

# Vinnies News

## Demand for Vinnies support surges

### **Vinnies WA has recorded a significant increase in the number of families seeking help.**

Recent data shows that while Vinnies supported 1,458 families through its Emergency Assistance and Support program in the month of January, that number rose to 2,363 in October.

The new figures, collated by Vinnies on the eve of Anti-Poverty Week in October, suggest that the winding back of Federal and State Government support measures are having a significant impact on families trying to stay afloat.

While factors such as tax refunds can cause the numbers of families seeking help to drop at various points throughout the year, the new data suggests more and more people are reaching out for assistance, with the number of calls to Vinnies also on the rise.

Federal Government support payments JobKeeper and the JobSeeker COVID-19 supplement ended in late March, the same time that the State Government's moratorium on rental evictions ended. The State Government's freeze on household fees and charges and the moratorium on electricity disconnections ended in late June.

According to Vinnies' data, the most impacted areas in Perth were Armadale, Midland, Joondalup and Rockingham, while in the regions, Mandurah and Geraldton were particularly affected.

Families struggled to pay their water and power bills as well as increases in rent of up to \$100 per week. With little money left for other expenses, Vinnies helps families with food, utilities, accommodation support and vehicle costs.

According to the WA Council of Social Services, there are over 17,300 WA households – around 39,000 people – on the social housing waiting list and 50 per cent of low-income households in Western Australia are experiencing rental stress.

Andrew York, Executive Manager of Community Engagement Services at Vinnies WA, said the situation was concerning.

"We expected that the numbers of people seeking emergency assistance and support would go up with the end of the rental moratorium and end of the freeze on household fees and charges, and now we're seeing it play out," he said.

"The figures lay bare the fact that we've still got a long way to go in dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Federal Government payments and the State Government moratoriums on rental evictions and the freeze on household fees and charges were welcome measures to help people, but once those supports ended, it became clear that many families were living pay cheque to pay cheque and just couldn't absorb the increasing costs of living, particularly the housing costs.

"Vinnies provides emergency assistance to help people escape poverty, but we know that for every family we help, there are others that aren't reaching out for support in time," Mr York said.

Mr York added that Vinnies' volunteer emergency assistance and support teams across the State, known as Conferences, have requested increases to their budgets to meet the rising demand.



# Annual Review captures hard work

Dozens of Vincentians attended the Annual General Meeting in late October to hear State President Gladys Demissie talk about the incredible year Vinnies has had in supporting the WA community.

Ms Demissie also officially launched the 2021 Vinnies Annual Review, which provides an overview of the Vinnies work and services over the past financial year.

The results speak for themselves.

Thanks to our incredibly dedicated and talented members, volunteers and staff, this year we made a very real difference to the lives of over 55,000 Western Australians.

In the past financial year, almost 4,000 Vinnies volunteers and members:

- Received **31,316** calls for emergency assistance and support
- Provided **\$5.12 million** in financial assistance and practical support
- Delivered **19,281** Emergency Assistance items
- Distributed **\$1.12 million** worth of donated food.



Dozens of Members attended this year's AGM.

The Annual Review is available to download at [www.vinnieswa.org.au/about-vinnies-wa/publications/vinnies-publications/](http://www.vinnieswa.org.au/about-vinnies-wa/publications/vinnies-publications/)



## Vinnies Christmas Appeal 2021

While many Western Australians will celebrate the festive season with family and friends, there are countless families facing the prospect of a bleak Christmas as they struggle to pay their bills, provide food and gifts for their children, or worse, find somewhere safe to call home.

That's why every year, Vinnies WA asks the community for support with its annual Christmas Appeal.

Only with the support of the WA community can Vinnies ensure many families across Western Australia will wake on Christmas morning with the renewed sense of hope and dignity that everyone deserves.

To donate and help make a positive difference in these people's lives, visit [www.vinnieswa.org.au](http://www.vinnieswa.org.au) or call **13 18 12**.



Vinnies Members are stepping up their fundraising efforts.



# New scheme brings fine volunteers to Vinnies

**A State Government program keeping aimed at keeping people who can't pay their fines out of jail is paying dividends for participants, and for Vinnies.**

Did you know that Vinnies is part of a program that allows people experiencing financial hardship to volunteer in lieu of paying court fines?

The Work and Development Permit Scheme began operating just over a year ago and dozens of sponsors – including Vinnies – have come on board since then.

The scheme is a partnership between the Department of Justice, Legal Aid WA and the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, and is part of a suite of law reforms passed by the State Government to overhaul the fines enforcement regime. The aim is simple – people shouldn't go to jail for being unable to pay their fines.

One participant who worked at a Vinnies store as part of the scheme says he'll continue to volunteer, even though he's completed his required hours. "It's a way of giving back and increasing social interaction," he says.

## Meet Jenny

**Jenny is no stranger to life's many challenges, but in the past few years, she has dealt with more than many people could imagine.**

She always knew that Vinnies was there when she needed help, supporting her with food, furniture, and clothing, and advocating with other agencies and government services.

With her health deteriorating, Jenny started spending more time in hospital. Vinnies helped her partner Mike look after her two children, one of whom has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

The family was forced to move after a series of break-ins at their home, which included one where Mike was the victim of a violent assault in front of the children.

Their daughter has since suffered from serious mental health issues, which have resulted in her struggling to return to school.

Vinnies advocated with the Department of Communities and the family was moved to safer accommodation.

With help from a Vinnies financial counsellor, Mike was awarded victim compensation which allowed the family to buy a reliable car.

Slowly the family emerged from crisis and the children began attending school again, but tragedy struck in March this year when Mike died suddenly at home.

Vinnies provided support to the grieving family immediately, with both Vinnies and another agency assisting with funeral costs.

Due to a COVID-19 lockdown, only Jenny and her children could attend the funeral.

Vinnies continues to support Jenny and her family.

Jenny's son is now receiving support via the NDIS for his autism spectrum disorder. Her daughter is in a special program for young girls who have dropped out of school.

With help from Vinnies, Jenny has received dental work to remove broken teeth that were causing pain.

She now receives an improved Centrelink benefit as a recent spinal injury made it challenging for her to work.

Jenny and the family have covered their bills and food costs independently for several months.

She checked in a little while ago to tell the Vinnies member who supported her that everyone was doing well.

"Life is full of the everyday ups and downs, and I am taking things day to day," she said.

"I will be forever grateful to you and all at Vinnies."



*Jenny and her children are doing well.*



# Vinnies bushfire support to continue

**Nine months after the devastating Wooroloo bushfire in the Perth Hills, Vinnies continues to help families get back on their feet.**

The Vinnies Bushfire Assistance Fund was launched in the immediate aftermath of the fire, which destroyed 86 homes and damaged a further 200.

The fund raised more than \$215,000 to provide direct support to residents, and came on top of \$1.4 million already raised during the previous Christmas and Winter Appeals.

In addition, Vinnies was grateful to receive the support of IGA, which mobilised swiftly to launch an in-store Appeal to raise funds in support of people and the local communities impacted.

To date 58 families have been given direct support and another 35 families have been provided fencing and other items to assist their recovery.

Vinnies WA Executive Manager of Community Engagement Services Andrew York expects the help to continue for a while.

“Many families are still at least one or two years away from rebuilding, so Vinnies will continue to provide services for another year,” he said.

The stories from people affected by the fires show that recovery will still take some time.

One local resident Vinnies is helping is currently living in a caravan on her property. The spot where her house once stood is contaminated with asbestos.

Another resident lost the rental property she had lived in for 15 years, the beautiful garden she had created lost to the flames.



*The Perth Hills bushfire destroyed 86 homes.*

In a cruel twist, her landlord kept her bond, because the devastated property was not returned to him in a lettable condition.

Both residents received a bush fire assistance grant as well as food hampers and ongoing Financial Counselling support.

Hills resident Tanja Allen took to Facebook to express her gratitude to Vinnies.

“It has really helped financially as well as made me feel like some people do care,” she said.

Ben Heptinstall, owner of Supa IGA Stratton, which is not far from where the bushfires raged, gifted care packs to those who were forced to evacuate.

IGA retailers across the state also rallied together to supply \$45,000 worth of IGA gift cards to the 86 families who lost their homes.

The sale of \$2 tokens in stores raised a further \$67,166, all of which was donated to the WA Vinnies Bushfire Recovery Appeal.

The generosity didn't stop there. Allied Pinnacle – a bread supplier to IGA – donated an additional \$20,000.



# WA Youth Crew Project takes off



**A new project is helping young people experiencing homelessness deal with legal issues and navigate services at the same time.**

Vinnies WA and the Street Law Centre WA Inc have received a joint Lotterywest grant worth more than \$380,000 to kickstart the Youth Crew Project.

John Carey, the WA Minister for Housing, presented the cheque to Vinnies WA CEO Susan Rooney and Ann-Margaret Walsh, the Principal Solicitor at the Street Law Centre WA Inc at Passages Perth, one of two youth engagement hubs Vinnies runs in partnership with the Rotary Club of Perth.

The Youth Crew Project will deliver increased services to street-present young people aged between 12 and 25, and assist them in addressing their socio-economic, health, housing, and legal issues.

Vinnies WA CEO Susan Rooney said the program couldn't come at a better time.

"We know young people have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many finding it incredibly difficult to navigate the various services they need to get back on their feet," she said.

"This partnership between Passages and Street Law Centre will allow young people to deal with those challenges with targeted support."

Ann-Margaret Walsh, the Principal Solicitor at the Street Law Centre WA, said holistic wrap-around services were the key to breaking the cycle of homelessness.



*Housing Minister John Carey presented the cheque to Vinnies and the Street Law Centre.*

"The Youth Crew Project funded by Lotterywest will allow both Street Law and Passages to work with young people by assisting them to resolve their legal and non-legal issues and thereby provide them with pathways to exit homelessness," she said.

Rachel (not her real name), a young person who left her family home and has experienced significant mental health issues, has already benefited from the Youth Crew Project.

After lending her car to someone, Rachel received multiple speeding infringements and lost demerit points, resulting in her licence being suspended.

Not being able to get around, Rachel suddenly found herself far from her dream of studying to become a teacher. That's when the Youth Crew team got to work.

While Passages assisted Rachel by helping her secure transitional accommodation, the Street Law team helped her with her legal issues by providing legal advice and court representation.

Rachel's matter was successfully resolved, and with the infringements against her withdrawn, her licence suspension was lifted and a spent conviction issued for her court matters.

Rachel said it would have been impossible for her to navigate her charges without the support of Street Law and Passages, who treated her with respect and without judgement.

"I can't say how much I appreciate you guys and how much you did for me," she said.

# Vinnies pays tribute to long-time Passages Chair

## Vinnies WA has honoured the long-time Chair of the Passages Youth Engagement Hubs Committee, David Reed.

At a ceremony at Passages Perth, Vinnies WA CEO Susan Rooney presented David with a plaque in recognition of his service.

Passages Youth Engagement Hubs are located in Perth and Mandurah, and are delivered as a joint venture between Vinnies WA and the Rotary Club of Perth.

David led the committee for 22 years, but decided to step down earlier this year. His passion for Passages won't end there – he'll be staying on as an ordinary committee member.

"It's been a great honour to serve as Chair of the Passages Committee and make a contribution to this incredible service," David said.

"I'm so proud that the Passages Youth Engagement Hubs in Perth and

Mandurah are making a difference to young people experiencing homelessness every day.

"There's always more work to be done, but I know that with Ashley Ladner as Chair, the committee will be in good hands."

CEO Susan Rooney paid tribute to David and thanked him for his extraordinary contribution.

"Vinnies WA is incredibly grateful to have had someone of David Reed's calibre as Chair of the Passages Committee," she said.

"Passages Youth Engagement Hubs exist because of David. It was his drive and vision that first brought the idea to fruition - the success of Passages Youth Engagement Hubs, and the difference they have made to the lives of so many vulnerable young people, is in large part due to David's remarkable commitment and leadership."

In the 2020-21 financial year, Vinnies WA recorded 1,477 new

and existing clients at the Hubs, with 5,477 total visits by clients to the two facilities. Over 700 referrals were provided for additional support services, which clients accessed at Passages on more than 33,000 occasions. These services included legal, medical, alcohol and drug support, Centrelink and financial support.

David was born and raised in Kalgoorlie and over 40 years he built a successful career that took him from stockbroking to prospecting and mining.

He is currently the Non-Executive Director for Perth-based minerals and advanced materials company Neometals.

David's other passion is giving back to his community, having served as President of the Rotary Club both in Kalgoorlie and in Perth.

It was in that role that David saw the growing rate of youth homelessness in Perth needed a specialised service to engage young people.

This led to the founding of Passages Youth Engagement Hubs, first in Perth and then in Mandurah.

Away from the corporate world and from his community work, David has a keen interest in horses and enjoys travelling and playing golf. We're hoping that now he might find a bit of extra time out on the green.



David Reed is stepping down as Passages Chair after 22 years.

## Voices of Vinnies

Chances are that if you're reading this, you don't need much convincing that Vinnies makes a difference to the lives of everyday Western Australians. But the magnitude of what Vinnies members and volunteers do, is still often best expressed by those who have received help.

Here's some of what they had to say.

"I appreciate it hugely for myself and my two girls. And I think it's fantastic and so helpful when I do receive the food help. Thank you hugely all of you."

**Greta, Innaloo**

"I would say that volunteers from Vinnies are beyond exceptional. They respect me as a human being and willing to help me during my difficult situation. Even, they try to reach us to provide extra support with companionship. Thank you so much Vinnies, I will remember this during my whole life, and in the future, I will remember to pass the kindness that you all gave to me and my family during our hard time forward to someone who need it like we do now. Once again, thank you so much, Vinnies. You are the real heroes."

**Esther, Crawley**



# Reconciliation Action Plan

**Vinnies WA has joined more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations in making a formal commitment to reconciliation.**

Vinnies WA has formally recognised its commitment to walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by launching its Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

Vinnies WA has a long history of working with First Nations communities across Western Australia.

“The Reconciliation Action Plan is a commitment by all our staff, members and volunteer people, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to extend and deepen our relationship, and to the broader community,” Vinnies WA State President Gladys Demissie said.

CEO Susan Rooney added that by adopting the plan, Vinnies WA was committed to regularly measuring and reporting on its progress.

“The Reconciliation Action Plan sets out a clear set of tasks that reflect our commitment to reconciliation and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,” she said.

The Reconciliation Action Plan consists of 13 actions covering four priority areas and dealing with Relationships, Respect, Opportunities, and Tracking, Progress and Reporting.

The artwork for Vinnies WA Reconciliation Action Plan was created by Yilka artist Rosie Paine, a Noongar/Yamatji/Wongutha woman.

The artwork features three circles that are connected by blue lines, which at its centre, represents Lake Joondalup in the northern suburbs of Perth, which is an important area to Noongar people.

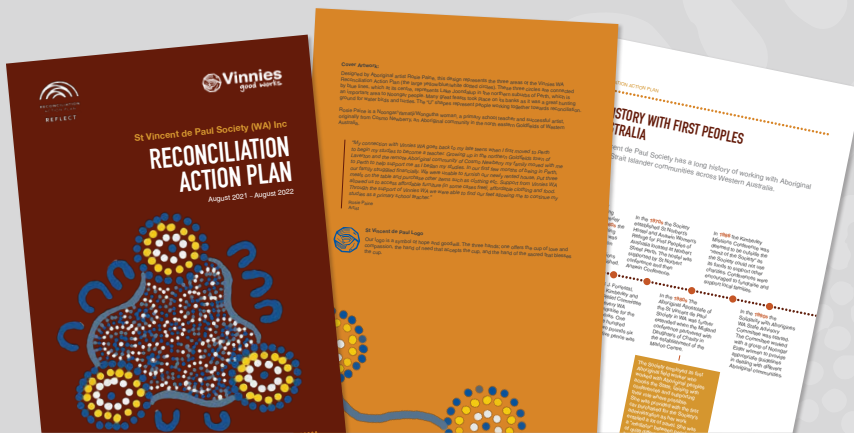
Many great feasts took place on its banks as it was a great hunting ground for water birds and turtles. The “U” shapes represent people working together towards reconciliation.

Rosie reflected on her own connection to Vinnies, who supported her when she moved from the Goldfields to Perth in her late teens for her studies.

“Through the support of Vinnies WA we were able to find our feet allowing me to continue my studies as a primary school teacher,” she said.



Rosie Paine created the artwork for Vinnies Reconciliation Action Plan.



“They are great people, so friendly and polite and will always try and help you any way they can.”

**Robyn, Armadale**

“Great staff and volunteers, what an amazing experience to know that people still cared about me.”

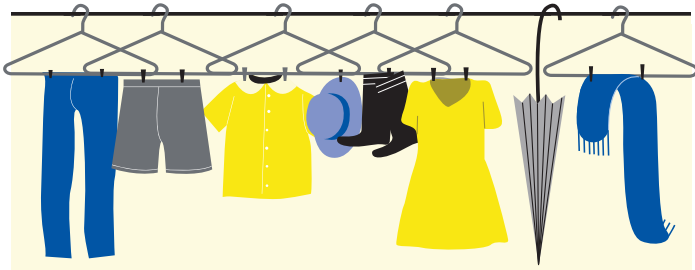
**Chris, Alexander Heights**

“Welcoming and non-judgmental volunteers, made you feel like a person not a number.”

**Christina, Innaloo**

“Once a volunteer called to arrange a time to come over. I was depressed and started chatting and ended up talking to the volunteer for over an hour. She was wonderful and easy to talk to, so much so, I felt comfortable telling her I had been suicidal but we also talked about other things like world events. I get lonely and it was nice to talk to someone about stuff like that. She only called to arrange a meeting time, so it was spontaneous and even though I didn't know her I felt comfortable with her. I felt better after that call. Like I said we talked about anything and everything it just flowed naturally. I don't know if I have explained it properly but I am grateful she took the time with me just to talk. Thank you.”

**Jess, Ocean Reef**



## Vinnies stall all the rage at school fete

**Vinnies pop-up shop at Chisholm College drew a crowd during their recent fete day.**

As part of "Chisholm Day", students and staff went wild at the stall, with clothes just flying off the three racks Vinnies had brought along.

All up, school staff and students spent big, with almost \$350 going back to the till at the Canning Vale shop after the event.

The Vinnies stall created such a buzz, that Chisholm College has already reserved a spot for next year.

We may need to bring a few extra racks of clothes.



## Self-care the focus at Passages for Mental Health Week

**Mental Health Week is an important time at our Passages Youth Engagement Hubs in Perth and Mandurah, which are delivered as a joint venture between Vinnies WA and Perth Rotary – Western Australia.**

We know the young people who access those services will often also be dealing with mental health challenges, so it's important to let them know that it's okay to reach out for help.

The Perth team kicked it off in style when they welcomed 'The Selfless Servers' to the hub. They're a team of volunteers that use practices to promote the importance of self-care to the vulnerable and at-risk young people. Young people engaged in sound healing and massage sessions, which they enjoyed.

Down in Mandurah, the team hosted a sound healing workshop and a drumming circle for six young people, which was provided by the team from Safe Women Safe Families WA.

**Vinnies**  
good works

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