



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

WINTER 2020
ISSUE NO. 87

Vision



**MORE SOCIAL
HOUSING OPENS**

**VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT
SUCCEEDS AGAINST
THE ODDS**

**INSIDE THE MATTHEW
TALBOT HOSTEL CLINIC**

**OUR
RESPONSE
TO CRISIS**



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear friends,
 I hope you and yours are safe and well as we adjust to this new world.

The effects of the drought, the bushfires and the coronavirus pandemic will be with us for years. Who could have imagined that our lives could be turned upside down so abruptly? Yet, your

response was swift and determined. You pitched in to support your communities and colleagues. You acted even when you were yourselves affected by these crises.

This moment in history has tested us as a Society. How we support those in need has changed, but our purpose has not.

Our founder Frederic Ozanam responded to God's call to love, by alleviating the poverty and suffering he saw in

the 1833. He was sometimes daunted by the need in the Paris slums. He was determined to help nonetheless. We now face need unseen in our lifetime. We must follow Fred's example – even if we feel intimidated, our resolve to assist is not.

Frederic's optimism, compassion and determination was fired by the Holy Spirit: this faith in God and in God's boundless support - for us and for those we serve - defines us as Vincentians. We will emerge through this winter of drought, fire and pandemic in hope and in trust in God's love for each of us, and particularly for those most affected.

In Christ

Peter McNamara
 State President, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

CEO'S MESSAGE



In the space of six to nine months, our communities have lived through Australia's worst bushfires, a global pandemic, and a volume of job losses not seen since the Great Depression. It's a period of our lives that I imagine we will recount to future generations one day, much as our predecessors told us about the world wars.

When these months go down in the history books, we are determined to look back with confidence that we did everything possible to support those hardest hit.

This edition of *Vision* serves as a capsule of our response to the bushfires and coronavirus, highlighting the stories of those we have assisted in their time of need.

In these pages you will read how we adapted our services to provide for those experiencing hardship and disadvantage (page 5), the way members assisted families to rebuild in the aftermath of horrific fires (page 13) and the support provided to individuals unable to work due to COVID-19 (page 25).

To all our members, volunteers and staff, I extend my gratitude for remaining resilient and adapting to the unforeseen challenges that have arisen.

Assisting people who have fallen on hard times is at the core of the work we do. As we move towards life beyond COVID-19, your work will be all the more important as we continue to offer a hand up wherever we are called upon.

Jack de Groot
 Chief Executive Officer, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

"It's going to take a long, long time for a lot of people to ever recover to what they would consider normality," said Col Billett, St Mary Star of the Sea Conference Vice President.

OUR RESPONSE TO CRISIS

The past six months has been a testing time for all Australians.

From one of the worst bushfire seasons on record to the hardship caused by COVID-19, we have been there to support people through it all.

In response to the fires our members have stepped up to assist neighbours in their communities, while the generosity and goodwill of donors around the world raised \$22.9 million through the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal to help people and communities recover over the long term.

With COVID-19 impacting our ability to deliver service as normal, we have adapted our ways of working to continue being there for people in need – now and into the future.

THE UNPRECEDENTED SUMMER

From the beginning of spring until the end of summer the damage wrought by the 2019-2020 fire season can be summed up in one word – 'unprecedented'.

18 million hectares burnt. Over 9,000 buildings destroyed. 34 lives lost.

These numbers allude to the devastation caused across Australia, but fail to truly capture the heartache and trauma felt by so many men, women and children from all walks of life.

It will take many months and years for people and communities to recover. Through it all we will be there to support them materially, emotionally and financially.

In the face of homes and livelihoods destroyed by the harsh climate, we have also seen the spirit and resolve of hundreds of communities rising from the ashes.

From a newly formed Conference in Sussex Inlet feeding and supporting more than 500 locals over the first days of the new year; Deacon Vince Ryan sitting and listening to the needs of communities ravaged by flames in northern NSW; and members like Col Billett assisting households with emergency relief payments at the Ulladulla Evacuation Centre – our people have been there to offer a hand up.

We have distributed \$17 million from the Bushfire Appeal to more than 4,560 households. In addition to financial support, we have provided material assistance with food, water, clothing, bedding and crisis accommodation.

We will continue to distribute the remaining funds through a Community Grants Program, consulting with impacted communities to determine how they can be used most effectively.



"We saw there was a need. It helped out so many people, you could see the relief in their faces," said Anne Hayward, St Patrick's Conference President, Sussex Inlet.



"Mental health is a big factor in the recovery effort. We get to know these people and let them know we are here to support them in the coming weeks and months," said Deacon Vince Ryan, Manning Region President.

OUR SOCIALLY DISTANCED LIVES

When the first rumblings of COVID-19 emerged in the final days of 2019 few could have envisioned the impact the virus would wreak around the globe.

Bringing social interaction to a standstill, destroying the livelihoods of workers and businesses, and as of August claiming over 730,000 lives worldwide, the coronavirus will go down as one of the most significant events of the 21st century.

In response to COVID-19 we have had to adapt the way we deliver assistance with large sections of our staff moving to working from home arrangements, support being provided through phone and video conferencing, and some of our members and volunteers required to step down due to the health risks associated with the virus.

We also had to make the difficult decision to temporarily close our iconic Vinnies Shops. As a major source of income for the Society, we rely on retail sales to fund our work in the community. We have reopened many shops around the state, with social distancing measures in place, such as restricted change rooms and customer limits.

With the health and safety of the people we assist our highest priority during this time, we are continuing to operate our housing and homelessness services to ensure the most vulnerable in our communities are safe during the pandemic. In instances where social distancing has placed our services at capacity, we have been able to house people in hotels with tailored individual support provided on site.

During this time of crisis we have received an increase in calls for assistance – many of whom have never sought help from a charity before. With restrictions on home visits to reduce the risk of spreading or contracting the virus, we have continued to provide assistance by dropping food parcels to people's doorsteps and checking in with people to ensure their wellbeing. With COVID-19 having a major impact on all aspects of the Society we are committed to supporting people now and going forward.



Strategic Plan helps build a stronger Society

The Strategy team outlines progress to date, amidst many challenges.

At the start of our ambitious strategy over a year ago we could never have imagined the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, we continue to draw on the Society's strategy to guide our direction.

The six identified strategic priorities provide a framework for developing and delivering the actions to help achieve our defined goals: Service, Quality and Impact - Our People - Enterprise and Sustainability - Support and Infrastructure - Robust Governance - Advocacy and Partnership.

Highlights include establishing five new regions to better focus on the operational needs and support of our members and volunteers; A three-year Governance Plan and an Enterprise Risk Management Framework to assess emerging organisational risks; A formation program in Pastoral Care and Spiritual Reflection Guides; The 'Build Homes, Build Hope' social housing campaign; New state-wide structures in areas of Fundraising, Commercial Enterprises, Retail and Logistics; and Key partnerships to further our aim of reducing landfill and waste.

We will continue to achieve our strategic goals by better utilising our finite resources and standardising practices which allows to work better as One Society.

Amidst unprecedented circumstances we remain committed to ensuring that our actions are well targeted and are bringing us closer to achieving our goals.

DROUGHT SUPPORT STILL ON OFFER

We continue to deliver the Federal Government's Drought Community Support Initiative (DCSI) for farming households hit by the hardship of drought.

In the three years to January 2020 around 96% of NSW (and 33% of Australia) experienced severe rainfall deficiencies, resulting in drought conditions.

In the worst affected regions, rainfall over the period was around half the long-term average, leading to empty dams, cracked paddocks and farming families doing it tough.

The Australian Government responded by launching the Drought Community Support Initiative (DCSI), the first round of which ran from December 2018 to June 2019. An emergency sum of \$3,000 was made available through the Society, and in this period we supported 5,000 households.

Additionally, we distributed \$3 million in Society funds to help people struggling through the drought in the last financial year.

In February, Canberra announced a second round extension to the existing DCSI, aimed at assisting drought affected farming households and businesses in identified Local Government Areas.

Farmers and farm-dependent workers and businesses can still access the program from either the Society or the Salvation Army. The Society distributed \$15 million in the listed LGAs in round 1, and expects to allocate a further \$15 million to those listed in round 2.

Once again, funding of up to \$3,000 in short-term financial assistance is available to eligible households and service providers.

More details are available at www.vinnies.org.au/drougthelp or by calling 1300 846 643.



LAC transitions out of NDIS support

Vinnies Local Area Coordination (LAC) program has concluded its engagement with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) after four years helping people with disability to develop personalised NDIS support plans and to access services.

The LAC has employed around 450 staff across 23 offices in the Central Coast, Hunter, New England, Central Sydney, South East Sydney and South West Sydney regions.

"Through the program we have helped people with disability to understand and access the NDIS and connected with them to develop and implement their NDIS plan," said Jack de Groot, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW CEO.

"St Vincent de Paul Society NSW will transition out of its partnership with the NDIA. We have exited out of LAC services in most regions, with the exception being in Sydney and South West Sydney where we will exit by 30 September 2020," Mr de Groot said.

"Unfortunately, this means that we have had to transition out of the employment of those staff delivering the LAC program, as well as some employees in supporting functions.

"This is a disappointing outcome, most of all for the dedicated LAC team who have delivered a high-quality program that was recognised for its excellence in supporting more than 30,000 people last financial year alone.

"We are extremely proud of their dedication in supporting people with disability to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and we celebrate the outcomes they achieved.

"We contacted the people we assisted through the LAC to assure them that Vinnies remained committed to their welfare as we underwent the transition phase.



"We deeply appreciate our LAC employee's loyalty and commitment.

"On behalf of the Society, I offer a heartfelt thanks to our LAC leadership team and all team members who have delivered a compassionate and outcomes focused program, in often challenging times, since our partnership with the NDIA began."

Ajay Sharma was one of many staff to express regret at this news on Vinnies Workplace forum, writing, "Let us all come together, to celebrate what LAC Team achieved and great work accomplished together as One Society, supporting and empowering vulnerable people across the state. Importantly we delivered one of pilot NDIS partnerships, which everyone learned from."

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL

Over the past year, members of our Access and Inclusion team have been hard at work developing an app to make communities more accessible.

Following on from the amazing work done by the former Ability Links program, the team behind the Better Access Map have developed an app that provides detailed information on the accessibility of over 800 local venues and businesses throughout the Hunter and Central Coast, pointing out wheelchair ramps, door width and parking options.

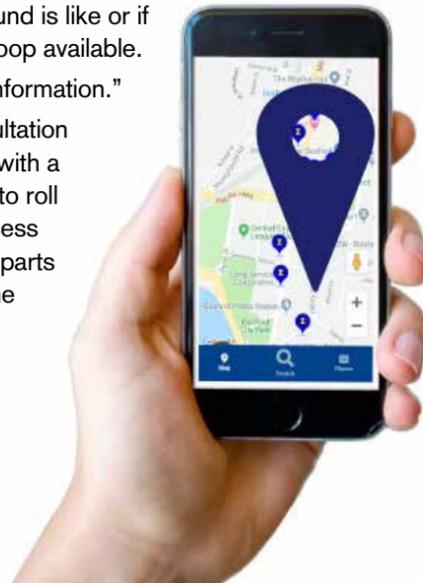
"The website and app exists to provide detailed information about businesses and organisations so people with a disability, carers and anyone who needs to know more about accessibility can find out if a place will be suitable for them," said Kieran Bird, Better Access Map Project Manager at the Society.

You can download the Better Access Map app through the App Store and Google Play, or find the Better Access Map online at www.betteraccessmap.com.au.

"No two people have the same access requirements – you might have someone in a wheelchair who needs flat entry or someone with a hearing impairment who might want to know what the sound is like or if there's a hearing loop available.

"It's really varied information."

Designed in consultation with people living with a disability, we plan to roll out the Better Access Map across other parts of the state with the hope of extending across Australia.



Jack de Groot named Impact 25 winner

Our CEO Jack de Groot was recently named one of the most influential people in Australia's social service sector.

Beating out a field of 430 nominees to be included among the winners of Pro Bono Australia's Impact 25 awards, Jack has been a champion of all our Good Works since joining the Society in 2016.

During his time at Vinnies NSW, Jack has worked to bring members, volunteers and staff closer together through the new strategic plan and overseen our response to crises such as drought, bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It is a great honour but in reality it is our dedicated members, volunteers and staff who are the real reason we are able to make a significant difference in the



communities we serve," Jack said.

"Over the past few months the devastation of the bushfires followed by the uncertainty created by the coronavirus has impacted so many people.

"The response from our members has been heartening as they selflessly look out for people in their communities who are doing it tough.

"It is going to be a long road ahead but we will continue to support those who fall through the cracks and advocate for better services that improve the standard of living for all people."



Bushfires a cruel cut for North Coast sawmillers

Throughout 2019 the village of Rappville in northern NSW battled the drought conditions that had impacted much of the east coast for more than a year. Farmers were selling off cattle or seeking agistment, and people were looking for work in nearby Casino.

The other lifeblood of the area still held up - timber growing and milling, both native hardwoods and plantation pine, the latter mostly destined for the Chinese market.

The Tarmac Sawmill was a major employer, while a smaller mill in Rappville itself provided other valuable jobs. Numbers at the primary school were good, and the heritage listed Commercial Hotel was a popular destination for workers at the end of a hot day.

Then, on November 8th, a massive bushfire swept through the heavily timbered area close to Rappville, the flames engulfing the Tarmac mill in an uncontrollable blaze, despite every effort to combat it. All was lost, including the jobs of more than 25 hard-working staff.

More fortunate was the saving of the smaller mill, with half a dozen jobs. Flames lapped at cut logs and roof beams but did not take hold. Dave Newby, a colourful local character, regrets his team couldn't celebrate the business's survival down at the pub... it closed its doors that day and remains up for sale.

Another business affected was the softwood plantation: hundreds of hectares of pines ignited, prompting a scramble when the flames were out to harvest trees whose burnt outer bark could be removed and the timber salvaged.

Mick Buggy had worked at Tarmac for nine years, supplementing his income with a small beef cattle farm. Kevin Hill also relied on the mill for his family's livelihood.

Both enjoyed their work and expected it to last long-term.

Mick lost his home, buildings and fences and saved only 15 of his cattle. Months after the fires, and despite grass reshooting, he was still hand-feeding them with expensive hay.

Kevin lost sheds, generators, a solar energy system and caravans his boys lived in, including a shed just 10 metres away from his home which erupted in flames. Fortunately the family's house survived, enabling them to continue living at home.

As in other bushfire affected locations Vinnies volunteers ran information sessions to help people who were

unaware, or too embarrassed to ask, about how we could help. The volunteers were also equipped to assist with paperwork, and to provide contact details for other organisations involved in bushfire recovery.

Former employees of the Tarmac mill were prominent amongst those attending, saying they greatly appreciated the support and advice the Vinnies team offered.

"This is a really tough time, mate," said one worker who had been at the mill most of his working life.

"I can walk you around a timber mill and explain exactly what's going on. But when it comes to going online and filling in forms, I'm totally lost. The fact of the matter is that I'm pretty much illiterate.

"That's why today has been great... these guys [Vinnies] are wonderful."





As a boy he assisted his dad, a plumber and master painter, did metalwork at school and learned joinery in school holidays. Later he worked as a fitter and turner and a ship's chandler, earning the weekly wage of £2/7/6. With mechanical engineering qualifications under his belt, he moved on to powerline and sub-station design.

Bob came to the project, and to Gosford, after spotting a short item in his parish newsletter twelve years ago. Before that he had lived around the state, first Sydney where he grew up, then the South Coast, the Hunter and the Western District of NSW. He checks off the work he did in these areas, including running his own architectural practice in Orange.

The team works five-mornings-a-week in a building aptly named after the patron saint of craftsmen. It includes retired teachers,

tradies, business people and professionals, united by their dedication to a project that has raised over \$1 million for the Society.

"It's great fun and the camaraderie is wonderful," Bob added.

During the past ten years the workshop's volunteers have contributed 170,275 hours of labour, truly a case of little things growing into much bigger ones.

The workshop's products are distributed in the Metropolitan Region (Broken Bay and Parramatta Central Councils and Sydney Archdiocese). The quality is high, both in construction and finish, with a spray painting booth run by an ex-painter with 48 years' experience and a retired chemist. Because of the damage that knobs can cause furniture they were discontinued and flush, finger-operated drawer and door openers were introduced.

"What we're turning out is of top quality," Bob told us, "and the costs are remarkably low - donated materials, equipment funded through grants and, most important of all, our wonderful volunteers. It's a perfect match, and the results are clear to see."

Vale Bob McGrath

This article was prepared in June 2020 prior to Bob McGrath's unexpected death in mid-July following surgery. We are publishing it as a testament to Bob's long dedication to helping the Society.

In the shoes of the carpenter

Bearing the name of the world's most famous carpenter, St Joseph's Workshop has turned out an incredible 128,964 items of furniture over the past decade.

Its administrator Bob McGrath, who worked at the West Gosford facility throughout this time, confirms the tally, all the more impressive by being the work of a 60-strong band of Vinnies volunteers whose average age is 73 years.

The furniture items, from bookshelves to chests of drawers and kids' table sets, are made from leftover materials that would otherwise have gone to landfill. They are sold through Vinnies Shops for prices ranging from \$80 to \$150, or given to the people we assist through Conferences.

"This is a factory, not a men's shed," said Bob, who lists architectural qualifications amongst his many achievements. Over his career he worked on projects for the Sydney Opera House, Centrepont Tower, a UTS high-rise and the Sydney Stock Exchange.

Wyong supports International Women's Day

On 9 March the Vinnies team in Wyong hosted their first International Women's Day to celebrate the amazing work done by women across all sectors of the Society.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day was #Eachforequal with the colours of Purple, White and Green representing the day.

The members, volunteers and staff dressed in the requisite colours and celebrated the day with lots of laughter. Brad Dingle (CSO Wyong) held a luncheon attended by all in the Wyong Region, topped off with Brad's home-made purple cupcakes.

Brad even included a trivia portion of the afternoon to test the knowledge of all things relating to women, giving prizes to trivia and lucky door winners. Feedback from luncheon attendees was unanimously positive. Attendees received a gift of thanks for their time and effort provided to Vinnies over the past year. Val McCartin, Wyong Shop Manager said, "It was a fantastic day," a view echoed by Cindy, a Warnervale Conference Member and Wyong Office volunteer, who added, "What a fun time, great food, everything was themed in purple, very enjoyable".



Left to right: Kate Scholl, Peter Gormly, Leo Tucker, Joy Bowen and Greg Ryan.

New roles enhance Mission, Spirituality and Pastoral Care

The Mission, Spirituality and Pastoral Care roles were created as part of the recent restructure to ensure better support.

Led by Leo Tucker, Executive Director – Mission and Spirituality, these partners are working collaboratively with Council and Conference Presidents, Regional Directors, managers and leaders across the Society to enable new models of pastoral care and mission engagement to serve those in need.

The four partners who began their roles in January are Greg Ryan (North East), Joy Bowen (Metro), Kate Scholl (Metro) and Peter Gormly (South).

The team is here to provide support in a variety of ways, such as reflection and retreat opportunities, offering pastoral care for bereavements, debriefing post crisis, hosting pastoral care forums, and assisting with Masses, liturgies and festival events.

New online learning course launched

Facilitating Faith in Action is a new Vinnies Learning Centre course for members and interested Society people. The 8-week course combines reading the Spiritual Adviser Handbook and writing brief reflections, with some online engagement. It explores Vincentian spirituality and practice, building community, decision making, and listening.

More information from Kate Scholl, 0425 211 065 or kate.scholl@vinnies.org.au. Search for course details and the Spiritual Adviser Handbook and Workbook on <https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/>



Poverty report launched at Vincintian House

1 in 8 adults and 1 in 6 children live below the poverty line, according to the latest 'Poverty and Inequality in Australia' report.

Commissioned by ACOSS and UNSW – in partnership with service providers like Vinnies – the report was launched in February at Vincintian House, one of our crisis accommodation services located in the heart of Sydney.

We were delighted to host Cassandra Goldie, ACOSS CEO, and Professor Carla Treloar, UNSW Director of the Social Policy Research Centre, to speak about the rates of poverty in Australia.

Among the key findings to come out of the report:

- 3.24 million Australians – including 774,000 children under the age of 15 – live below the poverty line
- 8 in 10 people on Newstart reported regularly skipping meals
- Newstart, Youth Allowance and Rent Assistance have not increased in real terms in 25 years.

Since the launch of the report prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 the government has adopted a number of the recommendations, including supplementing the rate of the JobSeeker allowance (formerly Newstart).

Following years of advocacy for an increase by the social service sector and wider community, we are committed to seeing a permanent increase to the social safety net.

To see the full 'Poverty and Inequality in Australia' report, go to <http://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au>

TODAY SHOW AND IGA PROVIDE EASTER SUPPORT

The Today Show and IGA teamed up to deliver Easter hampers to five households doing it tough during COVID-19.

Providing an esky full of food and household essential to people we assist in Sydney's inner-west, IGA generously included a \$500 gift card to each house.

One of the recipients, Mary, showed her appreciation to Donna, our Client Support Officer in Rozelle, for all the support provided over the years.

Dear Donna,

Thank you for nominating me for the Vinnies/IGA promotion. It was an honour and a pleasure for me to do something for all the wonderful support I have received over the last 5 years from Vinnies, and in particular you.

When I was in crisis, I turned to you and received unstinting support, not only practically but emotionally and psychologically, and also since then, through difficult moments I have had.

It is such a comfort to know I have someone I can turn to when I need to.

With heartfelt thanks and appreciation to you personally and also the wonderful organisation you represent

With gratitude and affection,

Mary



LIFE'S DREAMS WENT UP IN SMOKE

Sometimes the smallest things bring tears to the eyes, and for Al Bacon it was a teapot lying amidst other burnt and buckled items on the floor of what had once been the kitchen in what was once his family home. For Al it brought back memories of the family sitting around the table, the warmth of the crackling fuel stove, and the beauty of the surrounding bush.

Three years ago Al and his partner Storm Sparks moved to Wyaliba, a communal property of 3,500 heavily-treed acres, half-hour's drive from Glen Innes. They put the finishing touches on their off-grid house, had a son, Zeke, and settled in to their slice of paradise.

On 8 November last year fires swept along the valley, fuelled by a vicious wind and drought conditions that had turned the eucalypts into a time bomb. Only 18 of Wyaliba's 70 homes survived, with sheds, vehicles and in Al's case, two banks of expensive solar storage batteries, also destroyed. Few community members had insurance on their homes or possessions.

Tragically, lives were lost, including that of close neighbour, 83-year-old George Nole, who long ago had worked at NASA. He died in his car, having sought refuge from the flames. In attempting to rescue him, Al suffered extensive burns that required four trips to Sydney's Royal North Shore Hospital.

When the fire passed, the extensive destruction of Wyaliba was clear to see. The rebuilding process is happening but will be slow, expensive and emotionally gruelling.

Like so many bushfire evacuees in eastern Australia, Al, Storm and Zeke are living in rental accommodation in town. Vinnies was the first organisation to help them, providing \$4,000 in total along with clothing and other essentials to replace what was lost.

"Vinnies has been brilliant," Al said. "The initial emergency funding came through quickly, and the ongoing support has been so important to helping us get through. The personal support is vital and really appreciated. The fires have been demoralising for so many people, and it's important for them not to feel they have to face the future alone."

Our volunteer Regional President, Kerry Muir, managed the allocation of \$161,000 in Vinnies Bushfire Appeal funds to the local community within a month or so of the fire's occurring.

"Kerry's very well connected in the local community, which is a great asset," Al said.

"Thank you Vinnies for helping us and so many others at this terrible time."



Storm, Kerry Muir, Zeke and Al.

MORE SOCIAL HOUSING OPENS

Over the past three years the Society has been hard at work providing housing for people on low incomes.

As part of the NSW Government's Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF), we have committed to building 502 homes at 12 locations throughout NSW. By the end of 2020 all sites will be up-and-running offering people with the safety, stability and security that a home brings.

With housing affordability making it prohibitively expensive for many people to achieve the 'Australian Dream' and the COVID-19 pandemic putting those without a secure place to live at higher risk, we are incredibly proud of our work in providing sanctuary to people unable to secure homes on the rental market.

At Vinnies, we believe everyone deserves a safe place to live which is why we invested \$242 million to deliver SAHF. Sites are located close to public transport and community services, designed to 7 Star Energy and Silver Level accessibility standards, and allow feature tailored support programs for individuals so that they are able to achieve their goals.

With more than 51,000 applicants currently on the waiting list for social housing in NSW, the units offered through SAHF ensure tenants can have a roof over their heads with rents priced up to 75% of private market rent or 25% total household income for those on the NSW Housing Register.

Speaking at the opening of the SAHF site in Campbelltown late last year, St Vincent de Paul Housing CEO Brian Murnane recognised the importance of the project in assisting vulnerable members of local communities.

"These units will ensure tenants have the safety and security of a place to call home, as well as providing tailored support so they can connect with the services they need and become part of a supportive community," Mr Murnane said. To find out more about SAHF, contact sahf@amelie.org.au or call 9890 6500.



Emeritus Bishop of Wollongong, Bishop Peter Ingham, Local Elder, Uncle Ivan Wellington, St Vincent de Paul Housing CEO, Briand Murnane and St Vincent de Paul Housing Board of Directors - Chair, Denis Walsh at the opening of the Campbelltown SAHF site in November, 2019

Location	Number of units	Opening date
Dubbo	21	Opened September 2018
Penrith	68	Opened December 2018
Albury (Olive Street)	38	Opened December 2018
Campbelltown	48	Opened October 2019
Merrylands	78	Opened February 2020
Albury (Hovell Street)	18	Opened February 2020
Lilyfield	22	Opened March 2020
Burraneer	36	Opened April 2020
Jordan Springs	36	Opened April 2020
Maitland	17	Opened May 2020
Katoomba	26	Opened June 2020
Cardiff	94	Set to open September 2020

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

During this difficult time we have been blown away by the support shown by our corporate partners. With many businesses unable to operate as normal due to COVID-19 measures, we are heartened to see continued support from the corporate sector in assisting people experiencing hardship and disadvantage.

GENWORTH

A huge thank you to Genworth for its continued support of the V4You program and pledging \$10,000 to the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal.

Partnering with Vincentian House since 2013, Genworth's annual donation of \$50,000 will allow the V4You program to continue assisting kids with homework clubs, cooking classes and counselling.

Genworth also ensured families staying at Vincentian House had a Christmas to remember by purchasing presents for parents to gift to their children.

JOHNSON & JOHNSON

A team of 50 Johnson & Johnson staff undertook our largest corporate volunteering activity late last year reorganising and upgrading the Marion Centre – a crisis accommodation centre for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Transforming the centre's dressing room into a space akin to a boutique clothing store, the reception from residents has been overwhelmingly positive.

While part of the Johnson & Johnson team worked on the revamp, other staff members accompanied residents on a day out to Taronga Zoo.

Our thanks go out to Johnson & Johnson for going above and beyond to help those in need.



IGA

For close to a decade IGA has been there to support our good works in communities across Australia.

Once again partnering for a Christmas Drought Appeal campaign in December, sales of \$2 Christmas Gift Tokens and specially marked Community Chest products helped raised \$409,000 nationally to assist faming communities devastated by drought.

Stepping up again in January during the worst of the bushfire crisis, IGA pledged 100% of sales from Bushfire Appeal tokens and in-store donations to the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal. Raising over \$560,000 throughout the country, they also stepped up to assist families impacted by bushfires in NSW, Victoria and ACT with \$280,000 in IGA Gift Cards.

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

More than 50 corporate volunteers took part in Christmas events at Vinnies Services across Sydney last December.

Hosting barbeque lunches, wrapping hampers and delivering gifts, our corporate volunteers brought hope and joy to plenty of faces during the Christmas season.

Along with supporting our fundraising efforts, IGA/Metcash hosted a Christmas lunch at the Marian Centre.

At the Mary MacKillop Outreach in Haberfield staff from Genworth and Lagardere wrapped gifts and hampers for clients at the centre.

Merz Australia employees left gifts under the tree much to the delight of children staying with their families at the Marian Centre.

Claude Outdoor Group served up a delicious BBQ at Maroubra Beach for women and children staying at our refuges in the Eastern Suburbs.

We are so grateful for the support shown by our corporate partners and look forward to working alongside them into the future.

New Community Fundraising website

In March this year we launched our long-awaited Community Fundraising website for Vinnies NSW.

This site will serve as a central portal for all community fundraising activity in NSW, from school and community sleepouts to Team Vinnies events like the City 2 Surf and Blackmores Running Festival, and everything in between. Here, fundraisers will be able to learn more about Vinnies, set up an event or fundraising page and access countless resources to plan and execute a successful fundraiser.

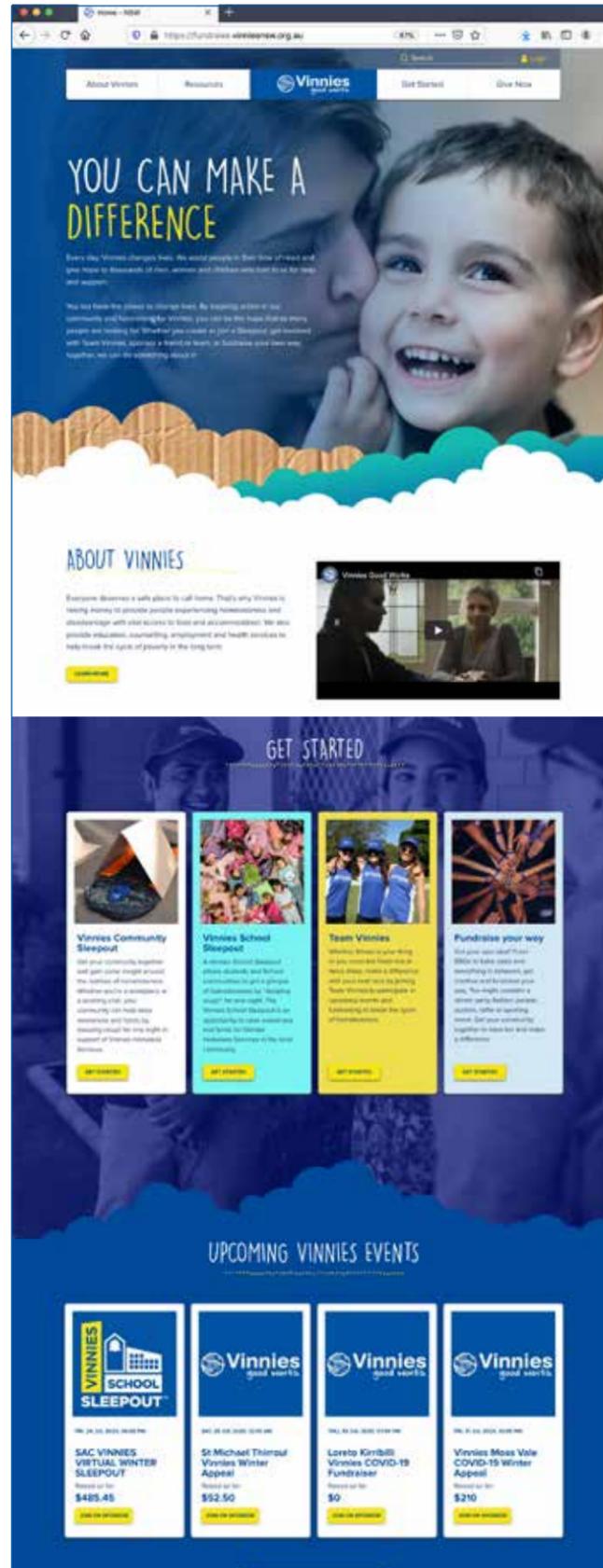
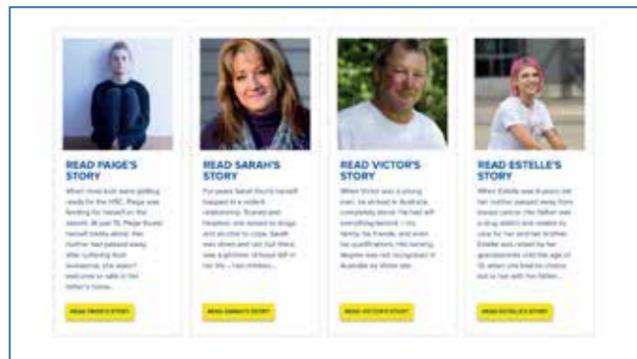
Central Councils and Conferences will also be able to set up localised fundraising pages using the new website to support their Winter and Christmas Appeals, along with other fundraisers to support the Society's Good Works in communities across the state.

Right now we are faced with a challenging time in the community fundraising space. As schools and community groups adhere to social distancing rules, the community fundraising events that we previously benefited from are simply not possible. This revitalised fundraising platform will allow us to make a strong come back and raise vital funds to continue to serve those most in need. When the time is right, we will launch ambitious acquisition campaigns across school and community groups to re-engage fundraisers and kick-start community fundraising.

Community Fundraising is an important area within the organisation, bringing in \$280,000 last financial year. Many community fundraisers remain loyal supporters with strong ties to Vinnies. They contribute consistently to our services but also step up to give in times of great need such as the Bushfire Appeal. This website is a big step towards empowering large numbers of fundraisers to mobilise in support of our cause.

Head over to the website here

<https://fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au/> to check out the new portal and please share it to help us to spread the word!



Family spirit inspires back-to-school help

Known as Australia's largest family-owned office products supplier, COS had our community's kids close to its heart when it donated 1000 back-to-school packs for delivery to bushfire impacted communities in NSW.

Then the logistics challenge began, with our staff, family members and friends rallying around to sort and pack all the stationery and other items into individualised packs. Next came the need to ensure all the packs reached the correct destinations – schools in the areas worst hit by the fires. This challenge was taken up by DHL Express, which formed the last link in the chain, delivering the packs on a cost-free basis to all those families awaiting the start of Term 1.

COS also pledged \$55,000 to the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal through the Lyone Foundation, while DHL made a \$10,000 donation.

Vinnies is deeply grateful to these wonderful corporate supporters who helped us bring some normality into communities rocked by some of the worst natural disasters the state has even experienced. Thank you to COS and DHL from the bottom of our heart.



Hotels Have Hearts in tough times

Hotels Have Hearts have teamed with Vinnies to collect donations at pubs and hotels throughout NSW.



Since 2001 hoteliers across NSW have banded together as part of the Hotels Have Hearts initiative in support of our good works.

Raising in excess of \$4.5 million over the past two decades, the funds raised have supported numerous Vinnies Services including crisis accommodation, meal programs, refuges for women and children escaping domestic violence, and much more.

Set to celebrate its biennial gala night in May, the impact of COVID-19 forced the event to be postponed until 2021. In response, hoteliers unable to operate during restrictions called on their employees to help out Vinnies by collecting donations at pubs and hotels throughout the state.

Promoting the initiative on the TODAY Show outside The Australian Hotel in The Rocks, Vinnies NSW CEO, Jack de Groot and hoteliers Marty Short and Kim Maloney encouraged people to donate quality items at local pubs and Vinnies charity bins.

Thanks to the support of Hotels Have Hearts we've been able to re-stock our Vinnies Shops with an array of pre-loved items, ensuring customers can continue to find a treasure while supporting people in need.



A long, cold winter for people impacted by COVID-19

When the COVID-19 outbreak came to Australia, it changed Ray's life in an instant. He went from being a happily employed personal trainer working across five different gyms, to being completely out of work as those gyms shut their doors.

It wasn't just Ray's prospects that took a dive, but also those of his family. His wife, Catherine, had just finished studying and was due to start a new job after many years as a stay-at-home mum and carer for her sister, who lives with Down syndrome. COVID-19 put those plans on hold for the indefinite future.

"The difference a day makes is incredible. It was like a domino effect," Catherine said.

Suddenly she and Ray were in a situation they never imagined: worrying about how they would meet their rent payments, keep their lights on, and most importantly, take care of their five-year-old son, Ben.

"It's an emotional rollercoaster, day by day. I force myself to get out of bed every morning, just to stop thinking dark thoughts," Catherine said. "I just need some hope."

As they came to terms with their new normal, the family were forced to live on Catherine's meagre carers' pension of \$360 a week. It proved impossible for a family of three.

"We've tried to put all of our outstanding bills on hold as much as possible, and that's helped a bit. But when this six-month period ends, a huge debt will have just accrued," explained Catherine.

The financial stress took its toll on the family's mental wellbeing, with Ray feeling an enormous burden as the family's sole breadwinner. He set right into the work of applying for jobs, but with one million Australians out of work due to COVID-19, it was a crowded field.

Like so many of the people coming to Vinnies in recent months, Catherine and Ray had never sought help before

from a charity or government. They struggled with asking for support, and when they finally called us, their one humble request was for some winter clothes for Ben.

"I came to Vinnies with so much shame about my situation, but [they] treated me with such dignity," Catherine said.

The Vinnies team were able to help the family to pay their electricity bill, access warm clothes, and purchase food to fill the pantry and fridge.

"I'm eternally grateful for the hope we now have, and the sense that we're going to be okay," Catherine said.

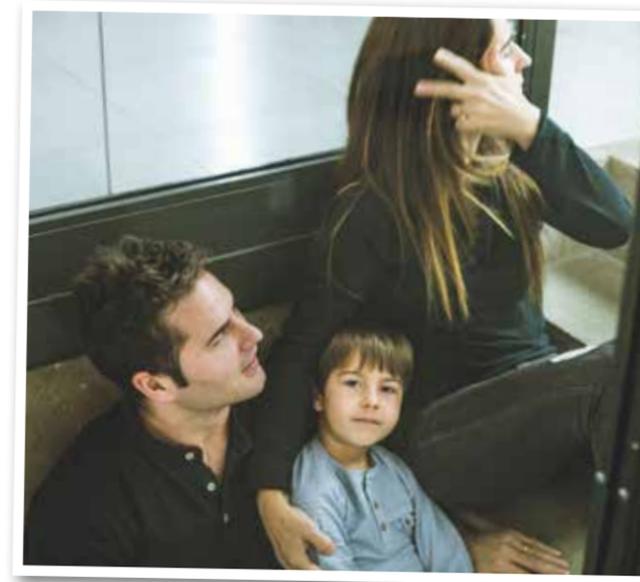
"Vinnies has made the difference between whether my family will eat or not."

Our members, volunteers and staff have done incredible work during the coronavirus crisis, tirelessly ensuring that all people continue to have shelter, food, clothes, and the comfort of knowing that someone cares. Even those members who have had to self-isolate to protect their own health have continued to contribute wherever they can, often calling the people we assist over the phone.

Thanks to you, the vast majority of Vinnies Conferences and services across NSW have remained up and running throughout this crisis, at a time when they are so sorely needed.

The COVID-19 Winter Appeal, raised funds to ensure we can continue to make a difference for people like Catherine, Ray and Ben.

As restrictions are gradually lifted, we know it will take time for life to return to normal for the millions of Australians impacted by COVID-19. Vinnies can play a vital role in helping families back on their feet, ensuring the fallout from this pandemic is not felt so acutely.



Help us keep Aussies hit hardest by the pandemic safe, fed & supported.

Donate to the Vinnies COVID-19 Winter Appeal today at vinnies.org.au/donate or call 13 18 12

Vinnies good works

HOW TO DONATE TO THE VINNIES COVID-19 WINTER APPEAL

- Visit www.vinnies.org.au
- Call 13 18 12

Community and Corporate spirit save the day

We have been amazed by the creativity and generosity shown by ordinary people eager to do their bit for people affected by bushfires, including Central Coast tattoo artist Tony Garland whose business Ink Vibe Tattoo raised over \$10,000 through a 'Flash for Fire' fundraiser, and 200 motorcyclists from Tamworth who travelled across north-west NSW to Nemingha and Manilla, collecting over \$5,000 and a trailer-load of goods.

These inspiring efforts remind us that anyone – regardless of who they are or how much they are able to give – can make a difference by pitching in to support communities in need.

We would also like to acknowledge the support of our many corporate donors, whose generosity will allow us to assist communities over the long term:

- Philanthropic group **The Paul Ramsay Foundation**, who donated \$1,000,000 to provide immediate financial relief.
- **Stand Up** and the **Jewish Board of Deputies**, who raised \$848,476.
- **IGA Supermarkets** across Australia raised over \$560,000 to support Aussies devastated by the Bushfires with 100% of funds going to the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal
- **St Vincent's Health Australia** (SVHA), who raised over \$337,000 to enable us to provide long-term assistance for rebuilding communities.
- Byron Bay based fashion brand **Spell & The Gypsy Collective**, who donated \$322,610 from pre-sales of its latest collection.
- **Australian Hotels Association NSW**, who donated \$250,000 to help communities recover and rebuild.
- **Lion** donated \$250,000 to the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal, matching the support from the Australian Hotels Association NSW
- **TVSN, Direct Group, Hooper Shaw Foundation and Rotherleigh Properties**, who made an on-air donation of \$250,000.
- **Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies** donated \$225,000 to support communities over the long-term.

- **Grant Thornton**, who donated \$200,000 in vital financial assistance.
- **Beyond the Bricks**, a real estate industry appeal who donated \$179,000.
- **Wonderland International**, who donated over \$162,000 to support the families affected by the bushfires.
- **Far East Land Australia**, who donated \$150,000 towards helping families get back on their feet.
- **7- Eleven**, who made a \$100,000 donation for services to NSW and ACT communities affected the bushfires.
- Hollywood superstar **Chris Hemsworth**, who donated \$75,000 for his homeland
- **ANZ**, who donated TV advertising slots during the Australian Open so that we could promote our good works during one of the biggest events on the Australian sporting calendar.

Thank you to our other corporate donors to the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal:

Amazon, ARTC, ASIC, Audika, Audrey Reefs, Betts Shoes, Betty's Burgers, Beyond Bank, Boost Juice, Brigidine Sisters Community, Brother International, Caroma, COS, Demant Group, DHL Express, Freyssinet Australia, Fullerton Hotels, Genworth Australia, Groupon, Gelatissimo, Hoselink, Inghams Enterprises Pty Ltd, Investa, IMB Bank, Jellinbah Group, Kooga New Zealand, Kookai, Lagardere, Travel Retail, Lyone Foundation, Macquarie Bank, Market City, Mirvac, Mizuho Bank, Mosaic Brands, Nasty Gal, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Ollie's Place, Oticon Australia, Oxford Properties, P&O Cruises Australia, Paypal, Practice Ignition, Quay Australia, Reckitt Benckiser (Australia) Pty Ltd, Roche Group, Ted Baker, Together Rising, The Iconic, St John of God Health Care, Silvertop Taxis, Suttons Subaru Chullora, Taronga Zoo Sydney, Virgin Australia, Wellsite Permit to Work Association

Thank you!

Step inside a health clinic for the homeless

The Matthew Talbot Hostel is Sydney's most iconic refuge for men experiencing homelessness. For more than 80 years, we have provided a bed, hot meals, showers, toiletries, clothing and support for men doing it tough on the streets of inner Sydney.

We also provide a health clinic onsite, which saw 20,000 visits last year alone.

Julie Smith, Matthew Talbot Hostel Clinic Manager, tells her story:

I first approached the Matthew Talbot Hostel on a cold spring afternoon in 1990, on my way to an interview for a job as a nurse in the adjoining clinic. The small lane of Talbot Place was thronged on both sides by men in hats and suits – the common hand-me-down clothes of the day. Some clutched bottles hidden in brown paper bags, some lay in the gutter, others staggered around, and a few men shouted warm greetings at the newcomer. It was a buzzing, colourful and rather intimidating scene.

I got the job and started what would turn out to be a long career on the frontline supporting some of Australia's most needy and unwell people.

Fast-forward to 2020 and the old hats, suits and the mostly unshaven faces have largely gone, replaced by a younger-looking but no less unwell group of people. The faces change but the problems, in the main, are the same.

The clinic opens every single day of the year. Throughout the day our nurses minister to the many complex needs of the people who arrive seeking our help. Mental health problems are stand-out issues, along with chronic illnesses and physical injuries.

Around three-quarters of our patients have co-existing addiction issues. Substance use is both a cause and a consequence of homelessness, and yet there are relatively few government treatment centres and programs to help people deal with their addictions. Getting access to them is particularly difficult for the homeless.

Homeless people die, on average, 25 years before their time. They often die of preventable illnesses. In a thriving country such as ours, this is not acceptable.



At the Matthew Talbot Clinic we endeavour to provide excellent healthcare with as few barriers as possible to those who slip through these gaps. Our patients don't have to make an appointment. They won't be asked to wait for too long. They won't be judged. They won't be asked to pay. They don't even have to know what is wrong with them. They can simply turn up and be assessed.

We have lovely, caring, professional staff who genuinely want to make a difference. When a person can't advocate for themselves, we will become their advocates.

We provide a general practitioner and psychiatric services, optometry, podiatry, drop-in health assessments, smoking cessation and metabolic health clinics, as well as help with heart failure, diabetes and blood-borne viruses. We provide both in-house services and referral to outside specialists such as dentists and cardiologists. All of this is made possible by generous donations to Vinnies.

It is almost 30 years since I first crossed the threshold of this unusual, special and challenging place. I love it now as much as I did all those years ago. I am lucky in my work; I get to know a group of people who most Australians will never have the privilege of knowing or spending time with.



MINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT SUCCEEDS AGAINST THE ODDS



The Vinnies NSW Executive Leadership Team sleeping out in the Matthew Talbot Hostel car park.



The Vinnies team putting the live-stream together.

Dr Andrew Rochford speaking with single mother, Cassie.

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout has overcome the challenges of COVID-19 to raise more than \$5 million nationally to support our homelessness services.

Across Australia over 1,550 business and community leaders braved the cold on Thursday 18 June as part of the first virtual Vinnies CEO Sleepout, with NSW raising \$2.1 million thanks to the efforts of 412 participants.

Originally set to take place in major cities, the impact of COVID-19 saw the event revised with participants nominating to sleep in cars, couches and backyards while tuning in for a live-stream hosted by television personality Dr Andrew Rochford.

The funds raised will allow Vinnies to assist people experiencing or at risk of homelessness with accommodation, food, healthcare and individualised

support designed with the ultimate goal of providing a safe and permanent home.

We've been able to do so much thanks to the generosity of people who have donated and taken part since 2006," said Vinnies NSW CEO Jack de Groot.

With COVID-19 leaving many people out of work and facing uncertain futures, Jack hoped the event would shine a light on the urgent need for increased JobSeeker payments to be retained to ensure people avoid falling into poverty and homelessness.

"Before the pandemic we had a ridiculously low rate for Newstart that entrenched poverty. People are extraordinarily anxious about what will happen over the coming months, so it is essential that the government maintains JobSeeker at a higher rate to give them a chance."

STORIES FROM THE NIGHT

Following a Welcome to Country by Wiradjuri woman Yvonne Weldon, the two-hour live stream saw host Dr Andrew Rochford speak with a number of participants and people with lived experience of homelessness.

• **BERNIE FEHON**, founder of the Vinnies CEO Sleepout, reflected on how the event has remained true to its original concept while evolving over the past 15 years. "We hear the voice of someone who has experienced homelessness," said Bernie. "Over the years the Vinnies CEO Sleepout has grown, but all the way through that element has remained consistent."

• **HOTELIER JERRY SCHWARTZ** and his nine-year-old son Dane appeared outside the Ibis in Sydney. Taking part in the Vinnies CEO Sleepout for the 11th time, Jerry spoke

of his role in supporting Vinnies during the COVID-19 pandemic by housing men unable to stay at the Matthew Talbot Hostel due to social distancing measures.

• Participants were moved by the story of **GAIL**, a woman who spent 30 years in a marriage filled with mental and physical abuse. Ending up at a Vinnies refuge after drifting between short-term accommodation and living on the streets, Gail praised the support afforded her – "if it weren't for Vinnies I wouldn't be here."

• **MOTHER CASSIE** shared her story of caring for two daughters without a stable place to call home. After losing her strongest support network with the passing of her grandparents, Cassie was assisted by Vinnies to secure social housing after years of moving between accommodation in Sydney's inner west. "When I had a place of my own the weight had been lifted off my shoulders – I don't know what I'd do without Vinnies."

• Taking part in his third Vinnies CEO Sleepout, **ROBERT KELLY OF THE STEADFAST GROUP**, finished as the highest fundraiser in NSW – and fifth overall – with over \$100,000. Sleeping out alongside a group of executives from the insurance industry, the night took on personal significance for Robert, who was featured during the live-stream retracing the steps of his grandfather who was supported by the Matthew Talbot Hostel. "There is a percentage of our population who get into hardship through no cause of their own – they become a victim of circumstance," explains Robert. "A small amount of money donated by a lot of people around Australia will be directly helpful to people who need a bed for the night, a good feed and some clean clothes."

• Closing out the night with a cross to Adelaide, **NICK READE FROM BANK SA**, was named the highest national fundraiser with over \$225,000 - earning the highly coveted pillow sponsored by The Australian. "It's great to support such an amazing organisation like Vinnies," said Nick. "I'd love to be able to solve homelessness and with my team we've been able to raise money, awareness and make a direct contribution."

Thanks to the work of our staff, volunteers, sponsors and participants, the Vinnies CEO Sleepout was able to go ahead in 2020. With thousands of people affected by the social, medical and financial impacts of COVID-19, we will be able to make a real difference to the lives of people in need of a hand up.

Register to take part in the 2021 Vinnies CEO Sleepout at www.ceosleepout.org.au.

Sign up today to take part in the Virtual Vinnies Community Sleepouts held in October at <https://fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au>.



Support now and going forward

Over the past few months a number of measures have been introduced to protect people hit by the social and economic impacts of COVID-19.

From increasing social support payments and giving tenants greater security in uncertain times, we will continue to advocate for change on behalf of those in need of a hand-up.

RAISING JOBSEEKER

After years of advocacy by the social welfare sector the rate of JobSeeker (formerly Newstart) has finally increased.

It is a long overdue decision by the Federal Government that is more important than ever before.

With thousands of Australians out of work as a result of COVID-19 financial support is vital to ensure people do not fall into poverty.

By increasing JobSeeker payments by an additional \$550 per fortnight and providing \$1,500 per fortnight to workers through the JobKeeper program, many people will be able to get back on their feet sooner and avoid the worst of the pandemic.

So far the government has announced an increase to the JobSeeker payment for six months. We are calling for a permanent increase to Australia's social safety net to protect the most vulnerable members of our society.

COVID-19 has brought the economic struggles faced by people across the country to the fore, while highlighting how additional financial support can dramatically improve the quality of life for those staring down the barrel of the poverty line.

NSW RENTAL MORATORIUM

At all times – and especially in the midst of a global pandemic – it is essential that people have a safe place to live.

While COVID-19 has unquestionably had an economic impact for many businesses and individuals, it is imperative that people's safety and wellbeing is placed at the forefront of this health crisis.

The NSW Government has announced a relief package for renters who are struggling to stay afloat, which includes a 60-day stop on evictions for tenants who have fallen into rental arrears and a six-month moratorium on evictions for those who have lost at least 25% of their weekly household income and negotiated in good faith with their landlord.

While we welcome the government's announcement, we are concerned that the moratorium measures may not provide sufficient protections for tenants who may be at risk of accruing an unsustainable debt in back-dated rent. Tenants also need to be protected from eviction for reasons other than accruing rental arrears.

Greater protections and support are needed to ensure people have a safe, affordable and secure place to call home during the COVID-19 crisis – and be protected from falling into a new crisis of poverty and debt once the pandemic has passed.



“Without Vinnies I don't know where I'd be”

After losing her job, battling mental health challenges and navigating the minefield of Centrelink, Lynn was ready to re-enter the workforce.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

Lynn worked as an office manager for a solar company until late last year, when six months of built-up stress took its toll.

“I've had stressful jobs in my life but you get to the point where it becomes too much,” Lynn explains.

Without a job and no longer eligible for the government's sickness benefit, Lynn was left to wait five weeks before receiving her first JobSeeker Payment.

Having accrued modest savings to draw upon in the interim, by the time the fourth week of no income rolled

around, a mounting pile of bills and expenses saw her turn to Vinnies for assistance.

“Centrelink kept pushing me back and I kept telling myself – ‘I'll be right, I can last another week, I've got my credit card’ – at that point I had nothing, not a penny to my name.”

“I went to Vinnies because I literally had no money, no phone credit, my internet had been cut off, no food, no toilet paper – nothing.”

Since then our members have been able to assist Lynn in a range of ways with home visits, food, house-hold items, medical prescriptions, vouchers to keep her phone connected and support to pay electricity bills.

“Getting the food and the assistance is awesome – it's saved me a couple of times from starvation and the worry. Knowing that there's people you can go to and talk to it's really helpful and just so nice.”

Ready to get back into work with a renewed sense of confidence, the surge in panic-buying caused by the coronavirus created a new issue experienced by thousands of Australian's on low incomes.

Lynn was unable to purchase staples such as pasta, toilet paper and supermarket specials due to increased demand and stockpiling. The struggle of getting by on just \$250 per week was made all the more difficult by social distancing measures that led to feelings of isolation.

“If I had to go into a lockdown completely for two weeks I don't know what I'd do because I live on my own. I can't afford home-delivery groceries – it's hard,” Lynn says.

“My computer died in January so I was going to the library to use the computer there. Now that the library's shut down I haven't been able to access a computer to look for work and that's really isolating.

“With the \$750 (COVID-19 Economic Support Payment) I was able to purchase a new computer which made me really happy. It means that I can connect and find out what's going on.”

Finding the way back from her challenges in recent times, Lynn is remaining upbeat in the face of the latest coronavirus setback thanks to the support of Vinnies.

“Last year I was in a really bad place when they helped me. I'm really thankful for the support, they've all been amazing.”

Remembering those who have left us

Caring for those who come to us seeking help is central to the Society's mission, and nowhere is this better personified than at Sydney's Matthew Talbot Hostel and Vinnies homeless drop-in centre Fred's Place in Tweed Heads.

Named after two giants of the Society, the services provide a range of emergency care for those doing it tough, often living on the streets and suffering a range of significant health problems, both physical and mental. For these reasons, tragically, a number of service users have a shortened life span and come our way towards the end of their lives.

"Earlier this year one of our regular men entered Matthew Talbot for respite after his partner had died in his arms at his unit," recalls Joy Bowen, Mission and Spirituality partner for the hostel's guests.

"We created a beautiful memorial for her. Not long afterwards he wandered off and later we were notified of his tragic death. We created another beautiful memorial, accompanied by prayers and stories. In this mystery of life, little do we know what is ahead."

Joy adds, "This is a regular and much needed ritual that helps us experience our grief. We also support our gents without families or those families without funds to support funerals. Also, as a wider Catholic community, we participate in the

annual Interment of Ashes at the Charles O'Neill Walkway, Catholic Cemeteries, Rookwood."

Up in Tweed Heads the service named after Blessed Frederic Ozanam receives up to 80 visitors each day, providing light meals, bathroom and laundry facilities, medical care, computer access, housing information and more. The area has one of the highest rates of homelessness and rough sleeping in NSW.

Many service users have serious health issues, as well as substance abuse problems and mental health concerns. A number of Fred's Place clients have passed away over the five years the service has operated, and while the transient nature of their lives makes many of them anonymous to the staff, some are well known to fellow clients and the news gets back.

Responding to a request from the mates of one deceased client the service established an In Memoriam wall where hand-made plaques could be erected to mark those who have passed. It has now become a sacred space bearing the names of the former street people who so valued the help and companionship that Fred's Place offers.



QUICK RESPONSE TO FIRE FAMILY'S NEEDS

When Sydney Archdiocese Conference Members Meredith and Mouna saw news about the east coast bushfires they immediately put up their hands to help those affected.

In a motel in southern Sydney they met a family who had fled fires in the Shoalhaven, realising the mother was in a tough spot, with three kids, including a toddler with special needs, and no car.

The pair swung into action, helping mum to access a \$1,000 emergency grant from donations to the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal. They also covered two additional days of motel accommodation, and went to buy the family some clothing and essentials for their stay.

Amidst all the sadness, Meredith and Mouna, felt glad to be there to help.



Meredith and Mouna, Sydney Archdiocese Conference Members

Award recipients kick goals for Vinnies

In a life with as many twists and turns as he made during his stellar Rugby League career – John Alan Cootes has added another notch to his belt, receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in this year's Honours list.

John was the first Catholic priest to represent Australia in the code, playing seven internationals and becoming top scorer in the 1970 World Cup in England.

After leaving the priesthood, and eventually football, John Cootes became a popular TV sports commentator and a successful businessman, running furniture stores in the Maitland-Newcastle area.

John has been a Member of St Vincent de Paul Society's Swansea Conference since 2010, is a current Member of Maitland Newcastle Diocesan Council, and, with whatever free time he can manage, is an entertainer and singer who visits retirement homes.

Other Vinnies member and volunteers to receive Australia Day Honours include:

Sue Adams (Guyra) – Citizen of the Year

Michelle Baldry (Cootamundra) – Citizen of the Year

Linda Barry (Harden-Murrumburrah) – Citizen of the Year

Coral Dennis (Trangie) – Senior Citizen of the Year

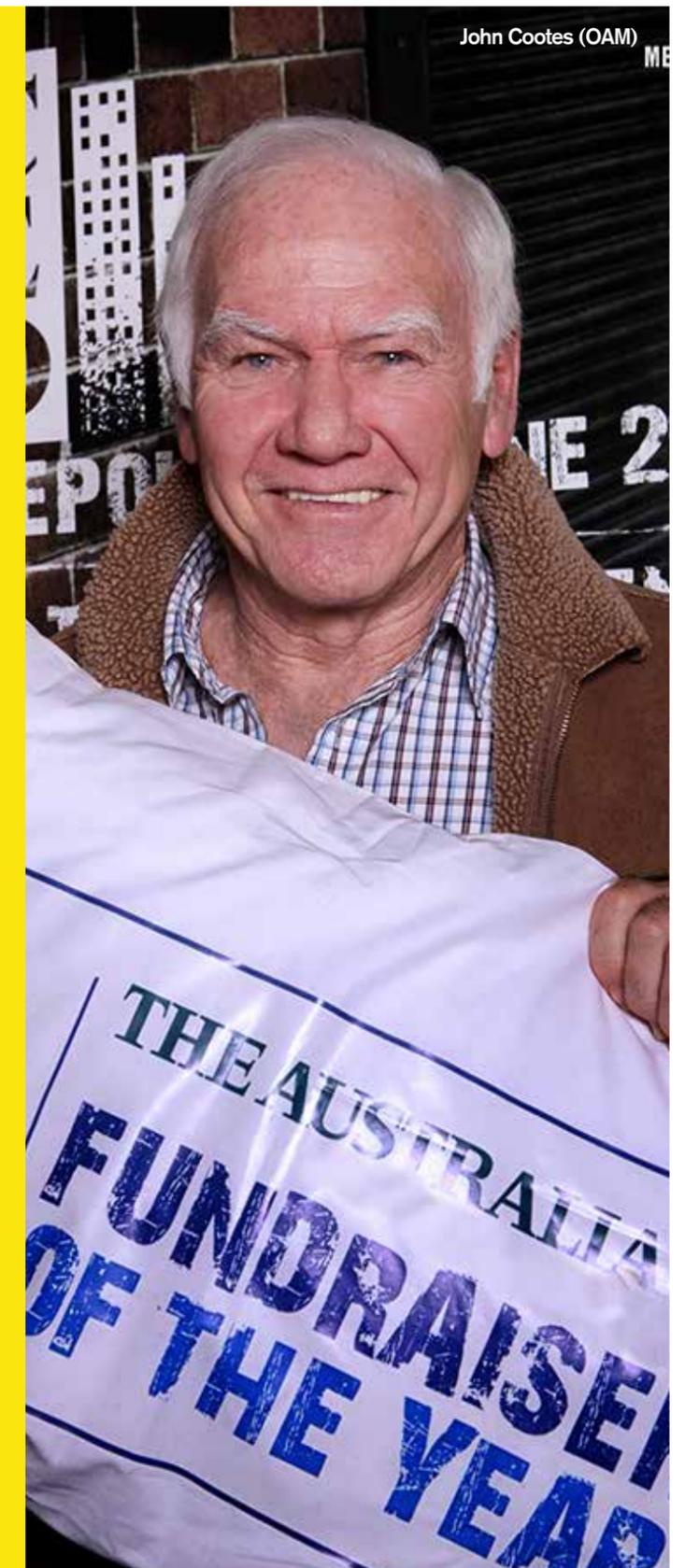
Arthur Hogan (Cowra) – Citizen of the Year

Jenny Howell (Young) – Citizen of the Year.

Skye McLelland (Grenfell-Weddin Shire) – Youth Award

Allan and Pamela Toole (Forbes) – Senior Citizens of the Year

Anne and Mark Ward (Canowindra) – Citizens of the Year



Meet Grace

In communities across NSW our youth members are making a difference.

Promoting our good works through Mini Vinnies, High School and Young Adult Conferences, youth members carry on the social justice tradition started by Frederic Ozanam and his friends – youths in 19th century France.

Grace is a 20-year-old member based in the South region studying social work at university. Gaining support from Vinnies as a child with food vouchers and annual Christmas hampers, she is currently the Youth Representative for the Wagga Wagga region.



When did you start getting involved in Vinnies?

I started volunteering with the Refugee Homework Program when I was in Year 12 and had free periods in the afternoons. I've always known I wanted to help people and be a part of the community and Vinnies was an organisation I knew and respected. The Homework Program fitted in with my study and working with the kids seemed like it would be really rewarding.

What does a typical week look like for you?

I volunteer once a week at the Refugee Homework Program. Every few weeks I have meetings – it could be an online meeting with the NSW Vinnies State Youth team or with the local Vinnies people. Sometimes I'll participate in one-off events like the Vinnies Community Sleepout. Every week for me is a bit different!

What's this I hear about beginning a Social Justice Group for Young People?

It's a bit of a mission of mine to get a Youth Conference going in Wagga. It'll be a place where young people will be able to share social justice ideas and get involved in different events, with the backup of Vinnies staff. Once it gets going everyone will have the ability to collaborate and share ideas for how to progress the youth space in Vinnies.



The Vinnies Metropolitan Schools and Youth Engagement team worked tirelessly throughout February and March with our Youth Representatives and University Executives to put together a range of compelling Orientation Week campaigns.

During this time, Vinnies had stalls at nine universities throughout the region and was granted the significant opportunity to present to students at Campion College about the many good works and volunteer opportunities that the Society has to offer. Each of the campaigns delivered across the metro region were a great success, resulting in a total of 861 students expressing interest in joining the Society.

Youth members form a critical component of the Society's strategy to grow membership and engagement – part of Our People Strategic Priorities found in Strategic Plan 2020-2022. We are extremely excited to have so many new and enthusiastic members and volunteers on board and we look forward to working with them in the near future.

TO GET INVOLVED WITH VINNIES' YOUTH INITIATIVES OR FIND OUT MORE, please contact Courtney Deighton, State Youth Engagement Coordinator at courtney.deighton@vinnies.org.au.



MOVING THE NEEDLE ON WASTE

Vinnies has joined forces with the Salvos and Red Cross to reduce clothing waste as part of the Moving the Needle initiative.

We receive thousands of pre-loved clothing donations every year which can be given a second life and help fund our services to support those doing it tough. Unfortunately, we are unable to sell low quality donations which may have to be disposed of with detrimental effects on the planet's sustainability.

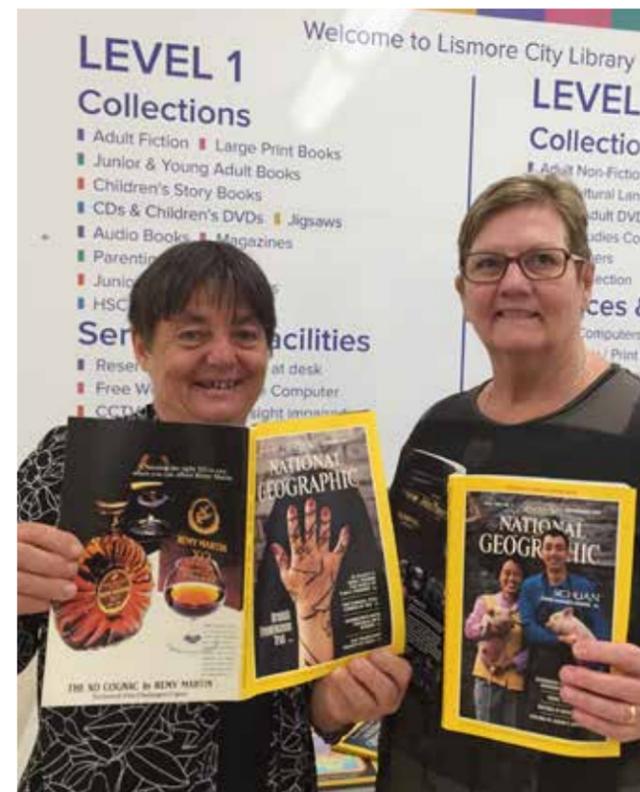
With the surge in 'fast fashion' retailers creating a market for cheap clothing, the high cost of low prices has led to six tonnes of fashion and textile waste going to landfill every ten minutes in Australia.

As part of Moving the Needle we're partnering with fashion retailers and customers across the country to provide a more circular and sustainable clothing model and reduce textile waste in landfill by 20% by 2022.

We've also held pop-up events around Australia for the public to drop off their pre-loved items and learn how to keep sustainability in mind when shopping for clothes.



Moving the Needle was featured on ABC TV's Compass. The episode "Material Gain" is available to watch online through ABC iView.



Library donation covers the world

Having travelled the world as a young woman, Casino-born Louise Doust returned to the Northern Rivers in the early 1980s, where she continued to experience the world through the pages of National Geographic.

Accruing an unbroken set of editions from 1982 to 2002, she recently donated her collection to Vinnies, hoping we could sell them to raise funds or find a worthy institution that could make them available to the community.

Their new home has now been found at the Lismore branch of the Richmond Tweed Regional Library where locals can revisit iconic moments and locations from history.

"The magazines are filled with amazing stories and wonderful photos", Louise said. "They document so much global history in such a relatable way. I'm so glad they're out there on the shelves, not gathering dust in my cupboard".

Left: Librarian Lucy Kingsley from Richmond Tweed Regional Library received a 20-year set of National Geographics from Vinnies North Coast Regional President Gail Gaudron

Pentecost in uncertain times...



In the evening of the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, "Peace be with you"...As the Father sent me, so am I sending you."

This brief narrative from John's Gospel opens the reading of Pentecost. It is of course a post-resurrectional narrative and I believe one does not have to be a theologian or biblical scholar to realise how strongly it resonates for us in these uncertain times. For the disciples were in lockdown in a room, just as we have been in recent times. The disciples were afraid, just as we are, especially in not knowing what is coming next. In their case, it was following the crucifixion of Jesus; in our case it is awaiting the effects and hopes of a flattening curve.

Then, Jesus appears to the disciples with two messages, and he gives today the same messages. The first message is 'Peace be with you.' The second message is 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.'

What is important here is that the disciples were together in their isolation and met with a God that walks-with-them, and of course today walks-with-us, in our pain, in our fears, in our isolation and times of trial. Jesus' relationship continued for the disciples and continues for us. Jesus' words of empathy, Peace be with you becomes a life-giving gift.

The second message of Pentecost is central to the purpose of the work of the Society. For Vincentians

are commissioned and sent out in faith to serve the disadvantaged and vulnerable especially in the aspects of the ministry of Jesus of radical inclusivity, restoration of life and dignity and in compassionate accompaniment of others. Vincentians; members, staff and volunteers, are Pentecost people filled with the Spirit of Easter and a global pandemic does not change this fact even though before then, I fear, there will be many Gethsemane prayer moments, many Good Friday grieving moments and many Holy Saturday waiting in the darkness moments, ahead of us.

In these uncertain times of the coronavirus and in the commissioning of Pentecost of good works, there is much to do. Central to the good works of the Society are relationships. Our work is building relationships with vulnerable people, whose trust and hopes have often been turned to ash throughout their lives. Faithful relationships assist wounded people to grow in confidence, find new hopes and recognise self-respect and can make connections with society. In this Spirit, we work to transform lives. In this time more than ever, we are forced to be creative, open eyes to new ways and new hopes. Social distancing is crucial but social separation is spiritually debilitating. We cannot be complacent in our relationships at this time.

Eternal and loving God,

May we in Vincentian spirit live in empathy, with strength of faith, certainty of hope and the gift of compassion to all. Through Christ our Lord Amen.

Committed to Vinnies throughout life and beyond

With a name suitably matching our own, Vincent Michael Ryan had a long and selfless commitment to the St Vincent de Paul Society, and his legacy is lasting well beyond his lifetime.

Born in the southern Sydney suburb of Hurstville on the first day of Spring in 1938, Vincent Ryan was schooled locally at St Mary Star of the Sea Primary, and then Marist Brothers in Kogarah, showing an aptitude for figures that would lead him into a career in the banking industry. It would also equip him to provide financial counselling to many hundreds of people who would come to the Society at times of need seeking assistance with their personal and household budgets.

In his late-20s Vincent began what would be a 50-year-long volunteering relationship with the Society, culminating with a late-life period as Treasurer and then President of the Bulli Conference, which received an Apostolic (or Papal) Blessing, 1963-2013.

Vincent fathered three children, Maria, Paul and Karen, and would be blessed with five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

His service for the Society was tireless and included volunteering at the Matthew Talbot Hostel, visiting inmates at Long Bay Gaol, hospital and home visits to the sick and needy, organising and distributing Christmas hampers for low income families and pensioners, and extensive financial counselling and assistance.

True to the Marist educational credo of "Deeds not Words", Vincent was a ball of energy throughout his life, unfailingly generous and exceptionally devout: "Dad was always involved in Parish life, whichever Parish he was residing in," recalled his daughter Karen.

"I remember going on road trips with him and if we were staying somewhere on a Saturday overnight, the first thing we went looking for in each town was the Catholic Church so we could attend Mass on the Sunday morning before hitting the road again."

Karen added that after her Dad died, the family wondered what they should have engraved on his plaque: "My brother Paul suggested a quote from St Vincent de Paul, given that Dad had devoted so much of his life to Vinnies and carried out so many good works under the Vinnies banner."



The inscription read, "I can do all things in Him who sustains and comforts me".

More than 200 people attended Vincent Ryan's funeral in Wollongong in September 2016. He was 78, and all agreed that his was a commendable life.

Vincent's memory lives on in spirit and in practice, as he left a generous bequest to the Society in his Will. In December 2019 at the Annual Mass at St Patricks his brother John Ryan carried the Book of Gratitude in his memory. The Book records the names of the many kind benefactors who have left a bequest to the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Vincent's commitment clearly runs in the family: "My voluntary work is mainly with Vinnies and St Therese Church at Padstow," John said.

"I'm Vice President and Treasurer for our Conference, which includes visiting the needy and those requiring assistance. I also carry out pastoral care at a local nursing home, which unfortunately has been temporarily curtailed due to COVID-19. I am also an acolyte and assist the Parish Priest with banking, counting, rostering and any other odd jobs, while my daughter Denise is a teacher and assists with the Mini Vinnies at her school."

To discuss leaving a gift to the Society in your Will please contact Cherie McKenna, Gifts in Wills & Estates Manager on (02) 8622 0387 or email: cherie.mckenna@vinnies.org.au

Help us keep Aussies hit hardest by the pandemic safe, fed & supported.



Donate to the Vinnies COVID-19

Winter Appeal today at

vinnies.org.au/donate

or call 13 18 12

 **Vinnies**
good works