



**23 May 2013**

### **Hunter Region CEOs sign up to sleep rough**

Hunter Region business and community leaders will sleep rough in Newcastle on Thursday 20 June to raise awareness of homelessness in the region and raise important funds for St Vincent de Paul Society homeless services.

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout has been running in Sydney since 2006 and in the nation's other capital cities since 2010. This is the first year that the Vinnies CEO Sleepout will be held in the Hunter Region. The Vinnies CEO Sleepout gives business and community leaders a small glimpse of what people experiencing homelessness are faced with each and every night.

St Vincent De Paul Society Newcastle/Maitland Executive Officer, Denise Lucas said that money raised as part of the Hunter Region Vinnies CEO Sleepout will go to address the increasing problem of homelessness in the local region.

"The area is experiencing a growing trend of homelessness and lack of affordable housing. Funds will be directed towards existing programs such as the Matthew Talbot Centre in Wickham and the Coachstop Caravan Park in Maitland. Money will also be used to support families struggling with the rising costs of housing and living expenses, preventing them from falling into homelessness," said Ms Lucas.

More than 105,000 Australians are homeless on any given night, including 7500 families. Half of the nation's homeless are women and that includes increasing numbers of older women. Sadly, more than 12,000 Australian children and a further 22,000 young people aged 12 to 18 have no home.

The Hunter Region Vinnies CEO Sleepout will be held on Thursday 20 June and participating CEOs will lay down their cardboard and sleeping bags at St Therese's Primary School in New Lambton.

Already some high profile CEOs have risen to the challenge including Matt Gidley, CEO Newcastle Knights; Kristen Keegan, CEO Hunter Business Chamber; Greg Holmes, GM Kooragang Island Site Orica; Paul Hughes, CEO Newcastle Airport; Chris Hicks, CEO Newcastle University Sports; Mathew Hayter, General Manager Mega Pacific; John Cootes, CEO John Cootes Furniture; Christopher Wallis, Managing Director GWG Partners; and Wayne Stewart, Managing Director Century 21Five Star Properties.

The St Vincent de Paul Society is challenging other local CEOs to 'Rise to the Challenge' and sleep rough for one night. To register go to [www.ceosleepout.org.au](http://www.ceosleepout.org.au). For more information contact [newcastle@ceosleepout.org.au](mailto:newcastle@ceosleepout.org.au) or 4967 6277.

**Media interviews available.**

**Media contact:** Sophie Bawden | (02) 9568 0278 | 0417 446 430