



VINNIES
SCHOOL
SLEEPOUT



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INFORMATION KIT

THANKS FOR GETTING YOUR SCHOOL INVOLVED IN A VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT

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This information kit will help you plan and host a successful Vinnies School Sleepout.

Together with Vinnies your school can make a real difference in the lives of the 1 in 200 people experiencing homelessness every night in Australia.

★ WHAT IS A VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT?

The Vinnies School Sleepout allows students and school communities to get a glimpse of the realities of homelessness on a personal level by 'sleeping rough' for one night. The Sleepout encourages students and teachers to **gain a deeper understanding** of homelessness, **raise awareness** of the realities faced by people experiencing homelessness and **raise funds** to support Vinnies homeless services in the local community.

Welcome to our Vinnies Sleepout family, you are joining thousands of fellow Australians just like you who want to make a real change to homelessness. Throughout the year and across the country schools, community groups and senior business leaders host Vinnies Sleepouts to help rebuild lives. Together, we are doing something about it.



THE CAUSE

Homelessness is an issue often overlooked and misunderstood in Australia. Despite common belief, children and youth are some of the largest groups of Australians experiencing disadvantage.



On any given night in Australia 1 in 200 people are experiencing homelessness. This figure includes a staggering number of children and young people:

- **More than 17,000 Australian children under the age of 12 have no permanent home**
- **60% of the homeless population is under the age of 35 and in the prime of their life**
- **Children face an 18% higher risk of poverty compared to other age groups**

You will notice Vinnies uses the words “experiencing homelessness” instead of “homeless person”. It is important to remember that homelessness is something you experience, not who you are.

It is critical that we provide people experiencing homelessness with the support to rebuild their lives and reconnect with the community. The ‘hands on’ nature of a Vinnies School Sleepout develops students’ understanding of the impact of homelessness and provides an opportunity to take action.

★ WHY GET INVOLVED?

Schools are uniquely placed to help shape and influence community awareness and opinions. Hosting a Vinnies School Sleepout will:

- **Encourage students to connect with an evident and increasing need in their local community**
- **Challenge your school community to raise funds to make a difference through social justice**
- **Allow your school to advocate for people in need in your community**
- **Raise awareness of the many faces of homelessness to help break down stereotypes**
- **Connect with local homelessness services such as food vans, refuges, or support services**
- **Bring students together with a united cause that benefits the community**
- **Further educate your school and community**

HOW YOUR VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Fundraising and promoting awareness can make a real difference in your school and wider community.

FUNDRAISING

Our work relies on donations from loyal supporters like your school to ensure we can continue providing our important services and rebuilding lives. Your Vinnies School Sleepout will play a substantial role in contributing to these donations.

Money and material goods raised will directly support people experiencing or facing homelessness in your local community.

DID YOU KNOW?

- \$15** pays for a day's meals for a family struggling to put food on the table
- \$30** provides someone a bed for a night in one of our crisis accommodation services
- \$50** provides school supplies and excursion fees for a child experiencing disadvantage
- \$80** pays for a course in life skills such as cooking, preparing for job interviews or basic computer skills at TAFE

See the Resource Kit for ideas and tips on fun, successful fundraising activities for your school.

RAISING AWARENESS

Homelessness is a growing problem with more and more people turning to Vinnies for help. The Vinnies School Sleepout encourages students to talk to family and friends about homelessness and how we can each make a difference.

Homelessness is experienced by everyday people living in your local community. Many families living on the edge are only three pay packets away from homelessness. If individuals have no family or friends to rely on, it's easy for someone to fall through the cracks and end up sleeping in their car, couch surfing or on the street.

There are three different types of homelessness:

- **Primary homelessness:** People without conventional shelter, such as people living on the streets, sleeping in parks, squatting in derelict buildings or using cars or train carriages for temporary shelter.
- **Secondary homelessness:** People who move frequently from one form of temporary shelter to another. This includes all people staying in emergency or transitional housing or people residing temporarily with other households, such as couch surfing.
- **Tertiary homelessness:** Refers to people living in boarding houses for 13 weeks or longer.

HOW TO ORGANISE A VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT

There are just **7 easy steps** to making the most of your Vinnies School Sleepout.

Editable templates and guides are included in our Resource Kit.

1 REGISTER YOUR SCHOOL

- **Register online** at nswvinnieschoolsleepout.gofundraise.com.au and our team will follow up with your Authority to Fundraise letter. Share your Vinnies School Sleepout page with others; it's an easy way to get the word out, raise awareness and collect donations all online. The website does half of the work for you!
- **Register offline** Alternatively you can register by completing the Offline Registration Form and emailing it to your local Youth Team.

2 PLAN YOUR EVENT

- **Choose a date** We suggest anytime between May and August to overlap with Vinnies Winter Appeal. The colder months also give a sharper focus on what it is like to have no home.
- **Pick a venue** Choose a suitable, safe location within your school: multi-purpose centre/ hall, classrooms, staff rooms or parish grounds all work well.

Remember, your location should be:

- Safe
 - Offer appropriate sleeping conditions for students (Exposure to the elements is great for atmosphere but make sure there are also sheltered areas in case of rain).
 - Near toilet facilities with all night access
 - Near power facilities so you can make hot drinks/meals
 - Near a water supply
 - Easily secured for participant safety
- **Permissions** Ensure you have permission to host the event from your relevant school administrator, that it adheres with school policies and that parents give permission for students to attend.
 - **Volunteers** Approach school staff and parents to supervise and participate at your Sleepout

3 PROMOTE

- **Posters** Hang some up around your school
- **School newsletter** Include details in the issues leading up to the event
- **School assembly** Talk about your Vinnies School Sleepout at your school gatherings
- **Launch event** Consider hosting an event to kick off the fun and recruit students and teachers to participate (maybe a Soup Van themed lunch activity). This a great way to jumpstart your fundraising too!

4 FUNDRAISE

- **Sponsorship** Ask students to seek donation sponsorship from as many people as possible - ask parents, relatives and friends, sporting groups, church or local businesses.
- **Activities** Host gold coin activities leading up to your Sleepout to raise awareness and fundraise (uniform-free day, soup van lunch, lunch time movies, breakfast clubs, etc.)

- **How to collect donations** Supporters can donate online at your Vinnies School Sleepout page, contribute to Vinnies School Sleepout collection boxes at classrooms/school events or students can record and store cash donations using their Sponsorship Form and their own money bag.

5 BE PREPARED

- **Risks** Consider potential risks around your event and plan how to reduce or eliminate them.
- **First aid & emergencies** Have a first aid kit and trained first aid officer onsite. Create a sign-in sheet at the door so you have a record of participants present. Tell students about emergency and first aid procedures.
- **Cardboard** Ensure there are enough cardboard boxes for students to sleep on or use to build shelter. Consider asking a local business or your school office to donate cardboard or asking students to

bring it in from home before the event.

- **Food Organise** simple food for dinner (and breakfast if hosting an overnight event). Ask a local business or your school tuckshop to donate items such as 2 minute noodles or soup or ask parents to donate items prior to the event.
- **What to bring** Send a reminder note to parents with event details and what to bring.
- **Gather your materials** Write up a schedule for the night, assign organising roles to teachers or volunteers and gather supplies needed for event activities, presentations and prepare certificates to hand out as students are leaving.
- **Take photos** Reserve the school camera so you can take lots of photos - ask a teacher or volunteer to be 'photographer' for the night.
- **Encourage donations** Consider planning a gold coin fundraising activity as a final push or as an opening activity at your Vinnies School Sleepout.



6 ON THE NIGHT

Here is an example of what your Vinnies School Sleepout might look like on the night.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

EVENING	
Time	Activity
5.30pm-5.45pm	Welcome and Event Overview
5.45pm-6.00pm	Information Presentation
6.00pm-7.00pm	Activity Stations
7.00pm-7.30pm	Dinner
7.30pm-8.30pm	Sleep Out
8.30pm-9.00pm	Reflection and Call to Action
9.00pm	Home Time

HIGH SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

EVENING	
Time	Activity
5.30pm-5.45pm	Welcome and Event Overview
5.45pm-6.00pm	Information Presentation
6.00pm-7.00pm	Activity Stations
7.00pm-7.30pm	Dinner
7.30pm-8.30pm	Movie
8.30pm-9.00pm	Sleep Out
NEXT MORNING	
7.00am-7.45am	Wake Up & Breakfast
8.00am-8.30am	Reflection and Call to Action
8.30am	Home Time

7 AFTER YOUR VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT

- **Thank everyone involved** Thank attendees, volunteers and donors to your Vinnies School Sleepout. Share photos, meaningful moments, how much you fundraised and how it will make a difference. Encourage last minute donations to help surpass your goal.
- **Update your school community** Write a report for the school newsletter or speak at assembly about what you learned and how your fundraising has made a difference. Vinnies State Support Office can also assist with local media.
- **Share your feedback** Share your Vinnies School Sleepout experience with our Vinnies team by taking our online survey at bit.ly/schoolsleepoutsurvey or by completing and emailing the Feedback Survey form so we can celebrate your stories and help improve your Sleepout experience for next year. Send us your photos so we can show the Vinnies community how your school has made a real difference.

- **Collect and return donations** Online donations through your Vinnies School Sleepout page will go straight to Vinnies. Collect all cash donations from students and ask your administrative office to help you write a cheque or direct deposit the donations to Vinnies. Contact your local Youth Team if you are donating to a local conference or service. You can drop off any material donations including good quality clothes, books or household items to your local Vinnies shop. **Further donation details are in the Resource Kit.**



TWISTS ON THE VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT

Worried a Vinnies School Sleepout won't work for your school community?

There are lots of ways you can still take a stand against homelessness in Australia and connect with Vinnies.

★ HOST A COMBINED VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT

Strengthen your relationship with other schools by hosting a combined Vinnies School Sleepout. Organisers can pool resources, host a larger event and it brings students together for meaningful collaboration.

★ VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT WITHOUT THE SLEEPING

- **A short sleep**

For younger students or 'time poor' participants, consider sleeping for only 1 or 1.5 hours. After 'sleep' time has concluded, gather students for feedback and sharing before they return home.

- **Afternoon/evening session**

Host an afternoon or evening event and focus on strong speakers and student activities instead of actually sleeping.

★ JUST A TASTE

- **Classroom presentation or activity**

Invite a local advocate or service worker to give a presentation or facilitate an activity in your classroom.

- **Themed lesson plan or student project**

Make a difference with your teaching by focusing on homelessness awareness.

- **School play**

Centre your play around a story that raises awareness about homelessness.

- **Social media campaign**

Invent creative hashtags or activities to raise awareness and funds to impact homelessness.



KEEP MAKING A DIFFERENCE AFTER YOUR VINNIES SCHOOL SLEEPOUT

★ ADVOCATE

Students have made history as the voice of change. Reserve time in the classroom to teach students how to write to their local MP in support of housing affordability and funding for social services. Even telling friends and family about issues affecting homelessness is an important way for students to make a difference and change others attitudes.

★ COLLECT GOOD QUALITY MATERIAL DONATIONS

Set up a food, clothing, school supplies or household goods drive at school and encourage students to donate good quality items. Food items can be donated to our food vans and material goods can be donated to shops where they help individuals and families experiencing disadvantage get back on their feet.

★ SAY HELLO

People experiencing homelessness often say that loneliness is one of the most difficult realities of living on the streets. Smile and say hello to people on the streets – this simple act sends a powerful message that they, as an individual, count.

★ FOCUS ON HOMELESSNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

1 in 18 Australians is experiencing disadvantage so the reality is that some students at your school could be experiencing hardship as well. Make the issue of homelessness and disadvantage the focus of a lesson plan, student project or school speaker. Get creative, there are many ways for students to learn and be moved by an issue, especially one so prevalent in our society.



11 "LAST YEAR I DIDN'T EVEN WANT TO BE HERE. NOW I'M DREAMING ABOUT MY FUTURE." — SALLY, 21

STORIES ABOUT REBUILDING LIVES

These true stories will give students a glimpse into the lives of three people who have experienced homelessness and have been lucky enough to rebuild their lives with Vinnies.

Share these stories in class or during your Vinnies School Sleepout proceedings.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS:

★ PAIGE'S STORY

When most kids were getting ready for the HSC, Paige was fending for herself on the streets. At just 15, Paige found herself totally alone. Her mother had passed away after suffering from leukaemia, she wasn't welcome or safe in her father's home because of an abusive stepmother, there wasn't any other family around, and she had very little support at school or elsewhere.

She spent her subsequent years couch-surfing, sleeping rough and relying on the kindness of friends. Her story shows just how quickly someone can find themselves in a desperate situation. Without the support that is so vital for teens and young adults, it's a fast downwards spiral. Poor choices seem like good ones – because they numb the pain, and hanging out with the wrong crowd is better than being all alone. Everyday Vinnies staff and volunteers are in homes, schools hospitals and communities helping people like Paige to rebuild their lives.



Of all women experiencing homelessness, the most likely to be affected are aged between 18-34.

“Thank you for helping me build my life again. I just needed that support which I've never had. The St Vincent de Paul Society have saved my life.”

FAMILY HOMELESSNESS:

★ SARAH'S STORY

For years Sarah found herself trapped in a violent relationship. Scared and helpless, she turned to drugs and alcohol to cope. Sarah was down and out, but there was a glimmer of hope left in her life – her children. She refused to let them go through this kind of upbringing. So one day, she got up in the middle of the night and drove away from everything. But Sarah was homeless, forcing her to seek refuge in her car. She barely had enough money to provide for her kids, let alone herself. That's when she found the strength to reach out to an old acquaintance, who put her in touch with Vinnies. Shortly after, her life began to change. Vinnies helped find Sarah a home, along with food, clothes and school supplies for her children. Emotionally, we've supported her every step of the way. Vinnies have helped Sarah break out of the abuse cycle, while transforming her into an ambitious mother, who is currently studying at university and volunteering at her son's school. Even her children can sense her newfound happiness.

In fact, 36% of people who access homelessness services have experienced domestic and family violence.

“There was so much violence. It got to the point where I felt like I would die if I stayed.”

SLEEPING ROUGH:

★ VICTOR'S STORY

When Victor was a young man, he arrived in Australia completely alone. He had left everything behind – his family, his friends, and even his qualifications. His nursing degree was not recognised in Australia so Victor did whatever he could to earn a living and build a better life for himself. He worked hard for many years, but one morning in 2002 Victor's life took an unexpected turn. As he was getting ready for work, he suffered a sudden stroke and collapsed on the floor. After the stroke Victor tried his hardest to keep earning a living, but eventually his poor health resulted in the loss of his job. Victor didn't have a passport or birth certificate so trying to access employment

benefits was like running in circles. With nowhere else to go, Victor found himself on the street. Despite their determination and resilience, life's twists and turns can leave people in a desperate situation with no one to call upon. That's where Vinnies steps in, because we believe that everyone should feel safe, supported and listened to. When Victor came to the Matthew Talbot Hostel, he found a safe haven. Through Vinnies and the help of his caseworker, Victor secured a place to call home and was able to access employment benefits, life skills courses and extra medical support.

In NSW alone 28,190 people are either sleeping rough or living in unsafe or insecure housing every night.

“I think I'd still be on the streets. I am very lucky.”



ABOUT VINNIES

For over 160 years, the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia (fondly known as 'Vinnies') has been assisting people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in our communities.

Through a strong network of 40,000 members and volunteers in 1,163 communities and with more than 200 services, Vinnies has programs to support people experiencing a range of challenging circumstances from homelessness and family violence to financial stress, mental illness and addiction.

Vinnies School Sleepouts honour the beginnings of the St Vincent de Paul Society which was founded in Paris in 1833 by a 20-year-old university student, Frederic Ozanam, who was determined to take action to support people experiencing disadvantage. Like Frederic, you have a powerful ability as students and educators to offer a hand up to people in need by supporting Vinnies community programs and social advocacy.

OUR SERVICES

Vinnies provides practical frontline support, advocacy and friendship for the most vulnerable members of our community. Our services respond to the specific needs of the people we assist.

★ HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Vinnies homeless services include crisis accommodation, family services, case management support, access to medical, legal and financial advice, education, training and activities, and meals programs.

★ DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REFUGES

For women and children escaping domestic violence, our refuges provide crisis accommodation, case management, education and recreational activities, health and counselling.

★ FOOD SERVICES

Run through crisis accommodation, food barns, meal centres and Vinnies vans, Vinnies provided over 820,000 meals through its meal services across the state.

★ DISABILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Our programs provide opportunities for people living with a disability or mental illness to integrate and socialise with the broader community and gain employment, breaking down barriers.

★ SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ADVOCACY

Vinnies key social justice priorities include advocating for affordable housing and homelessness, energy affordability and cost of living pressures and refuges and asylum seekers.

THANK YOU

On behalf of the thousands of men, women and children who turn to the St Vincent de Paul Society for assistance every day, we extend our most sincere thanks to your school community for hosting a Vinnies School Sleepout.

You have made a difference for those people experiencing homelessness in your local community.

★ CONTACT US

STATE SUPPORT OFFICE

Community Fundraising Coordinator 02 9568 0211 events@vinnies.org.au

★ LOCAL YOUTH TEAMS

CENTRAL COUNCIL

CONTACT

Armidale	Michael O’Kane michael.o’kane@vinnies.org.au 0433 810 423
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