

You are **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

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

SPRING 2021

*Thank you for your
kindness and compassion*

Marion's legacy of kindness

Providing a place to call home for Jade and her children

Tackling the housing crisis

Delivering emergency relief

Breaking down barriers to education





A new beginning

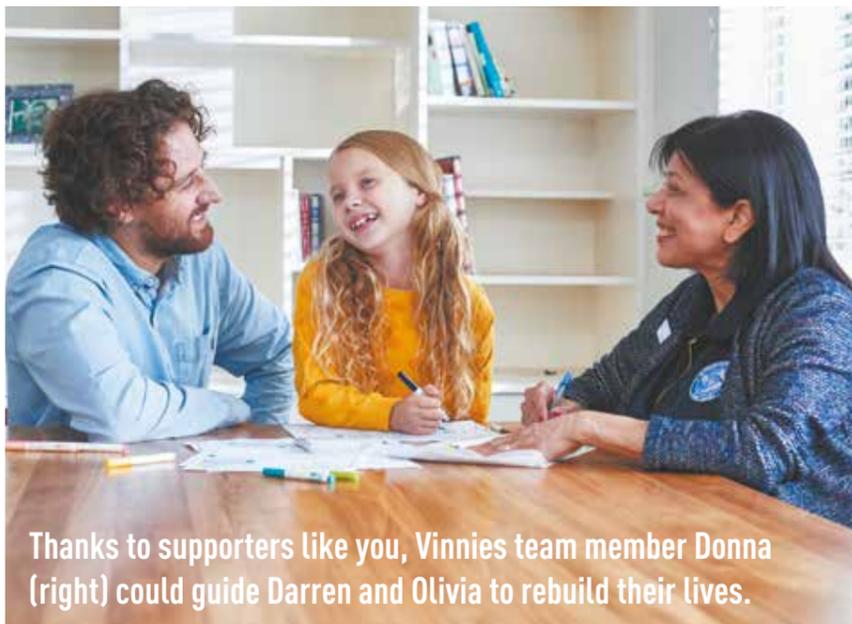
You are providing vulnerable families with a sense of safety and a chance at a better future.

You might remember reading Darren and Olivia's story in last year's Winter Appeal. The loving single father and daughter spent months couch surfing after fleeing an unsafe and abusive domestic environment. Darren was heartbroken when Olivia was taken away because he couldn't provide a stable home.

I'm delighted to tell you that, thanks to your compassionate

support, things are looking up for Darren and Olivia. They are now living in safe, permanent accommodation in regional Queensland, where Darren has found work on a farm. Olivia is also thriving at school now she feels settled.

Thank you for being someone that families like Darren and Olivia's can depend on.



Thanks to supporters like you, Vinnies team member Donna (right) could guide Darren and Olivia to rebuild their lives.

A powerful plan to tackle homelessness

You are providing long-term housing solutions for Queenslanders experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Queensland is in the grips of a housing crisis. An influx of people migrating to our state means low-income families are being forced out of their accommodation by sky-rocketing rents. The waitlist for public housing currently stands at 47,000, and 21,000 Queenslanders – including children – are experiencing homelessness each night¹.

The obvious longer-term solution to the housing and affordability problem is to build more appropriate and affordable housing. That's exactly what you are helping to do through your generous donations to Vinnies. With your support, Vinnies is committed to delivering 500 additional homes for vulnerable Queenslanders over the next five years.



21,000
Queenslanders
are experiencing
homelessness each night¹

¹ <https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/about/homelessness-statistics>



Helping find the way back home

You are breaking the cycle of homelessness for families like Jade's.



Jade, here with one of her five children, is grateful to supporters like you who helped her find a home.

Jade* couldn't hold back the tears of joy when she opened the front door to her new home for the first time. The single mum from Southport had spent nearly nine months living in her car with her five children as she recovered from struggles with domestic violence and addiction.

"It all got too much for me – my son was sick, there were five of us living in a car."

Thanks to the generosity of our many supporters, Vinnies was able to support Jade into housing through our Families Back on Track program.

"The Vinnies team listened to my story and helped me put together an application for social housing," she explains.

Jade can still clearly remember the phone call that turned her journey from one of desperation to hope.

"I remember the exact words – 'How does a 3-bedroom house in Southport sound? Go for a drive, have a look – it's all yours,'" she says. "That was nearly five years ago - so much has happened in that time but the Families Back on Track team have stood by me the entire time."

Thank you for being there for vulnerable Queensland families like Jade's.

**Name changed to protect privacy.*

A safe place to call home

You're helping to keep vulnerable Queenslanders like Sam and her children in housing.



Sam Sutton had no choice but to flee her home. The 22-year-old from Townsville was trapped in a violent and abusive relationship and feared for the safety of her two daughters, aged just one and three at the time.

"We needed to leave, but we had nowhere to go"

Thanks to the kind donations of wonderful people like you, Sam was able to turn to Emma Cox from our Youth Homelessness Support Program for help when she needed it most. Emma drove Sam to meetings, organised appointments and helped her navigate the complicated process of applying for community housing. She also provided Sam with the emotional support she needed to overcome the challenges she faced.

"She helped me build my self-confidence and understand that the abuse I was receiving wasn't my fault – that my daughters and I deserved better," Sam says.

With domestic and family violence rates continuing to rise throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, you are providing a vital lifeline to Queensland's most vulnerable women and children at this difficult time.

Thanks to the kindness of people like you, Sam and her daughters could find a refuge from violence.

CEO Sleepout goes state-wide

Senior leaders from across Queensland roll out their sleeping bags for homelessness fundraiser.

The 2021 CEO Sleepout was another great success, raising over \$1.8 million to support emergency housing solutions for people in need. For the first time ever, the physical event in Brisbane was broadcast as a live stream, allowing participants in regional Queensland to get involved from their backyards, couches and cars, while Gold Coast participants braved the cold from CBUS stadium.

The Brisbane event was held at the recently decommissioned South Brisbane Men's Hostel on Peel Street. It gave participants the opportunity to tour the facility and see first-hand what life can be like for someone experiencing homelessness. Talking to support workers gave the CEOs a better understanding of the complex factors that contribute to homelessness and the challenges people face to break the cycle and rebuild their lives. It also demonstrated the life-changing assistance Vinnies provides to Companions.

A special mention goes to first time CEO Sleepout participant, Omnific Concepts founder Melissa Alsemgeest, who smashed her fundraising target, raising an



Like you, Melissa is a dedicated Vinnies supporter and committed to ensuring vulnerable people have somewhere to call home.

impressive \$6000 at this year's sleepout.

The hairdressing entrepreneur says she was inspired to get involved in this year's event because she has witnessed her own family experience homelessness. Growing up, Melissa saw her mother and two sisters spend many years on the street as they sadly got trapped in a cycle of addiction, poor mental health and domestic violence.

Melissa says, "resilience, a hairdressing apprenticeship that gave her focus, and a long-term loving partnership that has spanned 28 years," helped her turn things

around and rebuild her life.

Well done Melissa for your commitment to helping the homeless – and for being such an inspiration.

Funds raised through this year's sleepout will support Vinnie's state wide homelessness services and help vulnerable families keep a roof over their heads during times of crisis.

To find out more about how your support for Vinnies is helping those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, please visit vinnies.org.au

Compassion *and* support *in a crisis*

You've helped keep vulnerable Queenslanders safe and warm during the winter months.

For nearly ten years, St Vincent de Paul's Spring Hill Support Centre has been providing a helping hand to people experiencing homelessness, poverty and family trauma. As Vincentian (volunteer member) Trish McMahon explains, the need grows dramatically in the winter.

"We're talking an additional 500 people coming to us looking for help with food and accommodation."

Rising rents over recent months have seen an even greater number of requests for help as families struggle to find affordable, appropriate accommodation in the cold months.

Thanks to the generosity of kind-hearted supporters like you, Trish and her fellow Vincentians have been able to provide food and other essentials to those who desperately need them this winter. You helped raise \$800,000, which is keeping vulnerable Queenslanders safe, fed and warm during this difficult time of the year.



Thanks to you, Trish, Dan and Clayton were able to stock the pantry at our Spring Hill centre and help vulnerable Queenslanders in need.

"Those donations mean we'll be able to keep our food pantries stacked for those in need as well as support the distribution of warm blankets, bedding and clothes for those doing it tough during winter," Trish explains.

Thank you for providing shelter from the cold for those who need it.

"Every winter, our support centre sees a spike in requests for help."

Without your generous gifts, our Vincentians (volunteer members) Trish and Pat would not be able to put food on the table for thousands in need.



A prayer for sustenance

Please will you pray for our volunteers and members who carry out our good works?

Lord, thank you that you allow us to reach out and support those in need through our assistance, services and efforts to be a voice for the voiceless.

Our care for vulnerable people is founded on love and respect for the inherent dignity of every human being.

Sustain us and all those who work to rescue and rebuild lives impacted by trauma, violence, and who live in despair.

Fill us with the hope of your new creation in times to come.

Amen

A hand up in education and employment

You are helping disadvantaged Toowoomba residents break down barriers to study and work.

Launched as a pilot initiative in 2019, and partly funded by generous donations from Vinnies supporters like you, the Toowoomba Scholarship Program has already helped dozens of residents in the region to get back on their feet. Successful applicants receive \$1500 to put towards fees and expenses associated with their studies. They also get access to support from community mentors.

Scholarship recipient Catherine had to overcome a number of challenges to achieve her dream of retraining as a nurse. As well as coping with mental health issues and the responsibility of being a carer for her husband and child

with additional needs, Catherine suddenly lost her mother. She says the scholarship and the connection she formed with her mentor gave her the strength and support she needed to complete her studies.

“It helped guide me not just with my studies. It also offered moral support and guidance. I’d like to thank Vinnies for all the support they have given me.”

“With the support of this program, there are no limitations to what you can hope to achieve.”

Thank you for sharing the gifts of education and opportunity.



With your support, regional students like Catherine, are able to turn their life around.

How your support has empowered people like Catherine to study and gain employment?



Made university education accessible to disadvantaged Australians through our Clemente Program inspiring 70% of students to remain in higher education.



Distributed \$440,800 to disadvantaged families through our Children’s Education Fund program, to ensure their children had access to ongoing education.



Assisted 82% of participants of our program - Skilling Queenslanders for Work, to be workplace ready with a recognised vocational qualification.



Enabled a 50% success rate for participants in our Community Voices program and Skilling Queenslanders for Work program to find a job.

Celebrating two decades of compassion

You are helping volunteers like Jennifer give back to their communities.

Congratulations go to Vinnies volunteer Jennifer Barry, who was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the 2021 Queen’s Birthday Honours List for more than twenty years of service to the Gladstone community.

The 76-year-old dedicates time each week to sorting donations at the Vinnies’ Gladstone shop, reading to kids at her local Catholic School and organising food hampers for people in need. She attributes growing up in the small mining town of Baralba with teaching her the value of looking after each other.

“I’ve learnt it doesn’t take a lot to put a smile on people’s faces. If we look after our communities, it makes for a healthier community.”

Jennifer says the award came as an unexpected surprise. “I feel very lucky to receive that kind of recognition. It’s never felt like a chore at all. After volunteering for so long, I honestly couldn’t imagine life without it.

Thank you for giving volunteers like Jennifer the opportunity to give back to their communities.



If you’d like to learn more about volunteering for Vinnies Queensland in your community, visit qld.vinnies.org.au/volunteerqld or email volunteering@svdpqld.org.au

Thank You

FROM OUR STATE PRESIDENT

These last few months have been an extremely challenging time for Queensland's most vulnerable people. As the cold winter months set in, our state was in the grips of the most severe housing affordability crisis in its history.



Record numbers of families were left struggling to find a safe, warm and secure place to call home. That struggle continues.

That is why your compassionate support for Vinnies has never been more important. Thank you for being someone your fellow Queenslanders can depend on in their hour of greatest need.

I hope you've enjoyed reading this Spring edition of *You Are Making a Difference*. The inspiring stories show how you are providing much needed hope and a hand up during these difficult days.

I personally was moved by the brave single parents, Sam, Jade and Darren who, through your compassion, have been able to give their children a safe, warm place to call home - and a better future..

My fellow volunteers and Vincentians like Jennifer (page 9) are providing emergency relief on the frontlines of the housing and homelessness crisis. And there's also Marion, an inspirational 80-year-old powerlifter and former nun who has made an extraordinary contribution to helping those experiencing poverty and homelessness.

I hope you have felt proud reading about all the wonderful things you are helping to make possible. None of the good works Vinnies does in our community would be possible without your kindness and generosity.

With my deepest thanks,



Dennis Innes, State President
St Vincent de Paul Society QLD

If someone you know needs crisis assistance, please call us on 1800 846 643.

A legacy of kindness



We are so grateful to our long-time supporters like Marion, whose generous gift will change the lives of those in need for years to come.

Marion wants her compassion for people in need to live on.

After serving in Victoria, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, Marion left the Order at 36. She went on to marry and start a successful book-keeping business. She also discovered a passion for powerlifting and is still competing and winning medals at 80-years-of-age.

Marion is a long time Vinnies supporter who donates generously and regularly to help those in need. She says that compassion and commitment were formed in childhood. "When I was growing up, it was the post-war years. A lot of people were struggling to put food on the table."

Marion wanted to continue helping those less fortunate when she was gone, which is why she chose to leave a gift in her Will to the St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland. As she explains, "I want to keep supporting those who are homeless. I often go to bed and think about the people who don't have a warm bed."

We thank Marion for her extraordinary compassion and generosity.

If you would like to find out more about leaving a gift to St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland in your Will, please contact us at: qld.donations@svdpqld.org.au

"It's the wonderful dedication of Vinnies volunteers that makes me want to help."

