

# Making a difference



St Vincent de Paul Society  
QUEENSLAND  
*good works*

Newsletter of the St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland | Spring 2011

## 2011 Disasters

THE LONG ROAD HOME	1
CEO SLEEPOUT 2011	3
CALLS FOR HELP	6
MORE THAN JUST A HOME	8
QUICK NEWS	10
THANK YOU VINNIES!	11



*St Vincent de Paul Society volunteer helping in the clean up out in Goodna*

The feeling of 'community' and of 'neighbourhood' has never been stronger in these areas, according to Jim

## The long road home

Jim Devereaux, a St Vincent de Paul Society member from Fig Tree Pocket, has been door-knocking through flood affected areas in the west of Brisbane since January.

"We're trying to lend a helping hand, whatever the situation," Jim said. "Especially now, many months out from the floods, people are still really hurting and we want them to know that they're not forgotten."

It is the combination of scouring the affected streets regularly to ensure no one is left behind, and responding to the calls for assistance from the Society's 1300 633 343 disaster line, that will keep Jim,

and number other Vinnies members and volunteers busy for months to come.

Jim said the teams initially find out information from residents during door-knocking: asking people whether they rent or own their properties, whether they have applied for appropriate insurance or grants, and how Vinnies might be able to assist with the purchase of new appliances, flooring, building materials or anything else material or financial that can get people back on track.

He said a common response from people when asked if they need help is, "no thanks, we're ok. Help someone else who needs it more."

"I have to say to people, 'There are people better off than you realise. We can and want to help you.'"

*(continues page 2)*



## Dear friends

2011 has been a busy time for the Vincentian family of the St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland.

Though the media attention has died down, the struggles of people affected by Queensland's natural disasters continue. We are working tirelessly to keep the support network around these people – many of whom have not yet returned home since January.

In this edition, we're also sharing some stories of people we've been able to help through our housing programs, as well as touch base with our VoRTCS Refugee Tutoring program.

Peace,

**Brian Moore**

State President

St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland

### Forward correspondence to:

Editor, Making a difference  
St Vincent de Paul Society Qld  
PO Box 3351 Sth Brisbane QLD 4101  
e: [communications@svdpqld.org.au](mailto:communications@svdpqld.org.au)

### For more information:

w: [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)  
p: 07 3010 1000  
f: 07 3010 1099

### To make a donation:

p: 13 18 12  
w: [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)

### To volunteer:

e: [volunteer@svdpqld.org.au](mailto:volunteer@svdpqld.org.au)  
p: 07 3010 1000

ABN: 14 211 506 904

\*Names changed throughout to protect identity.



*Jim Devereaux, a St Vincent de Paul Society member*

## The long road home

"It really is quite emotional seeing how people are living, and the stories they have to share."

A 4 year old boy's pride and joy, his 22 hand reared chickens all drowned in the floods. He grieved for days. His father transformed the cage into a sand pit so the boy could play whilst his parents fixed their flooded home. Society volunteers met this family whilst doorknocking and are providing assistance.

In another example, Vinnies is helping a family with covering the cost of food for the next eight weeks and providing clothing and bedding. Their rented home was affected by toxic mould after the flood and had to be treated. They had to throw away their furniture and fittings and their kitchen is still off limits.

The process of helping disaster victims will be extensive; with many people only returning to their destroyed homes on weekends, and others completely abandoning their homes altogether because it is too much to bear.

Only recently, Jim visited one street in Booval. Of the 64 houses, 21 were abandoned. One of these abandoned houses belonged to an elderly woman who had a stroke shortly before the flood. Her son came down to assist in the clean-up, and suffered a fatal heart attack whilst doing so. She was too devastated to return, so is living with family members elsewhere.

The feeling of 'community' and of 'neighbourhood' has never been stronger in these areas, according to Jim. People know what has happened to "the guy across the road" when asked by a Vinnies member. One gentleman in Goodna has not only been fixing up his own house, but has also been buying items to help out his neighbours. Vinnies has been assisting him by reimbursing his expenses. One of the neighbours assisted, a recent refugee, told Vinnies that "he was so pleased to have been able to call Australia home" due to the kindness of his neighbour, facilitated through Vinnies, despite the fact he lost almost everything himself.

Jim is just one of many St Vincent de Paul Society volunteers who are responding to the disaster on a daily basis.

# CEO SLEEPOUT 2011

Almost 120 corporates raised well over half a million dollars to combat homelessness in Queensland as part of the 2011 Vinnies CEO Sleepout held at Suncorp Piazza in Brisbane on June 16, 2011.

Business and community leaders including Treasurer Andrew Fraser, Shadow Treasurer Timothy Nicholls, Merlo Coffee Founder Dean Merlo, Brisbane Broncos CEO Paul White and Ipswich City Council Mayor Paul Pisasale hit the streets to raise awareness of and vital funds for homelessness.

## **Broncos CEO, Paul White:**

“The Brisbane Broncos is so linked to the community that it is right that we connect to community events like this one. Most of us live privileged lives, and often times you forget how others live. It’s a reality check. Sometimes we forget about how lucky we are.”



*State Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade, the Hon. Andrew Fraser MP and Opposition Treasurer Tim Nicholls MP in their close sleeping arrangements*



Vinnies CEO Sleepout  
2011 participants

Rosies volunteers serving  
soup to participants

Scott Flynn, of Kenlynn Properties, was crowned top fundraiser of the Queensland event with a \$35,000 total.

“I am humbled by this opportunity for normal people like us who are fortunate to have a home to come home to and experience what it is like first hand. This is the second time I’ve done it.

It is one of the most life changing experiences I’ve had – and it’s only for twelve hours. Imagine facing the world like that every day, with no home, no roof over your head. How can you prepare yourself for your life, to find a job?”

In just its second year running, the Brisbane Sleepout saw CEOs roughing it in conditions no more comfortable than those living on the streets – just a couple of cardboard sheets to soften the hard ground, a sleeping bag and a cup of soup to keep warm.

### Malcolm Snow, CEO South Bank Corporation:

“You do, as you lay there in the dark, reflect on imagine doing this 365 nights of the year. It’s that sense that many people are facing this every night that really brings it home.”

St Vincent de Paul Queensland CEO Peter Maher said he was overwhelmed by the generosity of those leaders who rose to the challenge at the Suncorp Piazza, South Bank.

“I’m still overjoyed by the level of support, both financial and in-kind, that our leaders have shown us,” Mr Maher said. “It was a particularly cold evening in Brisbane, but that didn’t deter the charitable men and women from experiencing what it’s like to live on the streets.”

“It just goes to show how powerful our corporate leaders really are at putting an issue such as homelessness on the agenda and to making a real difference to a cause.”

Mr Maher said the money raised would go towards St Vincent de Paul Society services throughout Queensland such as supported accommodation for people at risk of homelessness, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, food distribution, low cost food outlets and child and family support.

“Right here in Brisbane homelessness is a real issue and at last count 2070 people in the area could be considered homeless,” he said.

“Today the crisis is obviously far greater following the natural disasters in Queensland, which affected no less than 30,000 homes.

“We can’t afford to let anyone slip through the cracks, so we’re relying on the continued support of business and community leaders to keep homelessness on the agenda and to ultimately helping us put an end to this issue for good.”

**To find out more, or register for next year’s event: visit [ceosleepout.org.au](http://ceosleepout.org.au)**

**Lorraine Gorman, SVDP QLD's state housing officer:**

"It's not until you actually see, every day and every night, people sleeping rough; families sleeping in their car, that's when it hits home."



## About the night

**National number of participants in 2011: 973**

National number of participants in 2010: 387

**Brisbane participants in 2011: 116**

Brisbane participants in 2010: 55

**National amount raised in 2011: \$4.1 million**

National amount raised in 2010: \$2.9 million

**Brisbane total in 2011: \$560,000**

Brisbane total in 2010: \$350,000



*Vinnies CEO Peter Maher sleeping out*



*Event MC Madonna King, from ABC radio*



*Paul Pisasale, Ipswich City Mayor, sharing his perspective on homelessness*

## Where we helped in 2010

In 2010, Brisbane's first Vinnies CEO Sleepout raised \$350,265 to support the Society in Queensland.

That money funded the ongoing provision of 112 affordable or supported housing accommodations available for people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.

It assisted in the provision of over 100 new homes in areas of real need in greater Brisbane and regional Queensland.

The money was also used to help fund the social housing program, which complements the Families Back on Track accommodation on the Gold Coast, a facility that houses single parents with children. All 27 units are now occupied, and the first baby was born to a resident there last year.

## David Keir, Devine Homes Limited Managing Director:

"Whilst we say we're doing it tough at the Sleepout, we're not doing it anywhere near as tough as the 105,000 people who are sleeping in cars or sleeping under trees."

## Where the money will go in 2011 and beyond

The money generously raised in 2011 by an amazing 3,500 donors will be used in the expansion of the Society's housing program to continue to provide affordable, safe and secure accommodation for people across Queensland.

In addition, with new properties being made available by Vinnies for people in crisis on a regular basis, the money will also go towards furnishing the homes and units with basic bedding and electrical appliances.

# Calls for help

The devastation of Queensland's natural disasters is still being felt across the state. From the small requests of food and material support to the building costs of making a home liveable again, the St Vincent de Paul Society is responding to each and every call for help on a case-by-case basis.

Vinnies has provided financial assistance to approximately 1,500 households across Queensland. And that number doesn't begin to touch on the people who were given material support, such as food, clothing and furniture.

Through February to August 2011 alone, the Brisbane Call Centre received over 3000 calls to the 1300 633 343 Disaster Line.

## Amount of financial support given, per area:

- Brisbane region - \$1.15 million
- Western Brisbane region - \$9.9 million
- Toowoomba - \$1.37 million
- Far North Queensland - \$1.01 million
- Rockhampton - \$932,000
- Townsville - \$326,575

## Money distributed to people who have relocated to other areas, such as Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast - \$741,517

## Top 10 areas

1. Goodna – over \$1.1 million **1**
2. Oxley / Graceville - \$1.05 million **2**
3. Fernvale / Karalee - \$973,000 **3**
4. Ipswich - \$833,000 **4**
5. Booval / Bundamba - \$701,000 **5**
6. Indooroopilly / Kenmore / Chelmer - \$678,000 **C**
7. Fig Tree Pocket - \$655,000 **7**
8. Lowood - \$382,000 **B**
9. Emerald - \$374,000 **9**
10. Gatton - \$358,000 **10**

Total financial assistance given to date: \$18.315 million

**A**

## Cardwell

A couple were sheltering nine of their neighbours, including an infant, who were forced to leave their badly damaged homes. As all electrical items were damaged, amongst other things, the lady was travelling 50 kilometres into town to wash their clothes. The Society was able to supply the household with a washing machine, a dryer and a fridge, as well as food vouchers and support in trying to find suitable accommodation for the displaced neighbours.

**B**

## Lowood

Society members met with three elderly adults and one of their great granddaughters. They had no insurance for their home and have been trying to get the house cleaned since January. The great grandmother in the home is suffering financial strain and burden with the costs associated with repairing the home and paying for child care for her granddaughter as she receives no rebate for childcare expenses. The Society was able to provide financial assistance towards essential plumbing repairs.

**C**

## Indooroopilly

An Indooroopilly couple have been living in their flood affected home with no power or facilities. They've resorted to using camping equipment to survive. Their insurance company isn't providing any assistance, and whilst they've received some government assistance, are in extreme physical and emotional hardship. The Society has been able to assist with financial support.

QUEENSLAND

**D**

## Grantham

Farmer was living in shed as house had to be demolished. Society paid for plumber to connect stove and hot water in the Shed. There will be no income to this family until October so the Society is meeting outstanding debts, phone bills, health and electricity accounts until that time.

**E**

## Surat

Roma conference visited the Surat area after the flood and found several property owners were experiencing severe hardship due to loss of fences therefore loss of livestock. The local conference contacted local fencing suppliers and was able to cover the cost of materials to replace to fences in many instances.

**F**

## Kingaroy

A mother living in the Kingaroy area who has been affected by the flood phoned this week requesting assistance with medical bills. A sewerage pipe burst and flooded her home. Her young children contracted staph due to her home being unsanitary and have been on three courses of antibiotics since; their health is still not improving.

**G**

## Springsure

At Springsure, south of Emerald, the Society visited a family with a daughter who is wheelchair-bound. Due to their daughter's disability, the house was built in a low-lying area, and low to the ground. The house was practically destroyed, and needed to be lifted onto stumps. The Society assisted with new flooring, walls, white goods, furniture, bedding and clothing.

**H**

## Townsville

A woman west of Townsville whose rental accommodation was damaged by cyclone Yasi lost a number of household items in the cyclone and other items have been affected by the dipping and surges of electrical supply at the time. The Society was able to provide replacement electrical goods.



*More  
than just a  
home*

Friendship, skills, loyalty, and life changing experiences. People get more than a home when the St Vincent de Paul Society lends a hand up.

### Did you know?

Over the past 5 years, the Society has put over 300 more houses on the ground for people and families in need.

## Alicia's story

Alicia\* had been living on her own since the age of 14, regularly using drugs. Following police involvement, Alicia entered rehab at 15, however resumed using drugs upon release. Alicia regularly fell asleep in public places, was involved in relationships suffering domestic violence and had been taken advantage of.

Pregnant at 17, Alicia fought post-natal depression and attempted suicide in the months after her baby was born. In an effort to protect herself from violence from the baby's father, Alicia fought back. Police charged Alicia however she received a non-custodial sentence.

During this time, Alicia provided the basics for her child, but admits to neglecting her child's need for attention and interaction. Child Safety became involved after a domestic violence episode and Alicia entered into a voluntary agreement with them to improve the life circumstances of her son and to learn vital parenting and life skills. At this time, Alicia was living in a run-down local motel paying an exorbitant rent.



Alicia had been involved on a voluntary basis with Child Safety for a few months but admits to having little motivation to make any positive change. In December 2010, Alicia was interviewed by Families Back on Track staff and admitted to using marijuana as recently as 4 weeks prior. FBOT staff were impressed with Alicia's honesty and the insight she had into realising the importance of making some kind of change in her life. Alicia was "sick of living like this".

When Alicia was accepted into the FBOT program, she was 19 years old and suffering memory loss as a result of drug use, had no confidence, and little motivation. Alicia had little control over her life and had to phone her ex-boyfriend to find out her bank account number.

Following six months of working intensively with her FBOT Support Worker, Alicia made significant progress. She participated in a Parenting course run by the University which significantly improved her parenting skills and her awareness of her parental responsibilities. A family routine was drawn up and Alicia's son's bedtime became 7pm instead of 11pm.

Alicia participated in a Money Management course. Prior to moving to FBOT, Alicia was unaware of what amounts she owed and to whom. Debts were soon identified and a repayment schedule established. Alicia is excited to be debt free in August 2011.

Alicia attended other courses run by FBOT support workers and became interested in self-improvement. Alicia enrolled



her son in Childcare so that he was given the opportunity to develop his cognitive and social skills.

Alicia now understands that the key to improvement of her life circumstances and avoiding the poverty trap lies in education and employment. Alicia is currently enrolled in a Cert III course and looks forward to obtaining employment by the end of this year.

Recently, Alicia was offered public housing which will give her and her son secure and affordable housing. Child Safety has closed this file, satisfied with the amazing progress of this family towards a brighter future.

## James' story

During September, a Social Worker from a hospital contacted the Society conference on the Sunshine Coast about James\*, a cancer patient about to be discharged and in desperate need of housing.

He had been living with family (his brother and his wife) in a two bedroom Departmental unit. Due to circumstances in the relationship, the gentleman remained in his bedroom, while his wife slept on the lounge. This placed James in an awkward situation, and with grandchildren expected for some holidays, the current living arrangements were obviously not working, and were placing enormous stress on everyone.

James had chronic health issues. His cancer surgery had made it necessary for him to have a catheter for his bladder as a permanent arrangement, and he required the care of the Blue Nurses once a month to attend to this. From the local conference members' visits to James in the hospital, a friendship was built, and became a major source of support for him.

Vinnies was able to obtain a temporary room in a centre designed to support families of patients in hospital, while a more permanent home was sought. A studio room became available in the Society's Rendu Lodge at Nambour, which was an ideal solution as it was within walking distance of a shopping centre and a bus service was at the front door. James moved in on the 23rd December. His room was fitted out with everything that he needed, together with a Christmas hamper and gifts.

For six months he was his happiest, as he became accepted amongst the other tenants, and was able to maintain some independence to do his shopping.

Sadly one Saturday evening James collapsed in his room, calling for help. Another man, two rooms away heard his cries and assisted him onto the bed and called the ambulance. James passed away in his room in the presence of his neighbour and the ambulance officers.

Vinnies members felt privileged that they were able to be a friend to James and support him in the final stage of his life.

\* Names changed to protect identities

# Quick News

## Compeer program going strong

Queensland's first Compeer program, coordinated by the St Vincent de Paul Society at Caloundra, is experiencing significant growth after its recent launch.

Compeer, which matches volunteers with companions who are receiving mental health treatment, now has thirteen volunteers providing support and friendship for people living with a mental illness.

"Steady, reliable and caring companionship can make a world of difference to people isolated through mental illness, and volunteers are finding this a rewarding way of giving to others," Kym Allen, Compeer Coordinator said.

"It's really important when a person faces the challenges of a mental illness, it can be hard to maintain friendships."

Whilst volunteers are trained and provided with support, companions are referred by their mental health professionals and must be receiving ongoing treatment.

"The gift of friendship is so simple, but it can be profoundly powerful."

**To find out more about Compeer, contact Kym Allen on [kym.allen@svdpqld.org.au](mailto:kym.allen@svdpqld.org.au).**



## Hero acknowledged

St Vincent de Paul Society Ingham Conference President, Sam Cosentino, stood proudly with other Disaster heroes before the Premier of Queensland, Anna Bligh MP, in June to receive his commemorative medal for helping people suffering from the effects of Cyclone Yasi in the Ingham and Cardwell areas.

Sam has worked tirelessly around the clock with local and government emergency services to coordinate the provision of food, clothing, bedding, furniture and white goods for those in need.

"Sam has cheerfully carried the load by respecting the dignity of each individual and giving them hope in their circumstances," said Townsville Diocesan Central Council President, Peter Daniel. "The smile on his face has shone through to each individual," Peter said.

## VINNIES LEGENDS



Become a Vinnies' Legend by hosting or participating in an event to raise much needed funds for Vinnies. How? Well there are a number of ways in which you can fundraise, from holding an event or entering a fun run to organising a cake stall. For more information or to register an event please contact our Vinnies' Legends team on 07 3010 1072 or log onto our website [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)

## How you can help

- ♥ Become a Member of a Conference (local branch)
- ♥ Volunteer
- ♥ Make a financial donation
- ♥ Make a gift-in-kind
- ♥ Make a bequest

For more information contact the state office

**07 3010 1000**

or email: [state.admin@svdpqld.org.au](mailto:state.admin@svdpqld.org.au)

# Thank you Vinnies!

My name is Cindy, and I tutor the Bwormoi family in Acacia Ridge with Jonathan. I thought it was about time I gave you an update on our journey with a very lovely Sudanese family – the Bwormois (Robert, Mary, Rebecca, Okello and Michael).

Jonathan and I meet weekly with the family, and our main activity has been helping the younger children complete their homework.

We have seen great improvements in both Michael (6) and Okello (8) in reading, writing and using English in general. We have worked quite closely with their school, in particular with the children's ESL teacher. Both children are now completing their homework and have improved their spelling dramatically.

Remi (14) sometimes seeks help with his homework, whilst the eldest Rebecca (18) finished school in 2009 and has not been able to find work. We have helped her write resumes and complete TAFE and university applications. Rebecca often is at home caring for her brothers and sisters whilst her father works, and her mother is studying to become a nurse.

Our goal as tutors for the family is to eventually see the parents setting aside time in their busy schedules to help the children with their homework on a regular basis to help create a family routine of learning.

We are having great times with the Bwormoi family and have truly enjoyed seeing them open up and enjoy learning.

Thank you for the opportunity we have had in getting to know them and to see them grow.

VoRTCS (Volunteer Refugee Tutoring and Community Support) is a Special Works of the St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland and aims to assist refugee families to take up the opportunities that exist in Australian society through English language tutoring and community support programs.

**To find out more about VoRTCS, visit [vinnies.org.au/vortcs](http://vinnies.org.au/vortcs)**



We just wanted to say a very big "Thank You" to you both & all of the folks at St. Vinnies for your very generous donation to our family. You will never know how much your help has changed our life at the moment. Love & best wishes to you all.

Ms ...  
St Vincent de Paul Society

Dear Ms Hobel  
Please accept my grateful thanks for all the help the society has given me to get me home after the floods.

I am so grateful for the financial assistance as a partially disabled full pensioner but even more grateful for the encouragement and cheer that Brian Healy and his helpers from the Lourdes branch brought around. In the darkest time I felt that somebody was on my side. It made a huge difference to my mental well-being. Wonderful work from everyone concerned. Thank you all so much,

2 letters from flood people saying thanks

# Sponsor one of our special projects with a regular gift

## Children's Fund



Our Children's Education Fund gives young people access to education, employment and training

so they can contribute positively to the community. The fund provides financial assistance to students, through items such as school levies, excursions, uniforms or books.

## Womens Refuge



Hope House is designed to provide accommodation and support for homeless single women with

children as a transitional place to call home. Through providing a safe haven for both mothers and their children Hope House provides services to support them moving into secure, appropriate and affordable housing.

## Refugee Assistance



Our VoRTCS program assists refugee families take up the opportunities within our society. VoRTCS

volunteers assist families with whatever tutoring support is needed, including helping the children with homework and reading / writing skills, and also helping the parents with conversation skills.

## Family Support



Families Back on Track provides a safe, secure, and caring environment for homeless

single parents with children and homeless families with children. The project facilitates the re-establishment of homeless parents with children into the community through support, education and one-on-one case management support.

## Indigenous Support



Our Tiwi Islands Education program is helping some of the world's most at risk children to have

a chance at a better future through providing education scholarships. Scholarships are provided through Downlands College in Toowoomba where children are supported in achieving a quality education with the view to attending University.

## Youth Program



Our Buddies Day Program offers disadvantaged children a safe and enjoyable day out each

month, away from the routines and influences of their normal home situation. The program focuses on being fun, inclusive and educational while partnering children with an alternative role model (buddy) for support.



## Make a difference today - make a donation

Option 1

I'd like to make a gift to support the work of the Society

\$50  \$75  \$150  \$250  \$500

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Donations over \$2 are tax deductible*

Option 2

I'd like to make a regular monthly gift of

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ (minimum of \$10).

Please debit my credit card every month until I advise otherwise.

### I wish to make a regular donation to:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Appeal            | <input type="checkbox"/> Tiwi Island Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Families back on Track    | <input type="checkbox"/> VoRTCS              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Refuge            | <input type="checkbox"/> Hope House          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Education Fund |  |

Please send me information to help me consider including the Society in my Will

Please debit my card:

Visa  Amex  Diners  MasterCard

□□□□-□□□□-□□□□-□□□□

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like a receipt emailed to me, providing your email address allows us to email your tax receipt to you, minimising postage costs and paper usage
- My cheque or money order is enclosed, crossed 'Not Negotiable' and made payable to St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland.



**St Vincent de Paul Society**  
QUEENSLAND  
*good works*