MEDIA RELEASE

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TWO INCOMES, STILL NOT ENOUGH: VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL LAUNCHES AS WESTERN REGION FAMILIES STRUGGLE TO COVER THE BASICS

St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn (Vinnies) is calling on the Western Region community to get behind its Christmas Appeal as household budgets reach breaking point, with local Vinnies volunteers supporting 628 people – almost seven a day – between July and September, up 9% on the same period last year.

In that time, volunteers carried out 1,179 visits to local people and families needing help and provided over $141,000 in practical support.

Every dollar raised through the Appeal stays local, helping Vinnies volunteers provide food, fuel, help with bills and other essentials to people doing it tough this Christmas.

Last financial year, Vinnies supported more than 1,300 individuals and families across the Western Region, delivering over $534,000 in cash and in-kind assistance.

Food and vouchers, clothing, transport and help with utility bills were among the most common needs.

The new Vinnies Drop-In Centre in Young, which opened in August, gives people a welcoming place to access practical help, casework, referrals and connection closer to home.

St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn CEO Lucy Hohnen said the figures show how little room many households have left in their budgets for Christmas this year. . “There are families in our community with two incomes who are working hard, budgeting carefully and still struggling to cover the basics. Another interest rate rise only adds to that pressure. That’s why our message this Christmas is so important: two incomes, still not enough.”

“We are seeing people reach out for help with food, clothing, accommodation, fuel and household bills. These are the basics people need just to get by from day to day.”

One couple with a toddler was referred to Vinnies by the National Debt Helpline. Both parents were employed but already struggling with essential costs when one had to take temporary leave from work.

Left relying on one wage to cover rent, utilities, food, existing debts and the costs of raising a child, the family turned to Vinnies for food and fuel assistance.

Ms Hohnen said the family’s circumstances reflect the reality behind this year’s Christmas Appeal theme: **‘Two incomes. Still not enough.’**

“For some households, one unexpected change is enough to tip an already stretched budget into crisis.”

The pressure is being felt nationally. A new St Vincent de Paul Society survey* found 52% of Australians feel more financially stressed heading into Christmas than a year ago, and 57% will have to prioritise essentials over Christmas spending.

“If you’re in a position to give, your donation to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal can help a local family cover the basics and feel some hope over the festive season,” Ms Hohnen said.

A gift of $89 can help provide a food hamper so a family can share a meal together on Christmas Day. $224 can help provide financial support so people don’t have to choose between a meal and keeping the lights on, and $657 can help with housing costs so a family can stay safely in their home.

The Vinnies Christmas Appeal runs from 1 November 2026 to 31 January 2027. Donations of $2 or more are tax-deductible.

To donate, visit donate.vinnies.org.au/appeals-act/christmas-appeal-act

For support call 13 18 12.

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Sarah Murdoch is available for interview.

Survey information

*The Christmas Appeal Survey was prepared for St Vincent de Paul Society by YouGov. The online survey comprised a nationally representative sample of 1,068 Australians aged 18 years and over and was conducted from 24 to 28 September 2026.

Key results include:

- Half of Australians (52%) feel more financially stressed leading up to Christmas than 12 months ago, including 24% who strongly agree.
- More than a third (36%) have felt the need to hide financial hardship from friends and family at Christmas, including 15% who strongly agree.
- Gen Z respondents (43%) and Millennials (39%) are more likely to agree with this statement than Baby Boomers (28%).
- People with children under 18 are more likely to strongly agree that they hide financial hardship, at 21% compared with 12%.
- Nearly three in five Australians (57%) will have to prioritise essential expenses over Christmas spending, including 25% who strongly agree.

About St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn

Every day, St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn helps people doing it tough across the ACT and surrounding NSW regions. Our members, volunteers and staff provide emergency relief, home visits, community meals, homelessness and housing support, and services for young people, migrants and refugees. We also speak up for fairer policies to tackle the causes of poverty and disadvantage.

In the Western Region, local Vinnies volunteer groups in Young, Harden, Cootamundra, Temora, West Wyalong, Tumut, Gundagai, Boorowa, Lake Cargelligo, Yass, Crookwell and Goulburn provide emergency relief, home visits, material aid, referrals and practical support. Our regional presence also includes case work, the Young Drop-In Centre and Vinnies Shops across the region.