

You are **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

HOW YOUR SUPPORT OF VINNIES QUEENSLAND IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

AUTUMN 2023

*You are there for
Queenslanders in their
time of greatest need*

Helping Sarah and her
children find hope after
domestic violence

Supporting flood
victims to rebuild

Changing young lives
through education

Nurturing 'tight-knit'
communities

Thank you *from our State President*

You are providing much-needed hope and support to struggling Queenslanders.

I'm delighted to send you this Autumn Edition of *You Are Making a Difference*, at a time when you truly are doing just that.

2022 was another challenging year for many Queenslanders. Just months after COVID lockdowns ended, communities across our state were hit by devastating floods. Then the war in Ukraine sparked a global cost-of-living crisis which continues to push vulnerable families to the brink of homelessness.

As we have seen so often in troubled times, you and other generous Vinnies supporters

stepped up to provide the extra support struggling families needed. For that, I could not be more grateful. Thank you!

In this edition of *You Are Making a Difference*, you can read all about the hope your kindness has brought to people whose lives have been turned upside down by natural disaster, the cost-of-living crisis and domestic violence. I hope you feel proud of everything



you make possible through your wonderful support.

With my deepest thanks,

P. McMahon

Trish McMahon
State President
St Vincent de Paul Society, QLD

Dependable support *in the aftermath of natural disaster*

You continue to help Queensland's flood victims through their long journey of recovery.



With your support, flood victims are rebuilding their homes and lives.

When floods devastated families across Southeast Queensland in February 2022, Vinnies volunteers and staff sprang into action. While we are not a first responder organisation, Vinnies was able to deliver vital assistance, quickly, through our network of volunteer members who live on the ground in flood-impacted communities.

One year on and more than \$1.5 million in assistance has been delivered to 1644 individuals, including 600 families. Much of this support has been rolled out across Ipswich, Oxley, Caboolture and Gympie, where the devastation was

particularly intense and widespread. We know from experience that we will still be helping people for many months to come.

Thank you for helping to make that lasting support possible.

"My deepest thanks go to the dedicated volunteers and staff who continue to assist families recovering from the floods – and to the many donors who trust St Vincent de Paul to deliver financial help to people in need." Matt Nunan, Chair of the SVDP Disaster Assistance Committee

Celebrating Indigenous excellence

You are helping to recognise the extraordinary achievements of Aboriginal students.

For the second year running, Vinnies sponsored a Year 12 graduation event at the Murri School, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Independent Community School in Brisbane. The Murri School provides an Indigenous-owned and controlled education which values cultural inclusivity and aims to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous education.

Many of the school's students face significant disadvantage and challenges, which means it can be rare for students to graduate year 12. That is why we were proud to help bring families, staff and community together to celebrate the success of this year's graduates. It is just one

example of our commitment to grow our reconciliation efforts and explore opportunities to outreach into Indigenous communities. Thank you for being part of that journey.

Vinnies provided:

- \$500 for venue hire
- \$200 for senior students' tickets
- \$300 through the Blessed Frederic Ozanam Bursary
- \$100 for the Rendu Award
- \$350 for a photographer
- Total: \$1100**



Thank you for helping us provide more support to our state's Indigenous graduates.

Your generous friendship will give these young graduates memories for a lifetime.





“Education is massively important these days. I was determined to make sure my kids got the best out of their time at school,”
Sarah, mother of three

The life-changing gift of education

Sarah’s* children are thriving in and out of the classroom – thanks to you.

When Sarah fled her violent ex-husband back in 2012, she was left living in her car while trying to care for two young children.

“When I got my tooth knocked out, I had no choice but to leave,” Sarah remembers. “My ex had taken all my money, which made it hard to feed my kids.”

Sarah struggled for two long years to make ends meet and provide a safe home for her children before meeting local Vinnies volunteer, Cheryl. With support from Vinnies’ Children’s Education Fund – and wonderful people like

you – Cheryl has been able to help Sarah put life back together for her family and give her kids the best start at school.

“Cheryl has been amazing,” Sarah says. “Early on she helped me a lot with food parcels and gift cards to buy groceries.”

“She also helped me get the support I needed to pay for the kids’ education. That meant the world to me.”

Life continues to be a challenge for Sarah. These days she juggles the

demands of caring full time for her mother while raising three children on her own. Rising cost-of-living pressures have made the balancing act even more difficult.

“It’s hard every year, but especially this year,” Sarah says, “I haven’t got two cents to rub together. If I can’t even afford my groceries, how am I supposed to buy uniforms and everything else the kids need for school.”

Support through our Children’s Education Fund is vital to helping Sarah give her children the opportunity to achieve their amazing potential.



Thank you for giving children like Talia the opportunity to build a better future for themselves.

“I’m so proud of my kids. They’re doing so well. My eldest Talia is doing extension programs for gifted and intelligent students. My middle child Maddie is representing her college at chess. And my youngest Daniel is doing really well with his maths, music and reading.

“Without the help we get through the Fund, they wouldn’t be getting those opportunities.”

Thank you for helping to give promising young people the chance to shine bright – and preventing them from falling into a cycle of poverty and homelessness.

Did you know that just \$81 could purchase stationery and books that students need to thrive at school, so parents are not forced to make a choice between educating their children or feeding them?



You are helping mums like Sarah not having to choose between feeding their children and buying school essentials.

Your generosity will help ensure children like Maddie can have schoolbooks and stationery to aid their learning.



*Some names have been changed to protect identity.

Champions *for* Children

Volunteer groups are going above and beyond to help kids thrive at school.

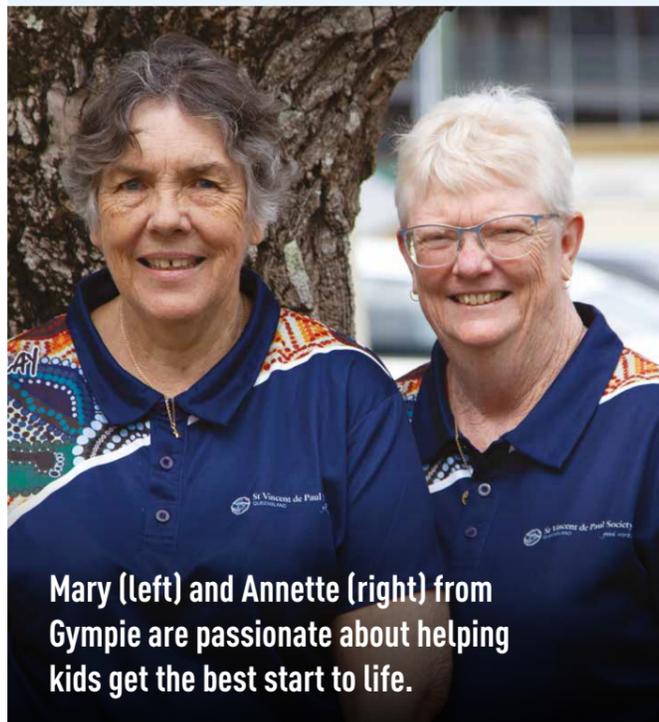
Vinnies volunteer members far and wide are helping kids from every corner of Queensland. And when it comes to giving disadvantaged children the opportunity to succeed in the classroom, volunteers in regional areas are at the top of the class.

In the last year alone, Gympie volunteers helped 190 children with \$39,737 in school expenses. Caboolture volunteers helped 119 children with \$24,454. Through their tireless efforts, these hard-working groups have helped change countless young lives and empower them with education.



Volunteer members Dilar (left) and Cheryl (right) from Caboolture.

“We try to be proactive in our work through the Children’s Education Fund. We approach everyone we have supported recently to check in on their circumstances and see if we can do anything else to help. Through that we often hear lovely stories of success.”
Mary, volunteer member from Gympie Conference



Mary (left) and Annette (right) from Gympie are passionate about helping kids get the best start to life.

“I’ve never seen cost-of-living pressures impact on families as much as they are now. I’ve known children staying home from school because they don’t have the right uniform. The Children’s Education Fund makes sure they go back to school with everything they need.”

Cheryl, volunteer member from Caboolture Conference

Cheryl supported Sarah, whose story you may have read on page four of this newsletter and in the accompanying letter.



What is Vinnies Children’s Education Fund?

Removing the barriers to education for some of Queensland’s most disadvantaged kids – thanks to you!

Every child in Queensland deserves an equal opportunity to get an education and the best start in life. But with cost-of-living pressures growing, more and more parents are facing impossible choices between putting food on the table, paying the rent and paying for their children’s education.

Household Expenditure Data* released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows there has been a 43% increase in average household spend on education over the last decade. On average, Aussie parents will spend \$571 for a primary student and \$771 for a secondary student to send their kids to school this year. Total education costs for 2023 are predicted to average \$2325 for a primary student and \$4212 for a secondary student**.

That means the need to support disadvantaged kids with their education has never been greater.

The Children’s Education Fund was set up in 2006 and provides financial support to students and families across Queensland for back-to-school expenses like uniforms, books, stationery, iPads, computers and other resources for the new school year. Last year, with the support of wonderful people like you, Vinnies provided \$974,463*** to support 3,997 disadvantaged children with their education.

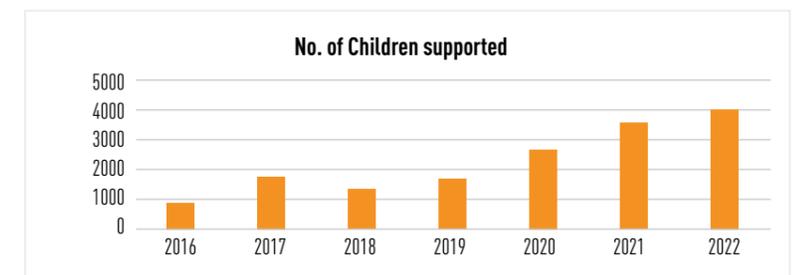
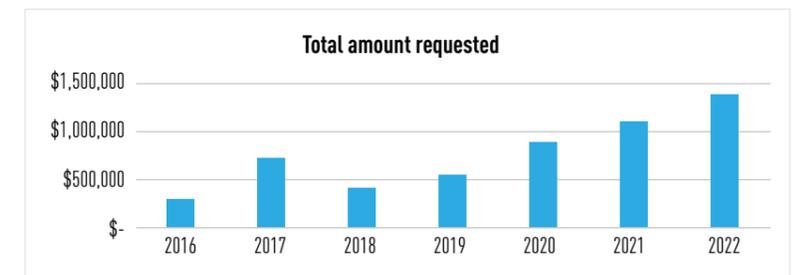
Thank you for sharing the life-changing gift of education with more young Queenslanders.

*www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/finance/household-expenditure-survey-australia-summary-results/latest-release
** <https://www.finder.com.au/back-to-school-costs>
*** includes Community Drought Support Program funding (QLD Government)



With your kind support, children like Maddie are able to go back to school with the right uniform and resources.

Each year, demand grows for relief from education pressure.



Did you know that just \$133 could cover the cost of uniforms and shoes so children can fit in with their peers and not get bullied or excluded?

Celebrating *lifelong* learning

Vinnies volunteer Gita is engaging vulnerable women to sew and fostering community connection.

When Gita noticed that refugee women in her community were looking for opportunities for social interaction and companionship, she decided to do something about it. She started by picking up her needle and thread.

Gita set up a sewing group for migrant and refugee women in Toowoomba. The classes gave the women, most of whom came from various war-torn countries speaking different languages, the opportunity to learn new skills, practise their English – and most importantly, socialise.

Gita quickly realised the group was about much more than sewing.

“One day I noticed the energy levels were particularly high and the women were frantically conversing in their mother tongue. I sensed something wasn’t right,” she says.

“It turned out something had happened back in their home country. I said to my colleague, ‘we might not get much sewing done today, so let’s just make them cups of tea and let the ladies talk.’”

Inspired by the success of the Darling Heights Learn to Sew Group, around 7 years ago, Gita went on to provide the same



Gita (above) our volunteer in Toowoomba started a sewing group for migrant and refugee women.



Thanks to your generous support, volunteer run programs such as these allow for better connected and caring communities.



opportunity at Harlaxton and Newtown Schools. She also had a delightful ‘Mothers & Daughters’ group at Harristown High that encouraged practising English skills along with sewing. Gita started another class at Range Allied Health, which provides support to people from a refugee background who live with a disability. Melody Shepherd, an occupational therapist and Director of the Centre, says Gita’s classes have given her clients a valuable opportunity to develop new skills and work towards their goals.

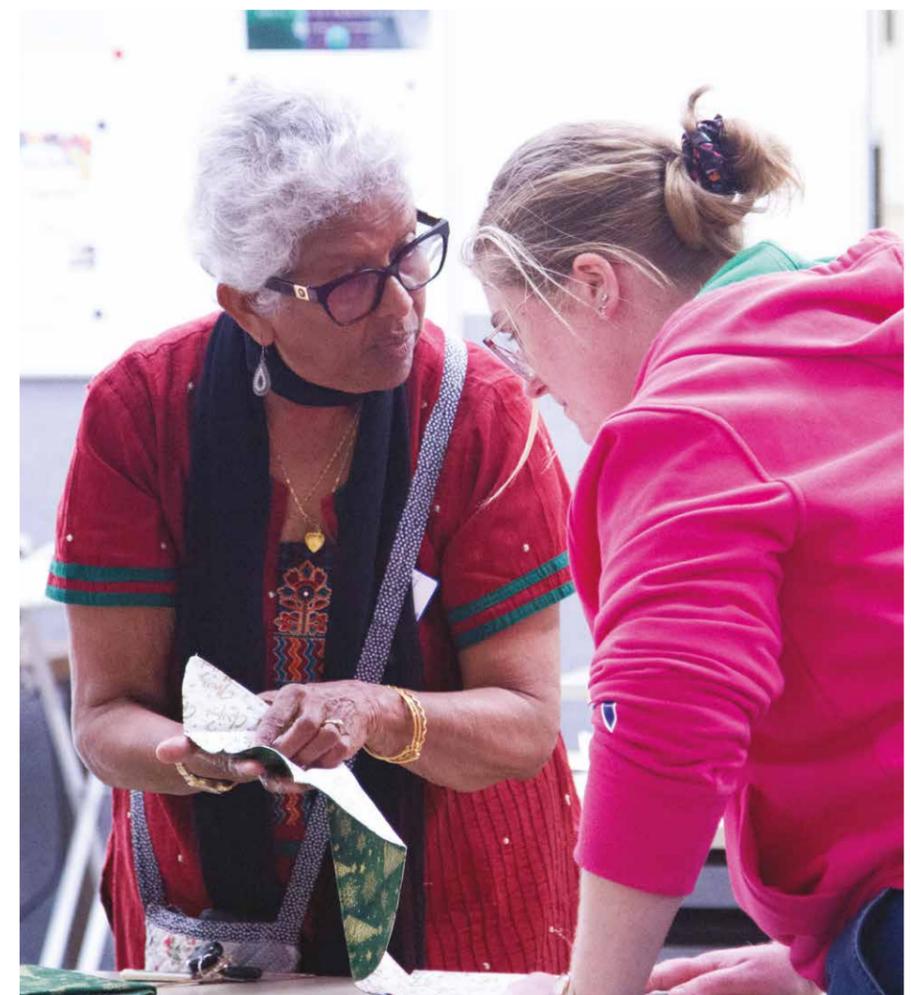
“Some of the women have an ambition to create their own small businesses by selling their creations. Others are participating with a goal to learn basic sewing skills and practice their social skills.”

Gita also now runs a ‘Sew and Chat’ group at St Anthony’s Church in Harristown, which brings together women from all backgrounds, cultures and walks of life to support each other while learning new sewing skills.

With your kind support, Vinnies has been able to assist Gita by providing new Janome sewing machines to use in her classes. Thank you for helping foster life-long learning and empowering women to build their lives with new skills.

“Volunteering is an extension of my family life. Where I grew up in Fiji, there was no social welfare. My parents taught me the importance of faith in action.” Gita

Gita is creating a tightknit community through her sewing classes – thanks to donations from people like you!



A pathway out of homelessness

The Toowoomba Shelter has been helping men get back on their feet and into a home.

In the last year alone, Vinnies has provided more than 100,000 nights of accommodation to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. One of the ways we do this is through hostels like Toowoomba Shelter, where up to 14 men at any one time can stay for up to three months while they get the support that they need to get their lives back on track.

Serving the community for more than 40 years, Toowoomba Shelter is operated by a dedicated team of staff and volunteers. Ron Burgess (pictured below, centre) is the Manager at the Shelter and says a recent client's story reminded him why the service continues to play such an important role in Vinnies' homelessness response.

"The client had recently got out of prison and wanted to make use of our support services to put his life back together. With our help he was able to find a room in a share house and successfully re-sit the test for his driver's license. He's also now volunteering at a community kitchen where he's cooking meals for the homeless."

Responding to a problem as systemic and deeply ingrained as homelessness requires innovation and collaboration. That is why we

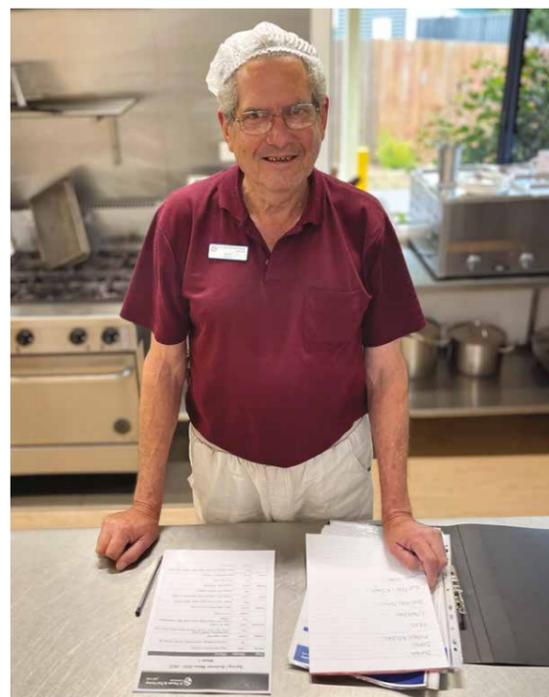
operate the Immediate Housing Response Service from our base at Toowoomba Shelter. Working in collaboration with the Queensland Government through this service, we get families who are in immediate crisis, sleeping in their cars and tents, into motels.

We also offer 15 homes to families in crisis for short-term emergency accommodation as part of the Toowoomba Family Accommodation Program.

This would not have been possible without the generosity of wonderful supporters like you. Thank you for helping us continue to lead the way with innovative solutions to homelessness.

"We do the work we do to create inclusion, empowerment and second chances, all generating hope, dignity, belief and positive life change."
Ron Burgess, Manager of Toowoomba Shelter

The staff at shelters like Toowoomba are critical to Vinnies' homelessness response.



Volunteer Roy served selflessly in the kitchen of the Toowoomba Shelter for three days per week for the last 14 years, until his recent retirement. Thank you Roy!



Towards 500 homes with your support

You are driving holistic solutions to homelessness across Queensland.

Advocating to government to build more homes is another key strategy Vinnies uses to tackle homelessness.

We were delighted to be invited to participate in a recent housing summit held by the Queensland Government, where we shared the experiences of those facing homelessness. We also submitted applications for funding to continue working towards our objective to build 500 new homes. So far, we have secured land to build homes and have submitted plans to government requesting funding and support.

Also, as a result of our lobbying efforts, the government has announced a funding increase of \$1 billion into their housing fund. As part of the Queensland Government's Housing Summit, it also announced a further \$56m investment including \$12m for rental support and \$10m towards emergency accommodation. While we welcome this commitment, we will continue to advocate for more action and funding – and more innovative solutions – to address the housing crisis.

These include:

Short-term initiatives

- to expedite funding and commencement of house building projects
- to work with local councils to review social and affordable housing quotas and release land
- to expand rent subsidies to keep people housed
- to develop partnerships with homelessness service providers to repurpose existing infrastructure like hotels and student accommodation into housing
- to approve a housing pathway plan for people released from institutions
- to establish a Housing Market Helpline

Longer-term initiatives

- to continue to advocate to the State Government to commit to developing 50,000 social and affordable homes over the next 10 years (5,000 per year)
- to work with the Federal Government to request greater funding and support through the Housing Future Fund, with the aim of achieving a cohesive national approach to the housing crisis in our country
- to work with the Federal Government to provide tax incentives for builders who build or refurbish properties for social housing or crisis accommodation



Thank you for helping achieve our vision of creating 500 homes.

Future leaders

sleep out for homelessness



Tomorrow's leaders put their advocacy and faith into action.

In August 2022, 35 Queensland students slept rough for the night to help raise awareness and advocate for those experiencing homelessness as part of Vinnies' Ozanam Leadership Program. This program aims to develop 15 and 16-year-old students into compassionate servant leaders in their communities.

2022 was the first time our Ozanam Leadership Program students participated in the CEO Sleepout. As part of the program, participants heard from an advocacy panel featuring four CEO Sleepout Ambassadors. They also got the opportunity to quiz the ambassadors on the importance of compassionate leadership in overcoming big challenges like homelessness.



Future leaders swapped warm beds for sleeping bags in August 2022 to raise awareness of homelessness.



Lana Hill is the Creative Director at Walker Hill. She has twice been a CEO Sleepout participant and was on this year's committee of Ambassadors. We asked Lana to reflect on her experience of this year's event and working with the Ozanam Leadership Program students.

What did you learn of the Ozanam Leadership Program participants?

That the future looks bright. These kids are ready to lead us to great things. They think differently than my generation in so many great ways. There is a lot to learn from them.

What impressed you most about the young people?

They asked a lot of questions about leaving a lasting impact on people and this world. The fact that they care so much about that made me realise I need to put more emphasis on what I'm doing to make tomorrow better.

What was the most challenging question the kids asked of the panel?

What are you doing to give the less-advantaged opportunities? We

all agreed, there is an opportunity for us to do more.

How is the CEO Sleepout an expression of your leadership?

Personally, it's allowed me to show my team and community that regardless of where you are in your life, you can find time for your community.

What are you most looking forward to at next year's CEO Sleepout?

Continuing to share everything I've learned around homelessness in QLD with my community. I feel like if I can continue to share what I know to help make a change, then the growth of the CEO Sleepout and money raised will happen organically. Seeing that come to life is exciting.



Our Ozanam Leadership Program students engaging in a discussion with our four CEO Sleepout Ambassadors (left to right) Jano Kotzas, Lana Hill, Andre van der Merwe and Byron Rienstra.

VINNIES
CEO SLEEPOUT™
22 JUNE 2023

Registrations for the 2023 CEO Sleepout are now open. Visit www.ceosleepout.org.au to register today.



Thanks to your kindness, families like Kelly's have been able to survive this cost-of-living crisis and have hope for the future.

You helped Kelly and her family survive the cost-of-living crisis

There is hope, and that hope is from you.

You might remember Kelly and her family's moving story from our recent Christmas appeal. They were faced with desperate choices - should they pay their bills or put food on the table? The pressure of trying to keep a roof over their heads was taking a terrible toll on Kelly.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, like yourself, Vinnies was

able to support Kelly and her family with food vouchers, furniture, and other essentials to help alleviate the pressure.

Having the stability of a secure roof over their heads has given them the chance they needed to rebuild their lives.

I'm happy to report that since I last wrote to you about the family, Kelly has been seeing a counsellor

and is feeling more confident about the future. She does not have to worry about her daughters' medications and they know that there is hope. That hope is you. Without you, so much could never have been achieved for families like Kelly's.

Thank you for being there for vulnerable Queenslanders like Kelly in times of great need.

Thank you to IGA staff and shoppers

IGA supports Vinnies again this Christmas.

We're delighted to have partnered with IGA for the 10th consecutive year to help Australians struggling over Christmas last year.

The IGA team have raised thousands of dollars through

the sale of baubles to generous shoppers at their stores. All funds raised will support those struggling to cover basic expenses like food, bills and rent.

Well done on a wonderful effort!



Here are some wonderful messages for Kelly and her family, from kind donors like you.

Dear Soul,
 Know that you are deeply loved. We are all on a journey of learning and discovery, and we are only here on a temporary stay, so we must help each other in an unfair and difficult world.
 Love from Lorraine & Dale

YEARS AGO VINNIES HELPED ME OUT AT XMAS AFTER LOSING EVERYTHING IN A HOUSE FIRE. MAIN THING NONE OF US WERE HURT. I KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE TO HAVE LITTLE BUT ALWAYS KEEP FAITH & HOPE & THIS WORLD IS FULL OF KIND PEOPLE. VINNIES IS MARVELLOUS. MERRY XMAS.

ONE DAY AT A TIME, ONE HOUR OF TIME, ONE MINUTE AT A TIME! THE UNIVERSE I FOUND WILL TURN UP WITH SOMETHING! I'VE BEEN HOMELESS THREE TIMES. 1963, 1972, 1986. KEEP POSITIVE THOUGHTS! I HELPED OTHERS THEY HELPED ME. I WATCH BIRDS TO RELAX! KEY

May the most beautiful Christmas gifts of Joy Peace & love be yours throughout the New Year 2023, & we hope it's filled with smiles, laughter & many wonderful moments to treasure.
 Ellen.

Kelly,
 It was very pleasing to read that you contacted Vinnies for help after the never ending stress you were suffering in your life. I am sure Vinnies will continue to assist you in your needs, and it is my hope that in due course every day life will become much easier and enjoyable for you.
 Pam.

Dear Kelly - We wish you and your beautiful family a happy & peaceful Xmas, and a brighter future in the New Year.
 love,
 Thank & Rhonda.

Let's hear from some of our dedicated volunteer members

what they love about their work



I get to help people. I like the fact that you see them walk out happier and knowing that we could help them.

- Marnie Stogg



It is a great opportunity for me here. Nice people and I get a chance to practise my English.

- Svitlana Chernnichuk



My mission. Just keep helping, keep doing something to help others.

- Dilar Francisco



I think I get satisfaction when I see somebody that's been homeless and has been on a waiting list for housing or whatever, and then they come in and they've got housing, and we're able to provide them with furniture and with fridge and a washing machine.

- Cheryl Vlieg