

DONOR REPORT

2018-19





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The 2018-19 financial year has been one of significant achievements in our services to the communities of Canberra/Goulburn. It also marks the tenth year of the Vinnies CEO Sleepout in Canberra and the tenth anniversary of our Clemente program providing a pathway to higher education to our companions.

This year, on a freezing -4 degrees Canberra winter's night, a record 181 CEOs participated in the CEO Sleepout impressively raising over \$812,000 in support of our homelessness services. Just as important was that through their actions the CEOs raised the profile of homelessness which continues to be our greatest challenge in trying to help people in need get back on their feet.

The key work of the Society continues to be the support of the people who call on our emergency relief services (our companions). Our 644 conference volunteers based in 51 parishes throughout the Canberra/Goulburn region have responded to requests for assistance by visiting people in their homes or through interviews at our Vinnies Centres. Whilst caring for their immediate needs we try to assist our companions to address the underlying issues that prevent them from being self-reliant. Last year our conferences provided over \$2 million worth of material aid.

Our Catholic parishes have again been great supporters of the work of the Society in helping us to raise funds through the February Doorknock and by responding to all of our appeals. Many schools, both primary and secondary, throughout Canberra/Goulburn have also supported us through social justice days, fundraising and Mini Vinnies programs. In August we launched our Drought Appeal in response to one of the worst droughts to impact the eastern states of Australia. As is often the case Australians generously opened their hearts and their wallets to the plight of their cousins in the bush. We raised over \$76,000 and distributed relief to a wide area of NSW through our conference volunteers who have an active presence in most of the larger towns in NSW.

Dressed by Vinnies Day was another initiative introduced in October to promote the great range of quality recycled clothing available through our Vinnies shops. Its success means that this will become an annual event. Our 27 Vinnies centres are the public face of the St Vincent de Paul Society and form an important focal point of the community, particularly in our regional areas. These shops enable us to recycle good quality goods at reasonable prices and to make them available at no cost to our companions. The profits from our shops are an important source of funds to support our other services.

Our Special Works provide professional support that our conference volunteers cannot provide for some of our companions with complex needs. With our focus on homelessness it is logical that programs like Night Patrol, Blue Door, Samaritan House, Community Inclusion Program, Compeer and Energy Efficiency have a priority of supporting the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

Our Youth Conferences, St Nick's and St Joe's, and VINES, a joint venture with Scouts ACT, provide respite, recreation, education and referrals to young people experiencing disadvantage in the Canberra region.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Canberra/Goulburn covers a broad range of services which is pretty amazing given the size of our organisation. We could not provide these services on the scale that we do without the dedicated service of our 644 members, 160 employees, and 1,500 volunteers. I am very proud of them for their generosity with their time and their dedication to continuing the work that our founders Frederic Ozanam and his companions commenced 186 years ago.

To all of our donors and supporters, a very sincere thank you. We could not do what we do without your continuing help and support. We rely on your generosity to enable us to reach out to our companions and to keep going when sometimes the task seems great.

*Warwick Fulton, President
(until 7 June 2019)
St Vincent de Paul Society
Canberra/Goulburn*

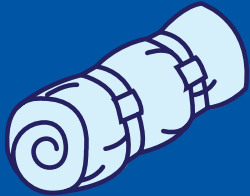
**Warwick Fulton has recently been appointed as Deputy President to the National Council and so has resigned from the position as Canberra/Goulburn Territory Council President. He is succeeded by John Feint.*



WHY VINNIES HELPS

39,311

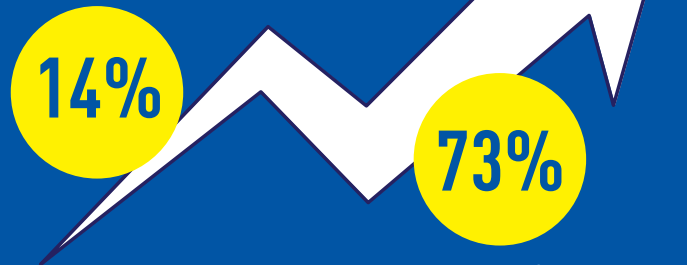
people experiencing homelessness across ACT & NSW



1596

Canberrans are experiencing homelessness

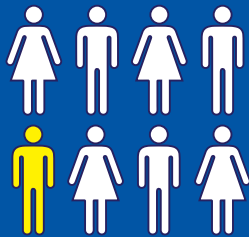
increase of all homeless people in Australia between 2011 & 2016



increase in number of people in overcrowded dwellings in ACT & NSW between 2011 & 2016

1 in 8

people are living below the poverty line in Australia



739,000

children in Australia live below the poverty line



* Information comes from ABS Census, 2016, and ACOSS 'Poverty in Australia 2018' report

HOW VINNIES HELPS OUR COMMUNITY



The total value of emergency assistance provided by Vinnies Canberra/Goulburn Conferences was

\$2 million

Support was provided to over

42,000

people in need



Long term secured housing was obtained for

312

families



2,546

Christmas hampers provided



80

students enrolled in Clemente



Meals served by Night Patrol volunteers

12,061

95

young carers provided respite and recreation



* Information comes from the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn Annual Report 2017-18

A photograph of a person in a white shirt reading an open book in a library. The background is filled with bookshelves, creating a warm and studious atmosphere. The person's hands are visible, holding the pages of the book.

CASE STUDY:

“CLEMENTE SAVED MY LIFE”

After Sarah* left an abusive marriage, she and her children lived in a refuge for 6 months before being allocated a house. Safe now, but alone with her children, Sarah suffered with sole parenting, and grief and trauma. Her family support worker suggested Clemente, an adult education program run in partnership between Vinnies Canberra/Goulburn and the Australian Catholic University. This is Sarah's story.

“There were many reasons why I separated from my husband. I knew I wouldn't get better while we were together and I wanted better for our children. So after 11 years of marriage I said it was over. There was a significant event that resulted in me calling the police and having him charged. When I was phoned and offered a place in a refuge for women escaping domestic violence, I cried. My children and I moved into a three bedroom house, the first time I heard the solid reassuring sound of the security door shutting was the first time I'd felt safe since the attack. We lived in the refuge for six months. The refuge gave us a safe place to regroup and heal but it's not ever a home. There's an anxiety behind being homeless and at the mercy of the generosity of others that I can't explain. The best Christmas present I've ever had is when ACT Housing rang me two days before Christmas shutdown to tell me that they had a property for me to view.

So I was finally in my own home with my four children and you'd think it'd be clear sailing from there.

But being a sole parent is hard just on its own, let alone when you are also dealing with grief and trauma on top. I also had to interact with my ex in regards to the children and support my children's relationship with him. My health suffered and I struggled to function. Life was about surviving not living.

I remember sitting holding a piece of paper that my family support worker had given me with the details of the Vinnies Clemente program on it. I remember being scared and wondering if I dared. Did I dare do something that wasn't going to have any immediate vocational benefit, did I dare do something that was for me - not my kids? I was also nervous that even with everything I'd been through it still wasn't enough to qualify me for the program. I remember phoning in the evening so I could just leave a message and at least say I'd tried, and meanwhile hide from any return calls. But Judy answered. Judy is the coordinator of Clemente. Her welcome and reassurance got me to come to the first day of the program, and her compassion and wise advice kept me coming back every week. Over the time I studied with Clemente she met my children and Friday mornings became the morning of fake illnesses so they could come and “help” Judy.

I wasn't sure what to expect from the course - I wasn't sure if it would be watered down content, I wasn't sure what the other participants would be like, and I had a deep seated anxiety that I wouldn't be capable of doing the work and would prove myself to be the failure I thought I was.

My first unit was Australian literature and when our tutor first started speaking to us I felt amazed. She spoke to us as equals, she spoke to us as if she had no doubt about our capabilities. She challenged me and got my brain working for the first time in years. She was compassionate and understanding about our situations without lowering her standards. I realised that I really was studying at a tertiary level, and I really was succeeding. I felt my dignity return, as I saw all the people who were investing time in me, my sense of self-worth improved, as I succeeded in completing the work I felt my self-confidence increase and as I managed to show up every week and function my self-esteem built.

The other participants in the program were a blessing I hadn't considered. I met amazing people who had incredible stories to share. I was humbled by the resilience humans have to overcome huge hurdles in life. We built a supportive community, we formed lasting friendships and that became as precious to me as the qualifications we earned.”

After graduating from Vinnies Clemente program, Sarah had the confidence to restart what she began over 18 years ago and went on to undertake a double degree in Education and Mathematics & Technology.

**Names have been changed*

CASE STUDY:

“SLEEPING ON THE STREET HERE IS SAFER THAN GOING HOME”

Ahmed and Mona* have been living in Canberra for five years. Originally here for Ahmed's work, the couple were told by family in their home country that it wasn't safe for them to return. "They're asking for you," Ahmed's family told him, and when their house was fire bombed, they knew they could never go home.

In their home country, the couple had family members killed in front of them, and knew they were at risk of kidnapping. Most of their family members from their home country are now in neighbouring countries, or in refugee camps on the border. Ahmed and Mona are the lucky ones.

Yet, despite the situation facing them in their home country, it took two years for their application for asylum to be approved, allowing them to stay. For those two years the couple existed on a bridging visa, the rules of which meant that they were simultaneously unable to work but unable to apply for any government support.

For two years the couple lived off what savings they had, and assistance from charities. Companion House worked with them for the whole period providing medical and pharmaceutical services, food vouchers, bus vouchers and access to their migration agent. Canberra Refugee Support (CRS) has worked with them for the last two years, helping them find somewhere to live, negotiating a bank account without excessive fees, and assisting with rent and bills.

St Vincent de Paul Society and Red Cross also assisted the couple at this time, helping with rent, bills and food.

One of the greatest challenges for the family was in securing accommodation. Rental agencies would not consider the couple since they had no proof of income. It was only thanks to an understanding landlord, renting his property directly, that the couple were able to move into a furnished one bedroom flat.

Ahmed states that, for him, the most difficult part of their two years on the bridging visa was not being able to buy food. "Sometimes we just had bread and water," he said. Vinnies was able to assist the couple with food hampers provided by local volunteer members and also gave Ahmed and Mona links to other emergency food providers.

In June 2018 Ahmed and Mona were granted humanitarian visas, allowing them to stay permanently in Australia, and allowing them access to Medicare and Centrelink. While their situation is better now than it has been for the past five years, the couple still face many difficulties.

At \$380 per week, their rent is 50% of their joint income; affording food is still difficult, and they no longer have access to many of the emergency food services which are only available to people with no income.

They attend English classes for five hours a day, four days a week, leaving little time for any paid employment.

Despite the difficulties Ahmed and Mona have faced over the past few years, the couple are friendly, and welcoming, and grateful for the assistance they've received from the organisations in Canberra who have supported them.

Without emergency assistance from Vinnies conferences, including food, clothing and help with rent and energy bills, people like Ahmed and Mona are at serious risk of homelessness.

Each year, Vinnies conferences provide approximately \$2 million worth of assistance to people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in the Canberra/Goulburn region.

**Names changed to protect the safety of the couple*

**Stock image used*





VINNIES WINTER APPEAL

For the Vinnies Winter Appeal this year we focused on the loneliness of poverty. Here are some of the messages our supporters sent to people experiencing social isolation.

I have supported Vinnies for many years. I hope my donation helps during these difficult times. Good luck!

I am grateful that I can help in a small way because my experience is that sometimes life throws extremely challenging situations to us, and that we all need to pull together for the good of all. I wish you happiness and hope that the support of Vinnies is helpful to you.

I'm glad we are able to help, even in a small way.
Best wishes

SPECIAL NOTES
FROM THE PEOPLE
WHO SUPPORT
VINNIES...

Thinking of you as the winter approaches,
and wishing you every blessing

I do hope this small donation
helps in some way
Do take care

You are never alone
Thinking of you

I think about you and
hope you find people who
are friendly and kind to you.

Dear Ruby

I pray with the support of
Vinnies & especially your
visits from Leena you will
enjoy a happy winter
this year.
Best wishes you.

I hope that assistance from
VINNIES will BRING some Joy
AND hope into your life.
God bless you

Dear Helpers,
You are doing a wonderful job
looking after the lost people, a lot of the
time through no fault of their own, it just
happens, like Ruby, she is lonely and just
needs someone to take too.



COMPEER PROGRAM

At the recent 2019 Volunteering Awards Canberra Region, the Vinnies Compeer Program won the impressive 'Thought and Leadership' award.

Compeer is an award winning international program that links adults living with a mental illness to a friendship volunteer. Our volunteers are the backbone of the program and are matched with people living with mental illness throughout the community based on similar interests.

Compeer invites people to become volunteers who believe in humanity, dignity and social inclusion, and are ready to help people reconnect with their community. The commitment allows them to build an authentic friendship and have fun in the process. Our volunteers recognise that every interaction they have with their friend is an opportunity to make a positive change in a person's life.

This year, Compeer will celebrate its 10th Anniversary of supporting people living with mental health challenges in the ACT. During this period, approximately 270 participants were supported by over 275 volunteers.



CALVARY HOSPITAL NIGHT PATROL TEAM

The Calvary Hospital Night Patrol Team received a 'Highly Commended' award as Corporate Volunteer of the Year at the recent Volunteering Awards. The team is one of 6 corporate teams that are currently part of the Night Patrol program volunteer base, supporting those on the streets of Canberra through practical assistance and genuine companionship.

Their team consists of 22 volunteers ranging from general health professionals to administrators, physicians, nurses and surgeons. The team is a joint effort of staff members from across both the Private, Public Bruce and John James Calvary Hospitals.

Since beginning with Night Patrol in 2010, Calvary have had over 100 employees volunteer on their team, all having a strong sense of social justice, and an understanding of what it means to take action through volunteering to enact social change.

The Calvary Hospital Night Patrol team are also involved in fundraising for the Night Patrol vans, whether it's organising donations of toiletries, blanket drives or placing a coat rack around the workplace for a jacket collection.

A GIFT IN YOUR WILL CAN RESTORE LIVES.

Find out more by calling 02 6234 7368 or email giving@svdp-cg.org.au



St Vincent de Paul Society
CANBERRA/GOULBURN
good works



St Vincent de Paul Society
CANBERRA/GOULBURN *good works*

**Thank you for your valuable contribution –
Together with your generosity we can continue to combat
the injustice of disadvantage in our society.**

www.vinnies.org.au

Privacy Statement: St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn respects the privacy and dignity of the people it assists, our members, volunteers and employees. For more information about the how the Society manages privacy information please refer to our Privacy Policy on our website: www.vinnies.org.au/page/Publications/ACT/Policies.

The donor report was produced by the Marketing and Fundraising Department of the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn, July 2019.

St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn ABN: 16 7328 525 54