

SPRING 2022

VINNIES

celebrating the
spirit of giving

MOMENTS

Feature

WHEN DID A
SIMPLE MEAL
BECOME A
LUXURY?

Inside:

THANK YOU
FOR PUTTING
DIGNITY BACK
ON THE MENU

STORIES OF HOW YOUR
SUPPORT IMPACTS LIVES



St Vincent de Paul Society
VICTORIA
good works

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

“Fresh produce costs are soaring”, “Cost of living spike sees surge for food relief in regional Victoria”. With headlines such as these, we are constantly being reminded that in Victoria food insecurity is a real issue for many.

I have noticed a rise in my weekly grocery-shopping bill, but one thing I have not had to deal with is skipping meals just so I can pay my utility bills.

But Gerry*, who you can read about in this issue of Vinnies Moments, has to do this just to survive. Gerry worked as a furniture removalist before going on a disability pension due to illness about 10 years ago. Gerry had always managed on the little support he had and had always paid his bills and kept a roof over his head.

Then after falling ill to another health condition which doubled his monthly pharmacy bill, Gerry found himself staring at a bowl of cereal or two-minute noodles for dinner. As you can imagine, Gerry got sick of cereal and noodles pretty quickly. Then he simply got sicker.

In the end, as he told one of our volunteers, it just became easier to skip meals.

It saddens me that Gerry is one of the growing number of Victorians currently experiencing a food crisis. Over the past few months, our Welfare Assistance Call Centre volunteers say that food requests have gone up by 15-25%. In June alone, 3,098 requests for food – the highest number since the pandemic.

No-one should go hungry in Victoria and I am proud to say that our wonderful volunteers agree with me wholeheartedly. They see more and more individuals like Gerry, and families, having to make the tough choices between buying fresh fruit and vegetables, or putting fuel in the tank, buying medicines or meeting the rent.

We are incredibly grateful for the support and goodwill of the community that enables Vinnies to continue to stock cupboards with staples and fill fridges with fresh healthy food for people like Gerry.

As Gerry told us recently:

“Honestly, Vinnies saved my life.”

Thank you for standing side-by-side with people like Gerry.
Thank you for believing in us.

Take care,



Julia Cabbage

Group Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria



If you would like to contribute to Vinnies Victoria and support people struggling to afford food, [donate online now](#)



**Name and image have been changed to protect the person's identity.*

SNAPSHOT OF OUR FOOD IMPACT

91% OF CALLS ASKING FOR FOOD



91% of people calling our welfare line are asking for food. In June alone, we had 3,098 requests for food – the highest monthly number since the pandemic.

600,000 SOUP VAN MEALS

Last year (FY 2021-22), our Soup Vans served 600,000 meals to hungry Victorians.



Demand doubled during the pandemic and is still rising.

39% INCREASE IN DEMAND AT BERWICK SOUP VAN

For the first time we are seeing a significant increase in demand at our



suburban services, with the Berwick run seeing a 39% rise on last year. The Berwick Soup Van team says that there has been an increase in the number of families needing assistance.

400,000 MEALS AT INNER CITY SOUP VAN

Our Inner City Soup Van continues to be our largest, serving more than 400,000 meals last year.



12 TONNE OF FOOD EACH WEEK

Soup Vans distribute around 12 tonne of food each week. Half of that is fruit and vegetables.



Soup Vans are seeing new groups of people coming to the service, such as families and more elderly and young people.





VICTORIANS ARE GOING HUNGRY

The price of fresh food and groceries has gone up a lot due to food scarcity. The pandemic, the war in Ukraine and floods in Australia have all contributed. Global food security is an issue for everyone.

At Vinnies, we know that the rising cost of living is having a big impact on people on low incomes. People you may know are going hungry.

People are skipping meals to pay their rent. Parents and carers skip meals so their children or people in their care can eat. People even skip meals so they can feed their pets.

Dietician at Co-health Community Health Centre (CHC) in Fitzroy, Katrina Doljanin says:

"I have worked with a lot of people in food insecurity over 20 years, but there has been an increase recently. And people who already were experiencing it are having a harder time."

Co-health CHC refers people to Vinnies' Soup Vans and other services.

"When you are not able to eat meals from across the five food groups, you can develop deficiencies. Skipping meals leads to low mood and things like 'brain fog'. People also develop anxiety when they don't know where their next meal is coming from," she says.

DONATE TO VINNIES SPRING APPEAL



When Gerry* says 'I'm so grateful to Vinnies', he means he's so grateful to our supporters. We couldn't help all the people we do without our generous donors. Our Soup Vans are on the road every night of the year, rain, hail, shine – or pandemic. And our volunteers are providing food and friendship for people across Victoria every day.

Your donation can help a family put food on the table tonight.

*Name and image have been changed to protect the person's identity.

WHAT IS VINNIES' SOLUTION TO FOOD INSECURITY?

Vinnies is unique because we offer professional services along with help from volunteers. Programs include:

SOUP VANS

Our volunteer 'Vannies' deliver meals, hampers, rough sleeper packs and friendship for people experiencing poverty and homelessness around Victoria.



CONFERENCES

Our local groups (called 'conferences') are active throughout Victoria. These volunteers provide people with basics and vouchers for food including fresh vegetables, fruit and meat.



NO INTEREST LOANS SCHEME (NILS)

People on low incomes can access no-interest credit to pay for household goods, freeing up other income for groceries.



VINCENTCARE VICTORIA



Ozanam House, run by our housing specialists VincentCare, provides thousands of free meals and a barista coffee service for people experiencing hardship and homelessness through the O Café.

We believe no one should go hungry. Our Soup Vans are focused on increasing access to nutritional food and our meals provide a range of healthy options from the five food groups.

Read the story on p4-5 about Gerry* who had to ask for food for the first time in his life last year. We have seen a big rise in first-time callers to our phonenumber, up 145% in recent years.



“VINNIES IS A GODSEND”

The price of groceries has shot up in the last year due to floods and the war in Ukraine, but what happens when there is no room in your budget to budge?

The answer is you go without. Some of us can cut back on luxuries, but for people with no spare money, food becomes the luxury. Vinnies volunteers see more and more people in food crisis across Victoria and 91% of callers to our welfare phone line ask for groceries.

Before Gerry* called Vinnies for help, he wasn't just skipping one meal a day.

“Vinnies saved my life, because I was going hungry,” says Gerry.

“I had a box of cereal in the cupboard, a few packets of noodles and milk and bread. I was struggling so bad. There were days when I didn't eat breakfast or lunch, it was shocking. Then for dinner, I had a packet of noodles, bowl of cereal or toast.”

Gerry says he was living like that for four months because he didn't want to ask for help.

“That diet made me feel rotten, always tired and sick – and sluggish from all the carbs. It was not good,” says Gerry.

Gerry, 51, had been a furniture removalist, but went on a disability pension after developing a serious chronic condition 10 years ago. Then in 2020, he was also diagnosed with a rare and painful disease, which affects only one in 1 million people. He spent four months in hospital and couldn't walk for three months. While he had always managed on his disability pension before, the second condition doubled his pharmacy bill to \$80 a month.



“It was hard, really hard. There were times when I thought, ‘Should I just give up?’”

At the same time, there was a death in Gerry’s family and he helped pay the funeral costs, which he is still paying off. He could not make ends meet then, and finally called Vinnies in late 2021 after seeing a TV advert.

“I felt very, very happy after Vinnies first visited, but also uncomfortable because I had never asked for help before.”

Gerry is now provided with a food hamper every fortnight. It’s delivered by a local Vinnies volunteer who collects the food from the Inner City Soup Van hub. It contains staples such as milk, bread, tinned tuna and fruit, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables.

The volunteers also add meat, eggs and other protein that they buy at the market, adding more nutritional value. Gerry receives monthly supermarket vouchers, so he has the dignity of choosing extra needed supplies himself too. The hampers and vouchers are Gerry’s main source of food.

“The help from Vinnies has made a big difference because there are a lot of things in the hamper. At times there’s even a couple of chocolate bars or a packet of biscuits – treats! It makes you feel normal again having a biscuit with your coffee.

“I like to cook. I make spaghetti bolognese with the hampers or a tuna and veggie bake that lasts a few days, or I freeze the left-overs,” says Gerry.

He noticed a big difference in his health after receiving the hampers.

“I am much more energetic now. I’m eating three meals a day and going for walks daily too. I feel good and gained a bit of weight.”

Gerry lives in a flat in inner Melbourne paying more than two-thirds of his pension in rent. Vinnies has also helped with an electricity bill and the hampers are even more welcome during the current cost of living crisis.

“Everything is too expensive. It’s gone out of this world, it’s ridiculous. Half a kilo of mince is \$8 or \$9. And steak. Oh God, I haven’t had a steak in (he laughs) a long, long while.”

Gerry enjoys the visits from Vinnies. “I have good chats with the volunteer. He always asks how I’m doing. He’s a lovely man. He’s my saviour! It pulls on my heartstrings to know he actually cares.

“I’m so grateful, Vinnies is a godsend.”



If you would like to support people experiencing a food crisis like Gerry, donate online to our Food Crisis Appeal now



COMFORT FOOD IS HEARTY, WHEN HEARTS ARE HEAVY

The Fitzroy and Collingwood Soup Vans have been in operation for over 45 years, providing food to the Inner-City areas of Richmond, Collingwood, Melbourne, North Melbourne, Flemington and South Melbourne.

Our traditional service includes soup, sandwiches and hot food delivered to designated sites throughout the inner metro area, transitional housing and community housing.

Recently Vinnies was advised that both the North Melbourne and Abbotsford sites for Soup Vans storage and preparation of meals had to be vacated. With the consolidation of two Soup Van kitchens into one Inner City Hub, replacing North Melbourne and Collingwood sites, we needed to find a space not only for our soup vans but also for our team of volunteers.

From a very generous bequest, the Inner City Soup Hub was created. This particular estate directed the use of funds to be specifically for providing meals for people experiencing homelessness.

The executors advise: “The family is very pleased that their mother’s bequest is directed to a resource for those in need and wish the project every success now and in the future”.

The mobile pantry and new facility in Kensington will provide healthy and nutritious supplies to City of Melbourne residents experiencing food insecurity.

Investing in our Good Works is a reflection of your beliefs today, tomorrow and beyond.

For more information about leaving a legacy for good, please contact our Gift in Wills Manager, Sharon Wangman on 03 9895 5821 or bequest@svdp-vic.org.au

**Name and image have been changed to protect the person’s identity.*

MEET OUR AMAZING VANNIES

It's impossible to imagine Vinnies Victoria without our wonderful soup van volunteers – our Vannies. They are central to our work – their wide-ranging skills and amazing efforts help us achieve so much and support our communities through tough times.



ESTHER – 80 YEARS YOUNG; 100-WATT SMILE

Every day, our Inner City Soup Van packs and distributes food hampers, including fresh fruit and vegetables. In preparation for the street runs, each week our wonderful Vannies volunteer Esther, 80, gives her time to sort, chop and package the produce to be distributed. You will always find her with a smile on her face and ready for a good chat while she gets about with the important tasks at hand.

By giving her time, Esther enables Vinnies to provide nutritious food in manageable portions to individuals and families living in nearby boarding houses or social housing units and with limited kitchen equipment – providing them an opportunity to live a healthy life.



NICKY'S FAMOUS FRIED RICE AND FRIENDSHIP

Nicky is a very special member of his Sunday volunteer team. His team members and the people we assist say that he cooks the best fried rice in town. Yum! Each Sunday, Nicky supports the kitchen and then provides a helping hand to pack everything up for the soup van run – including his famous fried rice that is always a hit.

Nicky is a quiet achiever who has been volunteering his time for many years and loves to help anyone in need. He is very welcoming to any new volunteer and his friendly nature is valued by his team – his support and care is invaluable to us.



MARIANA – 1,000+ SANDWICHES EVERY WEEK

“When I first went out, I found delivering meals on the streets of Richmond very confronting,” said Mariana. Yet over time, her sense of purpose and wanting to make a difference in her world meant Mariana overcame her initial hesitations and, seven years later, remains one of our treasured Vinnies Soup Van volunteers.

Each time we moved premises, Mariana moved with us. Over seven years, from North Melbourne to Parkville and now at our Inner City Soup Van Hub in Kensington, Mariana catches public transport to arrive at her volunteer shift on time. She gives her time to fill rough sleeper packs, organise stock and make around 360 sandwiches each shift – making 1,000+ fresh sandwiches weekly. We value our chief sandwich maker.

Our volunteers all attend regularly around life, study and work commitments to pack and offer food and social connection to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and poverty. They have fun and share common values of kindness and caring for our community. Without our volunteers, Vinnies would not be able to reach the number of people we do every week, 52 weeks a year.



If you would like to support Vinnies Soup Van and assist us to provide more meals, [donate online to our Food Crisis Appeal now](#)

**First name used only for privacy reasons.*



Leo's Kitchen

IN MEMORY OF LEO HOLT
SOUP VAN PRESIDENT & COLLINGWOOD VANNIE
1998-2021

VINNIES VICTORIA LAUNCHES NEW 'SUPER KITCHEN' TO FEED 400,000 IN INNER-CITY MELBOURNE

In early May, the St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies Victoria) celebrated the launch of our innovative new Inner City Soup Van hub in Kensington, Melbourne.

The facility is believed to be the first of its kind fitted out inside two reconditioned shipping crates, one housing a commercial-size cooker and oven, and the other holding a cool room and storage areas. The state-of-the-art cooking facilities are able to produce 60 litres of soup or pasta in minutes. The hub will be serving hot food to people in need in the CBD and on the streets of the inner city to answer an increase in demand due to rising costs of living.

News reports of surging food prices and rising rental stress among low income earners reflect the growing need that Vinnies has seen on the street for some time. The demand for Soup Vans doubled during COVID across all eight hubs – and is still rising. Last year, the hubs served 600,000 meals. The Inner City Soup Van hub will serve 400,000 meals annually to thousands of individuals and families experiencing homelessness or struggling to afford food.

Sarah Cromie, General Manager Membership and Special Works who oversaw the project, says: "This is a new concept. We're not aware of another organisation running facilities

for vulnerable communities on this scale. At Vinnies, we're focused on sustainable solutions and in terms of our Soup Vans, this is it. The new 'super kitchen' facilities are going to make a huge difference to the amount of hot, nutritious food we are able to get out to those communities quickly and efficiently.

"The event was also an opportunity to remember Leo Holt, our late State Soup Van President. Leo – who set up the Collingwood run in 1998 and tragically died suddenly during a volunteer shift in 2021 – first proposed the project to me in 2020.

"It was exciting to launch the hub after two years of planning and production and, of course, Leo's sad death. He would have been so proud of what we've achieved."

"That's why we called the cooking facility 'Leo's Kitchen'."

The hub amalgamates the former Collingwood and Fitzroy services and was primarily funded from a generous bequest (whose family wish to remain anonymous). Vinnies hopes

to expand the shipping crate model so that facilities can also be transported at short notice to an emergency situation, such as a bushfire or flood.

Ms Cromie says: "It was wonderful to mark the event and welcome our volunteers and corporate supporters, including the Cities of Melbourne and Yarra, IGA, Woodards Foundation, Talaria Capital and Grill'd – as well as a number of our Vinnies CEO Sleepout participants and ambassadors.

"We know there is an increased need. We're seeing people come to us who are really desperate for food. We're seeing young families and older women coming to us for food who are experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, due to the rising cost of living. What I'm really proud of is that the hub will provide the buffer many people currently struggling so desperately need to get through another day."

This year, roughly a third of the \$1.8 million raised during the Vinnies CEO Sleepout in Victoria will help support the sustainability of the Soup Van Hub.



STEEL CLUB VIC HELPS FEED PEOPLE SLEEPING ROUGH

'IT'S JUST SUCH A HEALING EXPERIENCE'

Meet Jaymes*, a softly spoken young man who became suddenly homeless following a total health breakdown during COVID. Having travelled the world as a barista, Jaymes was last year one of the almost 25,000 Victorians experiencing homelessness. "When I was unable to do that (work) due to injury, I lost everything," he says.

During the pandemic, Jaymes found himself at Ozanam House due to his escalating health conditions, including being immune suppressed after having worked for 16 years as a barista. At Ozanam House, Jaymes had the opportunity to join its Client Volunteer Program which provides café training to clients.

"Being here is so incredibly different. Getting back behind that machine eight years later and to be able to make some coffees... I am just so happy about it. It is just such a healing experience."

He also had the added worry of trying to find an interim home for his beloved pet cat and dog Molly and Boo Boo. He said, "I have always wanted to live in a tiny home, to be able to sleep properly with the cat on my chest purring and the dog under my arm."

We are so happy to share that Jaymes' has since moved into his tiny home. The journey was anything but straightforward, but with the right support, he was able to fulfil his dream.

Jaymes' recovery started when he walked through the doors of our crisis accommodation centre Ozanam House and now he has finally found the wonderful place where he belongs!

*First name used only for privacy reasons.

Steel Club VIC, one of our corporate donors who generously donated funds to Vinnies, providing more than 800 rough sleeper packs in Melbourne's inner city during one of the coldest winter weeks of the year.

Throughout the year, Steel Club members donate at each social function and at EOFY the final amount is donated to their charity of choice. This year, Vinnies was fortunate to have been selected as the recipient of this generous donation.

It's great to hear of this generosity from Steel Club VIC members on top of running their own businesses. The rough sleeper packs contain non-perishable food which we then top up with fresh fruit. This donation enables our Vinnies volunteers to reach even more people with nutritious food options.

If you're a business owner and have some ideas how you too can support Vinnies, contact Corporate.Fundraising@svdp-vic.org.au



DONATE TODAY
VISIT vinnies.org.au
OR PHONE 13 18 12



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