



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Poverty missing from election agenda

With more than 240,000 people living below the poverty line in WA and the highest rate of inequality in the country, you'd expect poverty to be high on the election agenda. Instead, the poor continue to be neglected.

WA Council of Social Service CEO Louise Giolitto says the lack of focus on social justice during the WA state election has been deeply disappointing.

"There are over 9,500 people homeless on any given night and the public housing waitlist has over 18,000 people on it. In what world is this good enough?"

"There have been some very welcome announcements regarding family and domestic violence and restoring funding for financial counselling."

"Our concern is that there has not been enough focus on tackling the structural and systemic causes of disadvantage and poverty in our community."

"Where is the plan for building more social housing – which we know is fundamental to tackling poverty? Or to address our complicated system of state concessions and ensure they get to the people who need them and are actually adequate?"

"Across the world, we are seeing the consequences of the political class' failure to take action on income inequality and entrenched disadvantage."

"The community has responded really positively to our 'What If It Was Me?' social media campaign. The campaign shows that, while these are difficult conversations, policy discussion based on the truth of people's lived experience and sound evidence of what works is possible."

"Despite this, the political and media conversation around drug use is still framed in a criminality narrative rather than the health one it needs to be. We talk about reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in our prisons, but won't discuss the essential step of abolishing mandatory sentencing."

"For too long the 'tough on crime' and 'dole bludger' rhetoric has been coming out of the mouths of those with power when talking about those without it."

"You want to save money for the economy? Invest in the early intervention and prevention services that reduce how many people are going to the expensive government services like hospitals and prisons. If you want to reduce crime, then actually start addressing poverty and disadvantage, which we know are so often its cause."

"This election, vote for social justice. Vote for social change. And remember, democracy doesn't end at the ballot box – protecting the most disadvantaged in our community is a fight that will continue no matter the result of the election."

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