

Vinnies News

Passages Peel celebrates 10th anniversary

Vinnies' Passages Youth Engagement Hub Peel celebrated its 10th birthday in February, and recent figures show just how important the service is to young people experiencing homelessness.

"Most young people that engage with Passages have been significantly impacted by trauma in their lives," she explains.

"This experience is unique to each individual and so Passages aims to promote a young person's sense of control over their life and environment."

"Passages staff are able to build relationships with young people and begin informal conversations about their support needs."

Although Mandurah is only an hour from Perth, the service Passages provides can make a huge difference.

The area often attracts young people from smaller towns and communities who, due to a lack of confidence and experience, don't want to travel into Perth to seek out extra services they might need.

According to the Zero Project on Homelessness, 51 young people in Mandurah were homeless and sleeping rough in December last year

alone. This figure does not include those who are couch-surfing or living in unsafe or crowded conditions, further highlighting the lack of options for young people in the area.

"There are fewer housing options for young people in Mandurah, particularly those in crisis or with additional support needs and there are fewer employment opportunities for those who are ready to take that step," Ms Gillespie says.

"We recognise that young people's willingness or capacity for change varies and that the journey to positive change is not linear, so we work alongside young people to build relationships founded in trust."

Passages Youth Engagement Hubs are a joint venture between Vinnies WA and the Rotary Club of Perth and Mandurah.



Passages staff build relationships founded in trust.

Since opening on 10 February 2012, marginalised and at-risk young people aged 12 to 25 have accessed Passages services on more than 22,841 individual occasions.

Passages Peel offers them safe, friendly and non-judgemental space to access support and services. Passages does not require referrals or exclude individuals on the basis of behaviours of concern, drug use or criminal activity.

The service also provides basic needs such as food, showers, laundry facilities and access to the internet as well as specialised support services.

Passages Peel Coordinator Jade Gillespie says building relationships with young people is about finding out what is important to them, rather than for them.



Vinnies opens Australind shop

Vinnies WA has opened its 54th shop in Australind, and it is already being warmly embraced by the local community.

“We’re in the suburb of Treendale, which is a growing area with lots of new houses and young families, so they think it’s great there’s a Vinnies here,” Shop Manager Carolyn Colton reports.

Both clothing and homeware has been popular with shoppers since the store opened on 27 January.

At this stage, the store is open Tuesday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. On Saturdays, customers can shop between 11am and 5pm. The shop is located at 15 Antlia Way.

Ms Colton says she is now looking to build the shop’s volunteer base.

“We’re asking locals if they’re interested and hopefully word gets around the community.”

Purchases from Vinnies shops help fund vital support services for the local community.



Australind is home to Vinnies’ newest shop.

Every year, Vinnies assists more than 55,000 West Australians by providing emergency assistance such as food, furniture, clothing as well as help with bills and rent.

In addition to providing emergency assistance and support, Vinnies runs a range of specialised services and programs in the areas of housing and homelessness, mental health, youth services and financial counselling.

Autumn Appeal: A story of hope and perseverance

We recently launched our Autumn Appeal, which features the story of a father’s struggle with addiction, ill-health and homelessness, and how, with the help of Vinnies, he regained care of his daughter.

“Things went haywire. It came to the point where I had to abandon the house, we went to the streets,” Steve recalls.

As he could not provide a safe and stable home for Sarah, she was removed from his care. Steve was devastated. He knew something had to change.

“I couldn’t have my daughter until I got a place of my own.” That’s when Vinnies became an integral part of his story.

When Steve was offered a house through Vinnies’ Housing Plus Program, he was given the opportunity to transform his circumstances and get his daughter back.

To donate and help make a positive difference for people like Steve, visit www.vinnieswa.org.au or call 13 18 12.

By having a safe place to call home and wrap-around services, Steve could focus on his health, well-being and provide the stable home needed for his daughter to thrive.

With support from Vinnies, Steve’s perseverance paid off when he was reunited with Sarah.



Steve turned his life around.

Financial counsellor wipes \$1 million of debt for Peel residents.

By Jill Mather

Dozens of Peel residents have kicked off the new year with fresh hope after a local Vinnies financial counsellor had over \$1 million of their debts waived in 2021.



Liza Chatterton, Financial Counsellor at Vinnies Mandurah Support Centre

Just before Christmas, Liza had eliminated or substantially reduced debts to the tune of \$1,018,396.87 for 79 clients in the Mandurah area. The debts waived ranged from \$77 for unfair bank charges to more than \$300,000 for mortgages that could not be repaid.

The major issues facing clients in debt relate to mortgage stress, loss of employment, and the ready access to short term loans like ZipPay and Afterpay.

“Some people can have up to 20 loans at once with no questions asked, and of course, the low-income earners are the ones targeted and the most vulnerable,” Ms Chatterton said. She works in the Vinnies Mandurah Support Centre for clients experiencing hardship and needing some emergency assistance and support.

For the year ahead, Ms Chatterton has a clear message to anyone thinking of getting a loan. “Think twice before going into debt. If you cannot afford it now, then can you afford it in two weeks? If the answer is yes then it is a good tool to use, but it’s definitely not a wise decision if the answer is no.”

Ms Chatterton has been the Vinnies Peel Region’s Financial Counsellor for seven years, after a previous career in the banking sector.

She won the top award from the Financial Counsellors Association of WA as the Best-Established Practice for 2021 and we couldn’t be prouder..

Lotterywest backs Vinnies emergency assistance with \$1.6m grant

Vinnies WA continues to support vulnerable West Australians with a \$1.6 million grant from Lotterywest.

The funds will go towards the Vinnies Emergency Assistance and Support program, which provides immediate financial or material support such as food, help with paying utility bills or rent.

This year, Vinnies WA expects to receive over 40,000 calls, and support more than 55,000 people across Western Australia.

At an official cheque presentation at Vinnies Joondalup Support Centre, Community Services Minister Simone McGurk praised the unique way Vinnies provides help to disadvantaged West Australians.

“Vinnies’ support workers are on the frontline, supporting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, people with mental

health issues, victims of family and domestic violence, and people who are unemployed,” she said.

“Compassion and support for people in need have been at the core of Vinnies’ work for decades and I hope this funding will make a difference to those in need.”

“We’re grateful to Lotterywest and the State Government for this grant, which will allow us to continue supporting West Australians,” said Vinnies CEO Susan Rooney.

“Particularly with the spread of COVID-19 through the community and a significant shortage of affordable housing, providing our Emergency Assistance and Support program is more important than ever.”



Minister Simone McGurk with Susan Rooney and Vinnies volunteers at the Joondalup Support Centre.



Vinnies staff with Mike Rowe and other winners.

Vinnies COVID work receives top accolade

Vinnies Specialist Community Services and Emergency Assistance and Support teams were winners at the Australasian Housing Institute’s Brighter Future Awards.

The team received the top gong in the category ‘Response to COVID’, which recognises initiatives or projects by organisations that have led to tenants and staff to feel supported through the global pandemic, allowing them to not only survive, but to thrive.

The award was presented by Mike Rowe, the Director General of the Department of Communities.

During the initial stages of the pandemic, Vinnies rolled out a number of new plans, policies and practices for our Specialist Community Services and Emergency Assistance and Support teams, which maintained a trauma-informed and person-centred approach for tenants, consumers and clients.

During lockdowns this meant that the Emergency Assistance team pivoted from home visitation to telephone and electronic service delivery as well as setting up Hubs and pick up services for food distribution.

This allowed Vinnies to reach those people who hadn’t been connected with our services. It also led to the development of a new permanent Hub model to address the needs of different groups of people who require assistance in the community.

Chrissie Smith, Executive Manager of Specialist Community Services, said the award was an acknowledgement of what Vinnies is all about.

“This is a true testament to our vision of offering a ‘hand up’ to people in need in such a sensitive environment and creating hope for a brighter future,” she said.

“It made me feel like some people do care”



In February 2021, Tanja Allan escaped the devastating Wooroloo Bushfire with her family. With donations received through our Bushfire Appeal, Vinnies helped her rebuild.

Tanja fled her home with her three children, her dog and her cat just hours before the bushfire swept through her community, leaving a trail of destruction. She was devastated to leave behind her two ponies, which she had raised from birth.

Luckily, Tanja’s home was saved, although her property was damaged, and miraculously, her ponies were saved by neighbours.

Tanja and her children, then aged 11, 8 and 2, were able to return to their home after two weeks.

With power in the area yet to be restored, and a cost of \$600 to get a generator up and running, Tanja received help from Vinnies in the form of a \$1000 grant, a fuel voucher and gift cards.

“I was so busy, I had so much else going on at the time, like everyone else did in that situation.”

More than one year on, there is still work to be done, but most of the fencing has been replaced and the ponies have an enclosed paddock again. Tanja says Vinnies’ support meant a lot to her. “It really has helped financially as well as made me feel like some people do care,” she said.



Tanja’s house and her ponies were saved.

Maija makes her mark

A partnership designed to support outstanding women leaders in the not-for-profit sector has awarded two prestigious scholarships, and one of them has gone to one of Vinnies' very own.

Maija Hildebrand, our Manager of Service Development, has been awarded the 'Entry to the C-Suite' scholarship, which means she has been participating in a six-month program designed to accelerate growth and career readiness as a leader.

The program is delivered as a partnership between the Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) and Tower Human Capital, which developed the program in 2017.

Maija says the program has given her insight into the importance of sponsorship – a concept that the program is focused around.

"Sponsorship is different from mentorship or coaching. It is essentially having senior leaders in the organisation recognising leadership potential in their employees and then actively encouraging their career development.

"The C-suite program high calibre guest speakers such as the Honourable Supreme Court Justice Jenni Hill, really demonstrated the crucial role of sponsors for women who often face many barriers to progress their careers.

"I would love to see the idea of sponsorship be more commonly talked about in the non-profit sector because although over 75 per cent of the sector workforce is made up of women, there is still a gender imbalance when it comes to the leadership level. I believe it is important to foster women's

career potential at all stages of their careers, and sponsors can certainly play a big part in this," she says.

Tania Cecconi, Executive Officer at CEOs for Gender Equity, says that this program is a first because it underscores the role of men in supporting women into leadership positions.

"It's time for male leaders to start tapping women on the shoulder too. This program matches organisational and women's aspirations to close the gender gap at the top," she said.

Andrew York, our Executive Manager, Community Engagement Services, says there is widespread evidence that show persistent and systemic barriers to women's workforce participation and progression into senior leadership roles.

"Addressing these barriers to women's leadership progression at an organisational level is an important lever to close Gender leadership gaps and retain strong female leaders on the pathway to senior roles," he says.

Since its inception in 2017, five cohorts of women have completed the program, and Maija views the connections to these leaders as valuable to her own career.

"Having access to strong female leaders as role models, as well as a network of other aspiring leaders from diverse backgrounds will make a huge positive impact on my career outlook and my confidence to set my own path," she says.

We're fortunate to have Maija as part of our Vinnies team and we wish her all the best for the program.

Maija Hildebrand is the Manager of Service Development at Vinnies WA.



A letter of thanks

Recently we received some wonderful and heartfelt feedback from a client. Stacey had been supported by the Society for some years and she speaks of her struggles with depression as well as the family facing potential bankruptcy. Below is an excerpt from the letter:

“Our family has been surviving on my husband’s carers pension and almost losing our home and belongings, as we as almost ended up bankrupt.

Through it all, we tried to endure, eventually taking a community member’s advice, swallowed our pride and asked for help. Since then, it’s been a few years and we are slowly getting back on our feet.

We were buckled, the kids were missing school we were having beans on toast for dinner and had no fuel. You helped us just like you have so many times the last few years.

For every step we tried to take forward, it felt as though we were pushed back two, and every time I didn’t know what to do or how we

would get through, you have been the angels that have been there for us.

I hope one day to own my own home, be in a better position financially and return the kindness, joy and help to Vinnies for them to help others the way you have helped us.

Until then we cannot do much but hope and work hard towards that goal.

Thanks to your Society and our community, our children had presents under the tree this year and we had ham on the table. From the bottom of our heart we wanted to thank you, but as we couldn’t return the kindness in the form it came to us, we hope this will show the same amount of appreciation.

It is slightly unfinished but we may say thank you to all of St Vincent’s for all it’s done for me, my husband and my children.”

– Stacey



Stacey and her children made an artwork to say thank you.

Harvey Mini Vinnies acknowledged for community work

A group of primary school students from Harvey has been recognised for helping bring their community together.

Students from St Anne’s School have been volunteering alongside staff and parents to prepare meals and share them with up to 150 local residents.

The Harvey Community Dinner is held on Mondays and has been

going for several years, first as a sit-down dinner, but takeaway-only since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The students are part of Mini Vinnies, a school program run by Vinnies WA, which teaches children to become advocates for social justice and take an active role in their community.

The students have now been recognised for their efforts by

receiving the Catholic Identity award for primary schools, which is part of the Quality Catholic Education Awards.

“It’s an acknowledgement of what the community is able to do, and it teaches the students to see that it’s good to help people in need,” said Leanne Pronk, a teacher at St Anne’s and organiser of Mini Vinnies.

She said the students – all from Years four, five and six – are involved in the community dinner by

Treasure in a suitcase

By Pauline McIntyre

After Catherine Chappell's mother passed away, she was clearing out her house in Mandurah and came across a small suitcase emblazoned with a sticker which read "St Vincent de Paul Helps People".

She immediately knew it was something important when she opened it! She found minute books and files pertaining to the Collie Conference dated December 1935 – July 1962 and April 1988 – May 1990.

There were also minutes of the Sacred Heart Sodality from May 1966 – April 1978.

But most surprising of all was the Relic of St Vincent de Paul!

It was contained in a small circular reliquary which was itself enclosed in a plastic box with a clear lid, taped securely closed.

Catherine's maiden name was Graham, and both her mother, Margaret, and father Andrew, were members of the Collie Conference of St Vincent de Paul, but she was perplexed as to why her mother had these documents still in her possession.

Margaret and Andrew were members of St Brigid's Parish Collie, and Margaret served on the Parish Council. She was also a member of the Historical Society and Catherine thought that maybe the contents might have been there for her to use in her research later on.



The suitcase contained a relic and minutes of a Conference meeting in 1935.



helping their parents prepare the meals at the Parish Hall, usually on a Sunday.

Before the dinners became takeaway-only, the Mini Vinnies participants would also help set and clear the tables.

Ms Pronk said that while the dinners were a whole-of-community effort, she is proud that the students have been recognised for their own contributions.

"It's about giving back to the community, and it opens the children's eyes to being able to give something back themselves," she said.



Students from St Anne's School help cook up a feast.

Quick News

Here's what else has been happening at Vinnies WA recently.

O' Happy Day at Notre Dame

We can confirm the 2022 University of Notre Dame WA Orientation Day was chock-full of fun!

Our Young Vincentian volunteers took part by holding a Vinnies WA knowledge stall where they shared information about our work in the WA community and asked students to write down their thoughts about Vinnies in WA.

A steady stream of students came through on the day, participating in the Vinnies mannequin challenge and gaining more appreciation for the St Vincent de Paul Society.



Tasty feast at Tom Fisher House

The team at Tom Fisher House have been cooking up a storm and serving up delicious roast meals to clients.

Chrissie Smith, our Executive Manager of Specialist Community Services says the meals are incredibly important in supporting clients.

"It's all about the importance of good nutrition for mental health."

Cool collectibles

Regular op-shoppers will know that they can find many wonderful things in our Vinnies stores.

The Rockingham shop in particular has had many collectibles on its shelves recently, much to the delight of local customers.



vinnieswa.org.au

9 Brewer Road Canning Vale WA 6155
PO Box 1450 Canning Vale DC WA 6970
P: 08 6323 7500
E: info@svdpwa.org.au



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect. May Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured. May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith, and reconciliation.

To respect the privacy of the people we assist, some of the names and images may have been changed.