The Bishops express particular concern for indigenous families, refugees, those on welfare support or minimum wages, the homeless and those with special needs. As Christians we are called to be supportive of families, especially those who are most vulnerable.

As the WA election approaches we ask you to consider how the elected government will assist families facing these challenges and offer some questions for your consideration.

## Affordable Housing

Increased investment in social housing should be the top priority for WA governments.

According to a recent WACOSS report the cost of affordable rental accommodation is the leading contributor to financial stress in low-income households.

The median rental price has risen to over \$470.00 per week and the rental vacancy rate has dropped below 1.2%

Housing affordability and emergency accommodation has declined in recent years.

Waiting lists for public housing are long and rents are high. Poor families are the most affected.

The cost of housing has risen to a point where owning your own home is increasingly beyond the reach of average working families. Action to reduce the scope and severity of this crisis is imperative.

**If elected, what steps will you take to provide more affordable low cost housing?**

**How would you support vulnerable groups to secure and sustain housing?**

## Special Needs

Around four million Australians have a disability resulting from a health condition. Families and friends provide over \$1.3 billion hours of care each year, which would cost around \$40 billion to provide if informal care were not available.

The costs to those who give and receive care are enormous and should be supported by our society. For this reason, we applaud the current range of Federal proposals, including a National Disability Insurance Scheme, which provides much needed support for families struggling to meet the needs of loved ones.

**If elected, how will you work as a State Government to support the implementation of an adequately funded and proper functioning National Disability Insurance Scheme?**

### **Mental Health Funding**

Requirements of the Mental Health Bill 2012 and the Stokes Review will necessitate significant additional funding to train more staff, provide additional facilities and implement more effective early intervention for mental health patients.

Since 2008, 15% of women and 20% of men who committed suicide did so within a day of discharge, indicating inadequate facilities and staff.

**What steps will you take to ensure these mental health recommendations are implemented?**

### **Indigenous Families**

Western Australia has the highest rate of imprisonment of aboriginal people in the country and aboriginal children comprise about 75% of juveniles in custody. Aboriginal families are much less likely to own their own home than non- aboriginal people and about one third of aboriginal families are in dwellings with serious structural problems.

Lower life expectancy and higher rates of poverty, disease, homelessness and unemployment are evident in indigenous communities. Better opportunities for education, health services and appropriate housing employment are required

**If elected, how will you work with indigenous communities to improve these conditions?**

### **Asylum seekers**

Australia has had a proud tradition of generosity towards people fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries.

Many asylum seekers are detained in unsuitable conditions, unable to work and their children deprived of security, education and social contact. Prolonged detention is a major cause of mental illness especially for the young. They have no access to transport or health concessions and are dependent on community, church or family groups for support.

**What steps will you take to ensure more just treatment of Asylum seekers in WA?**

**Patrick J Smith**

**Executive Officer**

**13 February 2013**