

**29 August 2023**

## **No empty plates: St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria launches Spring Appeal**

To help ease the excruciating cost of living and assist Victoria's most vulnerable, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies Victoria) will launch its annual Spring Appeal on **Friday 1 September**. The not-for-profit organisation that has been helping Victorians in need for almost 170 years will raise funds for an issue that is increasingly affecting thousands of Victorians: **food insecurity** – going hungry with no money to afford essential food items.

Funds are in dire need: in direct response to an increased demand for food e.g. in the Berwick area, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria started the Berwick mobile pantry in August 2022. Over that 12-month period, there has been an incredible increase of 235% of people waiting for essentials like rice, canned fish, and pasta on its fortnightly run. On average, 300 people turn up per month, with many asking for a weekly run of this "gift from heaven" as the mobile pantry has been called.

In the heart of inner-city Melbourne, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria has provided almost 30% more meals (776,000+ meals) feeding hungry Victorians, adults and children, compared to the previous financial year.

"88% of all callers to our metropolitan welfare assistance were asking for food in the last financial year," says Dr Jenny Fitzgerald AM, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria Group CEO. "Our volunteers and members on the ground tell us that the lines of people waiting for our Vinnies soup vans and mobile pantries grow longer and longer. They see more mums, dads, and younger people turn up, often over an hour before our vans arrive to ensure they get food."

### **Everyone is impacted: seeking assistance despite having a job**

Gavin Dufty, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria's Policy & Research Manager, is concerned about the increase of people seeking our assistance who have jobs and earn wages and salaries: "It highlights the extent and impact of cost of living pressures. Everybody is being impacted – some much more severely than others.

"They are seeking support for food after they forked out money for other necessities such as rent, mortgage, utilities, petrol, public transport, medical and education expenses. That's why they come to Vinnies, and we are here for them as best as we can. So that no one is alone in this," Mr Dufty explains.

### **"Empty plates are not a sign of a fair society. We need to do more," Dr Jennifer Fitzgerald AM**

"It's heartbreaking to hear stories of mothers who can't sleep at night, because they don't have enough food to fill their children's lunch boxes the next day or because they have to choose between buying much-needed prescribed medications and going hungry.

"It's a heart-wrenching decision no one should have to make," says Dr Fitzgerald. "Access to food is a human right. Every dollar you give to our **Spring Appeal** ensures, that together, we can fill empty plates, lunch boxes and, importantly, empty tummies. Together, we can provide nutritious food and make a difference in the lives of people struggling."

**To help St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria feed more vulnerable Victorians and their families, please go to: [Spring Appeal \(vinnies.org.au\)](https://vinnies.org.au) and join the conversation by using the hashtag **#GoodFoodOnEveryTable**.**



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#### **ABOUT THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY VICTORIA:**

*The St Vincent de Paul Society and its wide network of members and volunteers provide practical frontline support, advocacy and friendship for the most vulnerable members of our community. Key services include home visitation; Vinnies Shops; youth programs; soup vans; assistance for asylum seekers and refugees; education and tutoring; and professional accommodation and health services through VincentCare. The St Vincent de Paul Society in Victoria has more than 10,000+ members and volunteers, and more than 60,000 across Australia. Internationally, the Society operates in 149 countries and more than 950,000 members. To find out more visit [www.vinnies.org.au/vic](http://www.vinnies.org.au/vic)*