

You are **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

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

SPRING 2023

Helping Emma overcome homelessness

Supporting kids to thrive at school

Keeping struggling families together

Overcoming loneliness
through Companionship



 **Vinnies**
good works




RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN
INNOVATE

Thank you

from our State President

You're someone vulnerable
Queenslanders can depend on.

It is my very great pleasure
to send you this Spring
Edition of *You Are Making a
Difference* – and to thank
you for your compassion
and generosity.



Us Queenslanders are a resilient bunch. Hardship is nothing new to us, but these are particularly tough times for our state. From fires and floods to pandemic and crippling price rises, we've gone from one crisis straight into another over recent years. Add to those a homelessness and housing-affordability problem, and more people than ever are finding themselves in the most desperate of circumstances, through no fault of their own.

As the challenges we confront continue to grow, so does my appreciation for the depth and generosity of your support. I could not be more grateful for your friendship and loyalty.

In this edition of *You Are Making a Difference*, you can read more about how you are providing a helping hand to people whose lives have been touched by domestic violence, and homelessness and cost-of-living crises. You'll also meet other inspiring members of the Vinnies community who share your passion for supporting those less fortunate. I hope you enjoy reading about the wonderful things you are helping to make possible through your kind-hearted support.

With my deepest thanks,

P. McMahon

Trish McMahon
State President
St Vincent de Paul Society, QLD

Changing young lives *through education*



With support through the Children's Education Fund, Sarah's kids are excelling in the classroom.



Daniel, Talia and Maddie now have everything they need to fit in and succeed at school.

Your support is helping Sarah's* kids to shine at school.

You might remember reading Sarah's story in a letter we sent you recently. This brave mum fled domestic violence to keep her three children safe – and to give them a chance at a better future through education.

With your support, Sarah's kids are getting the best out of their time in the classroom. She sent us this touching update recently.

"Daniel is loving choir, and he really enjoyed singing at the ANZAC Day liturgy this year. Maths is his strongest subject, and he's now reading at a 4th grade level.

"Maddie was one of two children

chosen from her grade to attend Brisbane Writer's Festival and meet her favourite authors. She also came second in a writing competition.

"Talia is continuing to achieve. She's loving the transition to high school and the independence that goes with it."

This year, thanks to the wonderful generosity of you and other members of the Vinnies community, we raised an incredible \$414,000 through the Children's Education Fund. The money helps buy essential school supplies like uniforms, books and stationery for children like Sarah's.

Thank you for giving disadvantaged children the chance to reach their extraordinary potential at school.

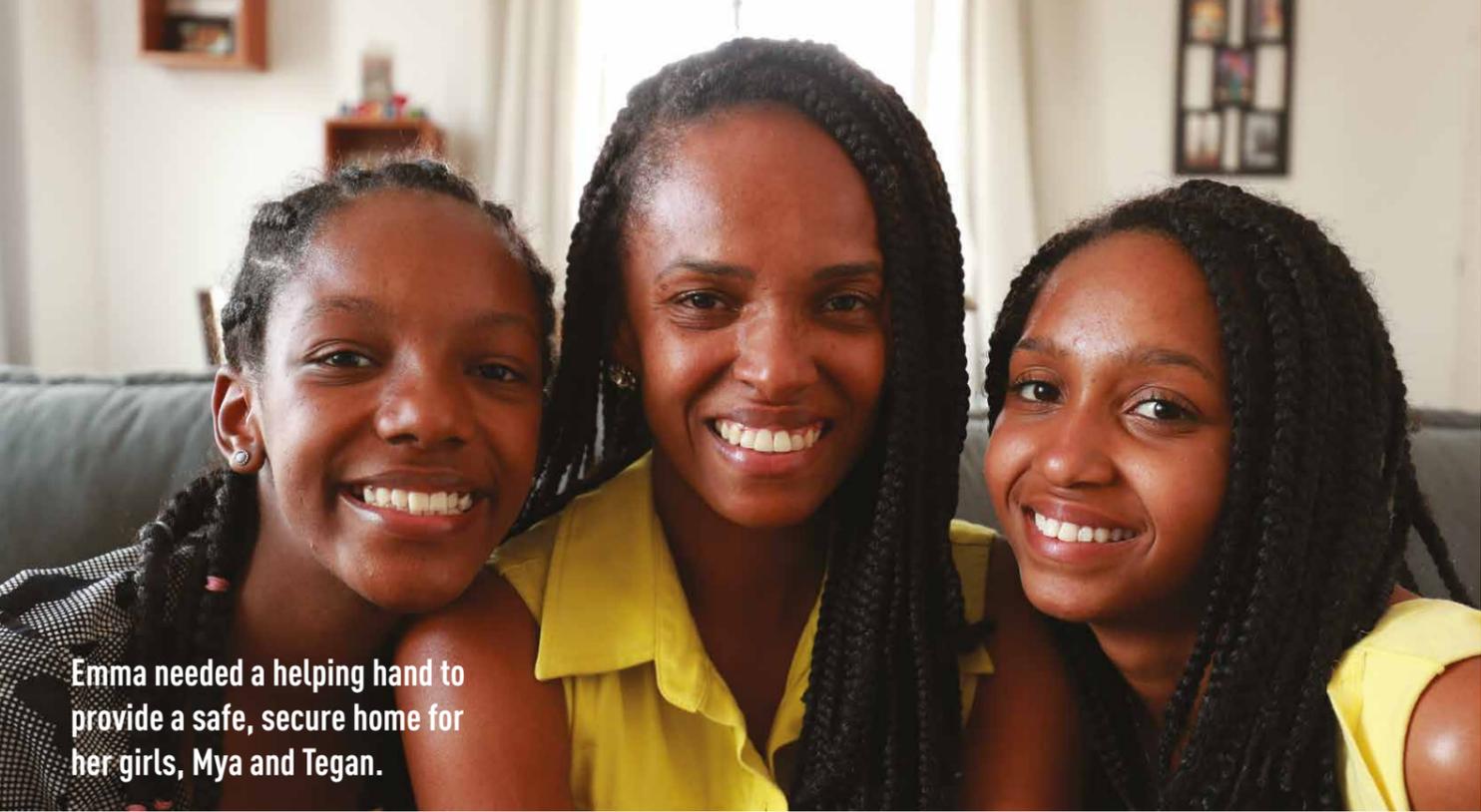
*Names and images have been changed for safety and privacy reasons. Thank you for understanding.



With your support, the future looks brighter for children like Daniel.



Sarah knew education was the key to a better future for her children.



Emma needed a helping hand to provide a safe, secure home for her girls, Mya and Tegan.

Dependable support *through the* toughest of times

You've helped Emma* cope with domestic violence, homelessness and devastating floods.

Emma was still at school when she fell pregnant and became trapped in a controlling and violent relationship.

"I never really had a positive male influence in my life," she explains. "So, I didn't know any different, and I didn't know it wasn't healthy."

As her partner's abusive behaviour continued to worsen, Emma knew she had to leave to keep her two daughters safe.

"I knew if we didn't get out, I would get killed. The girls and I escaped with nothing but a sack's worth of our things."

With no money and little family support, Emma and her girls found themselves bouncing from refuges and cheap motels to the backseats of cars. They even found themselves homeless for a while.

With nowhere else to turn, Emma's GP put her in contact with

our two kind-hearted volunteer members named Tracy and Helen. It marked a turning point in Emma's long and difficult journey towards independence.

Tracy and Helen's support began with a box of food, a simple act of kindness Emma says, meant the world at the time.

"It blew my mind there were people out there willing to listen and help," she says. "I'd never received



kindness like that in my life."

Since then, Tracy and Helen have been there to provide whatever support Emma has needed, whether that's a cuppa and a chat when things get too much, or help replacing the things they lost in the devastating 2022 floods.

"At times they've been the difference between me eating a meal or not," Emma says. "They've been the difference between me keeping a roof over my head, keeping the

phone connected, and getting my kids to school."

In the last year alone, 20% more Queenslanders like Emma have reached out to Vinnies for support. Thank you for making sure they always have someone they can turn to.

"It gave me hope that there were beautiful people out there who went above and beyond to make my life that little bit easier." Emma

Thanks to you, Mya and Tegan, have a safe place to sleep and can dream of a better future.

Did you know that just \$79 can provide a vulnerable family like Emma's with emergency accommodation in a shelter for a night?

*Names and images have been changed for safety and privacy reasons. Thank you for understanding.



Your compassion is making a life changing difference to families like Emma's.

First big step towards 500 homes

Vinnies' plan to deliver more affordable housing is off to a flying start.

This June, Queensland's Housing Minister Meghan Scanlon made a guest appearance at a Vinnies CEO Sleepout event in Brisbane to make a very exciting announcement: a partnership between the Queensland Department of Housing and Vinnies Housing (our registered Community Housing Provider) to deliver three housing projects in Toowoomba, Nerang and Bundaberg.

In total, these projects will deliver 147 safe, secure and affordable dwellings for Queensland families and individuals in three regions which have been hit particularly hard by the current housing crisis. It marks the first major step in our plan to deliver 500 affordable homes in five years.

As part of Vinnies' Housing First approach, these projects won't just provide housing. They will also deliver the wrap-around support needed to give residents a 'hand up' with things like food, furniture, advocacy and other services.

Funding for these projects will be delivered through the



Three exciting new housing projects will kickstart Vinnies' contribution towards reducing homelessness.

State Government's QuickStart Queensland program.

Construction on the projects is set to commence in 2024 once building approvals and building contracts have been secured. In the meantime, Vinnies continues to work with the State Government and other stakeholders in the community to secure more sites to build social and affordable housing.

"This agreement is an exciting development on our 500 Homes in five years journey. It demonstrates both, our commitment to this vital project, as well as our capacity to deliver on it."

Kevin Mercer, St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland CEO

Thank you for being part of the journey of helping Queenslanders find a safe place to call home.



The rich rewards of helping those in need



Volunteer member Barry finds purpose and joy in providing hope to those less fortunate.

Barry joined his local Vinnies conference on the Gold Coast seven years ago.

"My wife was already a member," he explains. "She would come home and share stories of her day. I was interested in those stories and wanted to get involved."

Since then, Barry has offered kindness, empathy and a helping hand to countless Queenslanders in need. With as many as 30 people reaching out to his Conference every

week for support, there's never a dull moment, but the work brings rich rewards.

"My favourite part is that feeling of spiritual happiness," he says. "Often when people share their stories, they start with sad faces and sometimes even tears. But when they leave us, they leave with a smile on their faces, and sometimes they even want to hug us."

Barry says one story from the past year underlines the importance of the work he does.

"A young woman fled her violent partner with five kids. She was living in a private rental which wasn't sustainable for her financially, but she still needed a roof over her head.

"We were able to provide her with food, hampers and vouchers. We were also able to lend an ear

to her predicament, which she appreciated. It was very rewarding to be able to help her."

Barry says he loves being part of a compassionate community who share a common purpose and values.

"We're a great team. Everyone brings their unique ideas and experiences. We support each other and we socialise a lot. We get along so well because we all share a common aim: helping others who aren't as fortunate."

"We see sorrowful faces come in, and we give them a helping hand and some hope." Barry

Want to make a difference to vulnerable Queenslanders by becoming a volunteer member? Scan the QR code to join us today.

Volunteering provides Barry (centre) and Kerrie (right) with a sense of purpose and joy.



SCAN ME

Queensland's leaders sleep out for homelessness

Vinnies team member Bernadette was one of more than 300 senior business leaders across Queensland sleeping out to raise vital funds and awareness.

2023's CEO Sleepout saw passionate community members like Bernadette Hestiati come together, swapping their comfy beds for cold floors and the back seats of cars, to raise vital awareness and funds for homelessness. With the state still in the grips in a housing crisis, the Sleepout's mission and message is more relevant than ever.

Bernadette went above and beyond to raise awareness by organising a special CEO Sleepout event on International Women's Day.

Attended by more than 50 people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, Bernadette's event featured entertainment, an international food buffet and a moving presentation by CEO Sleepout Brand Ambassador Matt Kratiuk about his own experience of homelessness and how Vinnies helped him back on his feet.

In her second year as a CEO Sleepout participant and event volunteer, Bernadette raised over \$10,000, blowing her \$5,000 goal out of the water. It's an extraordinary and inspiring effort.

Great work Bernadette and everyone who slept out in 2023.



"We need to educate our community that many people who are homeless face other barriers they might not understand exist. My heart is full knowing our efforts helping with this important work."
Bernadette



Just like you, Bernadette Hestiati, is passionate about giving back to the community and making a difference in people's lives.

Regional Queenslanders come out in force at the 2023 Sleepout Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Toowoomba lead Sleepout events across the state.



The 2023 Vinnies CEO Sleepout was another great success, with more Queenslanders than ever before from outside the city getting involved to help raise an impressive \$1.9 million. Main events were held in Brisbane and on the Sunshine and Gold Coasts, while community sleepouts were held across regional Queensland. Toowoomba and Rockhampton were two regional communities who attracted senior leaders to their events.

Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast business, community and government leaders slept rough on 22 June 2023 to raise awareness and funds for the growing number of local residents experiencing severe housing stress. Funds raised went to crisis accommodation, support for

housing applications, food, clothes and other essential items for the vulnerable in the community.

August saw several community sleepout events across the state in Townsville, Far North Queensland, and Toowoomba to provide those within the local community experiencing homelessness with vital access to food and emergency accommodation. The Logan Springwood community hosted their inaugural sleepout earlier in June this year raising over \$47,000 for crisis accommodation for people experiencing homelessness in their community.

Well done to all regional Queenslanders who got involved in this year's CEO Sleepout and community sleepouts.



Community and business leaders across the state, sharing your passion to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness, slept out this winter at CEO Sleepout and community sleepout events.

Providing vulnerable families with a place to call home Thanks to you, Roger* was able to secure a safe place to raise his children.

After seven long years apart, Roger was desperate to have his kids back in his life. But to do it he knew he would have to relocate from Ingham to Townsville and find a place they could all stay together. At the same time, he was juggling the responsibility of caring for his sick father.

Thanks to the generosity of like-minded supporters, dedicated volunteer member Roy* and the Vinnies team worked together to help Roger secure a rental property. He was over the moon when he was

able to have his children come and stay with him for the first time. He's now looking forward to taking his children to visit family at Ingham for Christmas, where he plans to teach them how to fish as well as some of the cultural dances he learned from his grandparents, uncles and aunties.

Funds raised by community leaders, sharing your passion and commitment for our mission, through the CEO Sleepout are vital to providing housing solutions for families like Roger's.



Your compassion means families like Roger's can have a place of their own to call home. Thank you!

Did you know \$1,600 can provide a homeless family with a month's worth of rent in safe, secure accommodation?

*Names and images have been changed for safety and privacy reasons. Thank you for understanding.

The power of Companionship

For 20 years, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Conference have been providing companionship to elderly residents within the community.

Two decades ago, our volunteer members in the small community of Maryborough noticed a number of people turning up to Mass alone. Realising there was a need for companionship, they formed a special Conference dedicated to visiting people in the community who were home-restricted, immobile, or simply lonely.

Since then, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Conference has visited more than 522 people in nursing homes, aged care facilities and their own homes to provide companionship and conversations.

Conference President Paul O'Donoghue says there is a growing

need for companionship in the community.

"This year we've gone from 100 people on our visitation list to 120. We've seen a boom in demand since COVID."

When it comes to company, Paul says a little can go a long way.

"Usually all it takes is just 30 minutes of chin-wagging before you see people's spirits start to lift. That person will talk about the visit for the rest of the day. It's the highlight of their week."

Congratulations on 20 years of kindness and companionship to Paul and the team.



The Maryborough community are enjoying the companionship of our dedicated volunteer members who spend time with them regularly to lift their spirits.

"Being poor is not just about wealth. You can also be poor if you're lonely."

Paul O'Donoghue, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Conference President

Thanks to you, Vinnies provides much-needed accommodation for vulnerable Queenslanders experiencing or at risk of homelessness at Rendu House. We asked some of the residents to write a letter sharing how your wonderful support has helped them get back on their feet and put their lives back together. We hope you feel proud of the life-changing difference you are making.

I am living in Rendu house currently.

I was so lucky to be offered a place at Rendu House, the last unit available. My luck had turned for the better, as I didn't have enough money to support myself in private rentals.

Since moving into Rendu House I have been able to find a little part time job and I am so happy to be settled in my unit.

Thankyou from the bottom of my heart.

'S'

I'm a Senior Pensioner & Renter, Resident in Rendu House and so VERY FORTUNATE to reside here.

It gives me less financial stress, knowing that all my bills are taken care of and no extra payments will come due.

Security cameras are installed for peace of mind. Beautiful gardens maintained and very pleasant environment truly gives me much comfort & safety living out my senior years!

Before residing in Rendu House I was a pensioner facing very depressing rental situations with increases in rent, utilities, etc. and a bother to others too, needing help with food.

I went through untold stress, belittling, humiliation, and so on, in begging for rent reductions, meeting utilities payments and living day-to-day.

I cannot say much more, as I'm happy now and wish to forget the anxiety & sadness of the past.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Grill'd Brisbane helping those who need a feed

The big-hearted burger chain is providing free meals to Queenslanders experiencing homelessness.

A big thank you to the team at Grill'd Brisbane, who have been volunteering their time to cook free meals for Queenslanders struggling with homelessness.

The burger chain's Need-a-Feed events have proved a huge hit, with hundreds of people queuing at the restaurant door for a meal. Vinnies volunteer Mark Heinrich, who has attended a number of events, says Need-a-Feed beneficiaries are getting much more than a free meal.

"The Grill'd staff are amazing. They treat every customer with respect and dignity. The enjoyment of the food by the customers, and the looks on their faces, makes everything worth it.

"While it may have started out a little quiet, the restaurant is now noisy with chatter and laughter. It has the sense of a fun night out."

Thank you and well done to the Grill'd team for lending a hand.



Thank you to the amazing team at Grill'd and Vinnies volunteers (left to right) Bernadette Hestiati, Mark Heinrich and Felicity Lupton – for helping feed vulnerable Queenslanders with respect and dignity.

You may remember reading Joan's story. Thank you to our kind supporters for sending in messages of hope for vulnerable people like Joan, struggling to find a safe place to rebuild their lives.

