



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW *good works*

One Voice

ISSUE 32 SPRING 2012

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

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Thank you for believing in me

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

As newly elected President, I proudly bring you the latest edition of One Voice.

The stories you will read in this edition are happening across our cities and towns each and every day and would not be possible without your crucial financial support. As more Australians turn to the St Vincent de Paul Society for assistance, your generous support means they have someone to rely on in their time of need. Thank you.

In this edition, you will read about the great work of our Conference members, the lifeline of the Society, who across the state last year undertook over 200,000 home visitations and provided around \$16 million in assistance with food, clothing, bills and other necessities. In one Sydney Conference, members are providing assistance to perhaps the most vulnerable amongst us, those recently arrived in our country, desperately trying to keep their heads above water as they build a new life.

There is a quote attributed to St. Francis Xavier which says, "Give me the child until he is seven and I'll give

you the man." These crucial early years can have a lifelong impact. You will read about the important work of the Margaret Druitt Day Care Centre in Western Sydney that provides a safe environment for children from low income and disadvantaged families to play, learn and reach their potential.

I also take this opportunity to thank corporate Australia who recently raised over \$1.8 million in NSW for our homeless services at the Vinnies CEO Sleepout. At the CEO Sleepout, we heard the touching story of a young homeless woman, Laura. You will read her inspirational story in this edition as well as a recount of this special event.

Once again, thank you for your support. Together we can continue to heed the call of our founder Blessed Frederic Ozanam who said, "Let us do without hesitation whatever good lies at our hands."

Yours sincerely,

Ray Reynolds
President, NSW State Council
St Vincent de Paul Society

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT AND COMPASSION

Last winter was tough. We saw first hand people lose their jobs as major Australian companies downsized due to financial pressures; manufacturing and tourism industries seeking cheaper, offshore labour; property shortages pushing up rental prices and hikes in electricity prices.

We know that there is no easy solution to poverty; it is your donations, commitment and compassion that help create opportunities for real change.

Thanks to your donations last winter, we were able to provide \$3.4 million worth of assistance to people in desperate need.

Your continued and generous support is invaluable. Thank you. ■

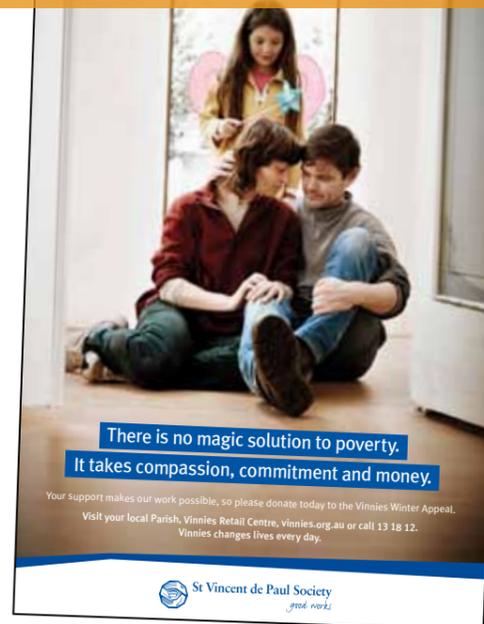


Photo 1 (L to R): Ian Narev (Commonwealth Bank), Peter McIntyre (Transgrid) and Ellie Comerford (Genworth), Photo 2: Gail Kelly (Westpac) Photo 3: Ann Sherry (Carnival Australia)



BOSSSES ROUGH IT FOR AUSTRALIA'S HOMELESS

Every night in Australia, over 100,000 Australians find themselves homeless. Each June, hundreds of Australia's leading CEOs sleep out in support of the St Vincent de Paul Society's homeless services, so that men, women and children who have no place to call home are provided with crucial support.

The 7th Vinnies CEO Sleepout took place in capital cities across Australia on Thursday 21 June, raising \$5.3 million. This year's event focused on breaking down perceptions of homelessness, and the concept that by investing in someone's future, CEOs can truly make a difference.

Armed with nothing more than a sheet of cardboard and a sleeping bag, CEOs including Gail Kelly, Westpac Banking Corporation; Ian Narev, Commonwealth Bank; and Ann Sherry AO, Carnival Australia got a small glimpse of what life is like on the streets for thousands of homeless Australians.

Ann Sherry AO from Carnival Australia was taking part in her first Vinnies CEO Sleepout and said she was honoured to help raise awareness of homelessness as well as some much needed funds.

"Vinnies came and talked to me about the number of

women and children who are homeless and it touched a chord. It is a statistic and phenomena that we shouldn't tolerate, and I think that is true of all homelessness," said Ms Sherry.

Another first-timer, Member for Wentworth, Malcolm Turnbull feels that homelessness is a blight on Australia's landscape.

"Homelessness is a disgrace; it's a disgrace to our country that so many Australians are homeless. This is one way, just one of many, to raise consciousness about it and also to raise a lot of money."

Speaking of the great support from corporate Australia and the incredible fundraising result, Graham West, CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW said: "It is incredibly inspiring to see so many of the country's business leaders put their hand up to experience a night on the cold concrete, not only to try and grasp the enormity of homelessness, but raise important funds to combat this insidious issue."

To see how funds raised helped Vinnies homeless services last year go to www.ceosleepout.org.au ■



PROVIDING CRUCIAL HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

In outer Sydney, the St Vincent de Paul Society is providing a crucial service that assists young people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. Vinnies Youth Housing Macarthur addresses the often high need suburbs of the Macarthur Local Government area and surrounds.

The service offers safe, affordable semi-supported medium to long term housing for young men and

women aged 16 to 21 years, and sole parents and young families aged 16-24 years of age.

Vinnies Youth Housing provides a supportive environment for up to two years which allows a focus on maintaining family contacts and restoring the young person back to the family home if safe to do so.

Each young person is assigned an individual case

manager throughout their tenancy to assist them to develop life skills, complete their education, improve their parenting skills, maintain their tenancy and prepare them for independent living.

One young woman easing back into independence is Laura, a 21 year old who says she feels like she has been homeless forever. Laura has been in and out of homelessness since she was ten, the product of a dysfunctional home with a mother who suffered from mental health issues and drug addiction. At far too tender an age, Laura was left to her own devices.

“To me homelessness is feeling isolated, desperate and inferior. It’s meant struggling just to complete everyday life tasks and fighting to try and build yourself a brighter future,” said Laura.

Having never met her real father and not knowing where to turn to after her mother kicked her out of the house, Laura went from one temporary solution to another, often finding herself on the streets.

After sleeping on a friend’s couch for some months, Laura ended up in foster care away from her school and the few friends she had managed to make. Feeling isolated and lonely, she called her mother asking if she could return home to Sydney.

Laura ended up living back at her mother’s house for about a year. During this time she remembers the mental and physical abuse she had to endure. After one particularly violent altercation, Laura was once again forced to flee what should be every child’s safe haven – her mother’s side.



“Not having any friends and no family I was left with no other option but to go to a crisis refuge. When I got to the refuge I was shocked and scared, I didn’t know what to expect,” she recalls.

For years, Laura went from crisis refuge to crisis refuge, to friends, to boyfriends, couch surfing, then on to medium term refuges.

“I was exhausted. It seemed no matter how hard I fought and how strong I stayed, I would have to start all over again somewhere new,” explains Laura.

At her lowest point, she was eventually put in contact with Vinnies. Laura was placed in a property and explains that, “for the first time in a long time” she felt comfortable and safe.

“I have my own room and my own privacy. This experience has had a really positive impact on my life.

“Homelessness touches every aspect of your life and shapes who you are. It is a dark relentless suffering that is hard to break free from,” she adds.

Thank you for supporting young people like Laura so that they can have a brighter future. ■



MEMBERS LEND A HAND TO THOSE MOST IN NEED

The St Vincent de Paul Society has a wide-reaching network of members that are relied upon to provide care and support at a grass-roots level, with a key function being visiting people in their homes who are struggling either financially, emotionally or sadly both.

Members in a Sydney Conference have been busy helping a young family from Afghanistan who are doing their best to build a new life in Australia.

Baher was born in Afghanistan and has been in Australia for eight years. He is married to Ara, who is also from Afghanistan but has lived most of her life in Holland. Ara arrived in Australia on a fiancé visa and is not allowed to work nor is she entitled to any government support for her first two years in Australia. Ara became highly stressed after her arrival and her forced withdrawal from the workforce.

Prior to his marriage, Baher purchased a house but with only three days work per week, struggled to make the

repayments, leaving him with very little money to live on each week.

Last year, Baher and Ara welcomed a baby into their home. They did not receive the baby bonus and receive \$150 Family Tax Benefit a fortnight.

Seeing their plight, Conference members took the young family under their wing. They have paid for dental treatment, utility bills, land rates, and regularly supply nappies and other necessities. The Conference also looks to help the family in the long term and arranged for Baher to speak to a Vinnies' financial planner.

All across the state, St Vincent de Paul Society members are making a difference to the lives of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in our community.

Thank you for your generosity which allows our members to continue this crucial outreach work in the community. ■

EARLY INTERVENTION THE KEY AT MARGARET DRUITT DAY CARE CENTRE

On the outskirts of Western Sydney, a St Vincent de Paul Society long day care centre is providing more than just traditional day care services. Through its programs it is offering learning opportunities to children who might otherwise slip through the cracks.

The Centre provides affordable day care for around 90 children aged between two and five, from low income and disadvantaged families, allowing them to develop their full potential in their most formative years.

It is well-known that learning problems in children will impact negatively on their overall developmental in the long-term. The earlier a problem is identified and treated, the better the chances are for improvement.

The Centre focuses on meeting the individual needs and interests of each child and the programs are designed to provide children with the opportunities to build relationships, make good choices and develop language, problem solving and literacy skills at their own pace.

Importantly for many of the children, the Centre also



provides three hot meals per day as well as two tea breaks. Sadly, many of these children would go hungry without these meals.

Sarita has been working at the Margaret Druitt Centre for 16 years and says that the Centre feels like a "second home." Sarita oversees the daily running of the Centre, ensuring the children receive the best care and get opportunities to learn where they may otherwise miss out.

"The way all of the staff work as a team to provide the best they can for the children is the secret to making the Centre such a special place. The fact that the staff have all been here so long is a credit to our work and the passion we all hold," says Sarita.

Thank you for giving children living in poverty an opportunity for a good start in life. ■

Remember Vinnies in your Will and leave a lasting legacy

Did you know that there are other ways you can help the St Vincent de Paul Society that won't cost you anything now? By pledging to leave a gift in your Will, you can ensure that your contribution will continue to change lives well into the future.

To alleviate the confusion that often surrounds Will-related matters, we have prepared two useful publications to help you put your personal affairs in order. Simply complete and return this form for your free no-obligation copies.



Please tick all that apply

- Mapping your Assets** – a valuable and practical tool for recording your personal information
- Executors and Probate** – A complete guide to everything you need to know about the role and responsibility of an executor when making or executing a Will
- I would like to remember the St Vincent de Paul Society in my Will** – please contact me for a confidential discussion.
- I have already remembered the St Vincent de Paul Society in my Will**
- I would like an Honorary Solicitor to help me with my Will**

Title.....First Name.....

Last Name.....

Address.....

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Post to: The Bequest Team, St Vincent de Paul Society, PO Box 19, Petersham NSW 2049 or contact our Bequest Officers on (02) 9568 0234 or email bequests@vinnies.org.au.

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GIVING A VOICE TO THE HOMELESS

The Matthew Talbot Hostel in Woolloomooloo was abuzz with activity recently as Grammy winning musician and The Voice judge Seal paid a visit to the Hostel and the Ozanam Learning Centre (OLC).

Seal met clients and spent some time learning about the Centre's programs and facilities.

Seal, who himself was homeless as a teenager, met and performed with Jon, a budding musician undertaking classes as part of the OLC's music program. In the Centre's music room, the duo spent some time discussing everything from living on the streets, the importance of music in their lives, and even Jon's chances of trying out for The Voice next year.

Seal spoke frankly about his experience of homelessness, which saw him on the streets at the age of 15, fleeing an abusive father.

"I too was homeless, I slept in subways, I know what it is like to be without a home," he said.

Seal explained that his visit to services like the Matthew Talbot Hostel and OLC helps him reconnect and noted that for many homeless people the sense of not being noticed can be devastating.

"Part of the battle is being heard or just knowing that someone actually sees you," said Seal.

The OLC provides a range of education programs, recreation activities, a drop-in day centre and an extensive information and referral service in a safe, supportive environment.

Thank you for investing in the potential of people like Jon. ■

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ONE VOICE

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Because we respect the privacy of the people we assist, names in this newsletter may have been changed, stories summarised and pictorial models used.

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Type of donation

- I would like to make a **regular donation**, through the **Circle of Hope** regular giving club, on the basis indicated at right **OR**
- I would like to make a **one-off donation**.

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