



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

One Voice

ISSUE 34 SPRING 2013

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

Thank you for doing something about it

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Dear Friends,

In this, the year of the bicentenary of the birth of our founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, we are reminded of how one person's commitment to make a difference in the lives of people experiencing disadvantage, can result in a movement that

today helps millions of people.

This edition of One Voice is testament to just this – that with compassion and faith we can make a positive difference. You make that difference possible with your ongoing generosity and support.

This commitment is also evident in the visitation work undertaken by thousands of our dedicated members. Home visitation sees our members meet with people in their homes to provide them with financial and emotional support. Last year our members made 220,000 visitations in people's homes, hospitals, prisons and nursing homes. You will read about this important work and a special service called the Redfern Taskforce, which is helping people in inner-city Sydney every day.

You will also read about Helen who spent time at one of our refuges that supports families escaping domestic violence.

Over at Ozanam Industries in Stanmore, the Society provides employment opportunities for people with a disability, so that they can reach their full

potential. The value of employment in building someone's confidence and self-esteem cannot be underestimated. As you will read, your great support has allowed us to undertake significant improvements of this very special service.

Regional homelessness is often overlooked and compounded by a lack of appropriate services. Fred's Place is a fantastic new service in Tweed Heads that is helping to meet a growing demand for homeless services in the Richmond-Tweed region.

Finally, we are thankful to the more than 300 CEOs in NSW who slept out in the cold on 20 June to raise funds for Vinnies homeless services. The event raised \$5.6 million nationally and over \$2 million in NSW thanks to their many generous supporters. Importantly the event also helped us reinforce our call on both sides of the political fence federally to recommit to halve homelessness by 2020.

You play an integral part in all of this positive action. None of it would be possible without your ongoing generosity and support, and for this we are truly grateful.

Yours sincerely,

Ray Reynolds

President, State Council
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

THANK YOU FOR DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT THIS WINTER

Thank you for taking up the challenge to 'do something about it' this winter. This year, we asked Australians to dismiss attitudes of powerlessness and be inspired to take action on the things that matter to them.

We are glad to say that we have once again received the generous support of individuals, community groups and businesses from across NSW.



Sadly, too many Australians experience a long, cold and often lonely winter but by donating to the Vinnies Winter Appeal, you helped us make a real difference to many of these people's lives.

Thank you for your generous spirit.

HALVING HOMELESSNESS BY 2020 A PRIORITY AS CEOs SLEPT ROUGH

In June, almost 1100 CEOs nationally and over 300 CEOs in NSW slept rough for one night to raise vital funds and awareness for people experiencing homelessness. Surpassing the previous year's totals, the event raised \$5.6 million across the country and over \$2 million in NSW.

Leading fundraiser for the night was Holly Kramer, CEO Best & Less who raised over \$148,000 with the generous support of her staff and customers. She was followed closely in NSW by George Frazis of the St George Banking Group with \$113,000, Matt Comyn of the Commonwealth Bank with \$112,000 and Paul Nicolau of the Australian Hotels Association NSW with \$90,000.

It is a shocking reality that in Australia today, over 105,000 people are experiencing homelessness each night. This figure demonstrates that there is still a lot of work to be done to address homelessness and that far too many Australians are being pushed to the margins of society; struggling to find a way out and rebuild their lives.

In NSW, 28,190 people are either sleeping rough or living in unsafe or insecure housing such as boarding houses, tents or caravan parks, with a significant and growing number living in overcrowded housing.



Holly Kramer, CEO Best & Less(L) and Deborah Thomas, CEO Bauer Media(R) slept out in support of Vinnies



When considering these figures it is important to remember that behind each number is the story of a fellow Australian who has experienced the extreme isolation and desperation of homelessness.

In 2008, the Federal Government issued the first White Paper in Australia on homelessness, *The Road Home*. It provides a national framework to effectively address homelessness and most significantly, committed to the goal of halving homelessness by 2020.

In practical terms, these targets have created a situation where state and territory governments have been trialling new approaches to see what works best in reducing homelessness.

It is important to note that reducing homelessness was never going to happen quickly. It's a complex issue that takes time and over the last four years the foundations have been established to get some strong results.

This is why the St Vincent de Paul Society used this year's Vinnies CEO Sleepout as a platform to call on both sides of federal government to make an unwavering commitment to *The Road Home* White Paper targets to halve homelessness by 2020.

An enormous amount of work has been done and it will be lost if the incoming Government in September – Labor or Coalition – walk away from the targets.

Thanks to our generous CEOs and supporters like you, we can provide the right assistance to get people out of homelessness.



LENDING A HAND TO PEOPLE IN NEED

The St Vincent de Paul Society has a wide-reaching network of members that provide care and support at a grass-roots level. Members visit people in their homes who are struggling either financially or emotionally or sadly both.

In NSW alone, the Society has over 5,000 members who undertake this crucial work on a daily basis around the State. Last year, Conference members and

volunteers made over 209,000 home visitations and an additional 14,000 hospital, prison, nursing home and Special Works visits.

In Redfern, a special task force has been at work since 1976, providing assistance to residents in the inner city, which includes some of the most disadvantaged people in Sydney.



Conference members from other areas, especially the Forestville region, many of them University students or recent graduates, established the Redfern Task Force. Initially, Task Force volunteers carried out visits to homes from Darlington to Darlinghurst as well as Chippendale, Redfern, Waterloo and Surry Hills. The demand was so overwhelming at the outset, that volunteers found themselves making up to 30 visits a night. This hectic schedule has changed over time and now an average of six to eight homes are visited per evening.

Siva Markandu, who has been with the Task Force for around 30 years, explains that at present there are over 80 registered volunteers, the majority of these aged under 35.

“The Task Force is now managed by a committee who were not even born when the original Task Force was established. It gives me pleasure to know that its future is in safe hands. The Society was founded 180 years ago by a group of young people so it is fitting that youth continue to contribute by helping some of Sydney’s most vulnerable and disenfranchised people,” says Siva.

Siva says that unfortunately, very little has changed in the nature of help sought by people coming to the Task Force and feels that people on Newstart, especially those with young children, are now worse off than ever.

“We must always have them on our radar and be willing to listen and cater appropriately for the individual’s immediate situation. Loneliness leads to mental health issues and addiction and addiction leads to other health issues,” explains Siva.

Numerous cases over the years have stayed with Siva, many of which continue to haunt him.

“You encounter people who are students or recent professionals, from homes not unlike your own, who come to the Centre asking for short term assistance. But those who need most support are people with mental health issues, drug addictions, refugees, the elderly and single parent families living in boarding houses,” says Siva.

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

IN 2012/13

THE REDFERN TASK FORCE:

PROVIDED HUNDREDS OF HOUSEHOLD ITEMS INCLUDING FURNITURE AND WHITE GOODS



MADE 2,843 VISITS AND ASSISTED OVER 3,400 PEOPLE



PROVIDED OVER \$103,000

IN SUPERMARKET GIFT CARDS



DISTRIBUTED \$20,000 WORTH OF ENERGY VOUCHERS

DISTRIBUTED OVER

300 CHRISTMAS HAMPERS





SAFE HAVEN

Helen was happily married. After her second child was born, she left her job to stay home and care for her children while her husband, Tom continued to provide for the family. Things started to go wrong when Tom began to feel the pressure of being the sole-provider. Initially, there was no physical violence, but the constant verbal put downs deeply affected Helen and by the first time he hit her, she had started to believe that everything was her fault.

It was only when he started to become violent towards the children that she walked out of their home and turned to the St Vincent de Paul Society for help.

Helen was offered a place at the Marian Centre, a Special Work of the St Vincent de Paul Society, that provides crisis and outreach accommodation for families who are escaping domestic or family violence. The children smiled as they were welcomed with bags filled with games, puzzles and lollies to help them settle in. Since she had come with nothing, Helen was immediately given toiletries and a small amount of money to tide her over until she could apply for support.

It was the first time in months that Helen and her children felt safe. Like many victims before her, Helen was touched by this kindness and told the staff, "I feel you treat me like royalty."

Within a few days, the children were enrolled at the nearby school. The teachers worked closely with staff at the refuge to offer ongoing emotional support.

Meanwhile, with the help of her caseworker, Helen was busy making plans for her future. Access to income support, health services and most importantly housing were top priority.

After spending some time at the Marian Centre healing as a family, Helen and her children were able to access a home owned by the St Vincent de Paul Society on the North Shore, where they could continue to rebuild their lives. Here they would continue to receive support as needed from case workers.

This property, which plays an important role in helping families transition from the Centre to their own rental property, was left to the Society by a generous bequestor. St Vincent de Paul Society Forever Friend, Sharon was aware of the needs of women like Helen but was unfortunately unable to help during her lifetime.

She knew the only chance she had of truly making a difference was to leave a gift in her will. By leaving a property that is now used to provide accommodation to vulnerable families, Sharon's generosity is changing lives now and will continue to do so well into the future.

Through generous donations and bequests, the St Vincent de Paul Society is able to support women like Helen and her children. A bequest, no matter how big or small, can change lives not only now but for generations to come.



OPPORTUNITY THROUGH EMPLOYMENT



Ozanam Industries has proudly provided employment opportunities for people with a disability for over 40 years. The service is dedicated to supplying high quality service solutions to the Australian business community and currently employs over 100 people in supervised, monitored and supportive work environments at West Ryde, Stanmore and Castlereagh Industries in Coonamble.

All work centres produce a wide array of products and services including sorting and assembling various commercial products for packaging and distribution such as show bags, conference bags and bulk retail items and mail fulfilment and envelope supply.

Recently, Ozanam Industries, Stanmore underwent a significant redevelopment including an entirely new internal fit out. Complete with a new roof, large eating space and balcony, internal elevators and climate control, the service has been transformed into a modern and light-filled work space.

Allyson Morrison, Disability Services Vocational Coordinator at Ozanam Industries believes that the real benefit of the redevelopment is providing the supported employees with better opportunities.

“It shows people living with a disability that the Society recognises them as valued employees and that they deserve to have excellent conditions of employment. The new space will also optimise opportunities for each employee to develop to their full potential,” says Allyson.

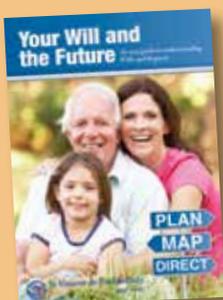
Your generous donations mean that we can continue to provide supportive employment opportunities for people with a disability.

50% of Australians do not have a current legal Will. Do you?

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- I would like to remember the St Vincent de Paul Society in my Will** – please contact me for a confidential discussion.
- I would like to enquire about the free services you provide to help me make or update my Will.***
- I have already remembered the St Vincent de Paul Society in my Will**

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FRED'S PLACE

For most people, the popular tourist town of Tweed Heads brings to mind idyllic beaches and tranquil rivers. The issue of homelessness would be the furthest thing from your mind. However, the reality is that the Richmond -Tweed region has a high rate of homelessness.

A total of 1765 people are experiencing homelessness in the region but this number is thought to be much greater. Twenty nine percent of the homeless population in the region are living in improvised dwellings and on the streets.

In response to this issue, the Society has recently opened Fred's Place, which provides assistance to people without a home in the Tweed Heads region. The service model is in line with the NSW Government's *Going Home Staying Home* strategy, which seeks to provide services and programs that break the cycle of homelessness.

After living out of their car for the past few years, Jenny and her 15 year old son Michael arrived at Fred's Place feeling worn down after a lifetime of abuse and disadvantage. Adding to Jenny's stress was her mental illness and the pressures of trying to provide appropriate educational and emotional support for her son Michael, who was affected by autism.

As she struggled to find the right support for her son, Jenny moved from state to state for the better

part of a decade. More recently Jenny was sadly diagnosed with cancer, increasing the concerns she holds for her son.

Fred's Place assisted Jenny and her son by providing them with meals, shower and laundry facilities, securing emergency accommodation, organising respite care, providing links to local health care providers and assisting with housing applications.

Lismore Central Council President, Brian Goodall said,

"Fred's Place provides an opportunity for people experiencing homelessness in the region to receive support and develop the skills and capacity to return to independent living in the community."

With the support of Fred's Place, Jenny says that she now sees a stable and positive future for herself and her son.

Thanks to your on going support, we can continue to provide assistance to people like Jenny and Michael so they can break the cycle of homelessness once and for all.

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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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All correspondence can be sent to:
Email: publications@vinnies.org.au

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