



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW *good works*

One Voice

ISSUE 35 AUTUMN 2014

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

Thank you for doing something about it

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear friends,

Welcome to a new issue of One Voice. In this edition we demonstrate that by joining together we can achieve great things.

Back-to-school is often a difficult time for families as they struggle to keep up with the cost of buying new uniforms, bags and school supplies. Many families are forced to make difficult decisions between buying essential back-to-school items and paying a bill or putting food on the table for their children. Across the State, our members step in and help out with mounting costs, easing the financial and mental pressure on families. You will read more about Melissa's struggles and how your donation made a difference.

Isolation can be devastating for many people and is often a major issue for those living with a mental illness. Breaking down these barriers is Compeer, a friendship program which matches volunteers with people living with a mental illness. You will read about the special bond shared by Jim and Thomas.

The Metro South West Brokerage and Wollongong Brokerage programs focus on early intervention and prevention of homelessness. You will hear how Vinnies stepped in to prevent Michael and Beth from losing

their home and helped them to regain control of their finances and tenancy.

In the wake of the bushfires that devastated the Blue Mountains in October last year, the Society's members and volunteers were among the first on the ground offering financial and emotional assistance. The Society received an overwhelming generous response from the public and is now working in partnership with local government and other charities to make sure help reaches those people who need it the most.

These stories are just a small example of the life-changing assistance our members, volunteers and employees provide every day. Your ongoing generosity makes it possible for us to continue assisting close to 500,000 people each year in NSW and for that we sincerely thank you.

By working together as a community, we can all do something about it, and be part of the change we'd like to see.

Yours sincerely,

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

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY CHRISTMAS APPEAL

This year we asked what your reason was for donating to Vinnies and we were overwhelmed with the wonderful responses we received.

At what is a time of celebration for many of us, far too many Australians struggle to provide the basics for their family, let alone cope with the extra costs associated with Christmas. Thanks to your generosity we raised \$870,000 which helped us ease the heavy burden felt by many people at this time of year.

In addition to this outstanding result, our friends at

IGA Australia and their customers raised an amazing \$420,000 nationally through their Community Chest Program in support of the Society's Christmas Appeal. We thank IGA for their support.

Your thoughtfulness for others during this festive season has eased the pressure felt by many struggling Australians. Thank you.





“It is funny how things turn out,” says Melissa. In 2003, Melissa was volunteering for the St Vincent de Paul Society and in 2004, she approached them for assistance for the first time.

Melissa was volunteering at Vinnies Shops during a time when she was the primary carer for her grandmother.

“I’ve always been aware of the St Vincent de Paul Society and whilst caring for my grandmother, I volunteered as a way to get out of the house and get a small break from the caring role,” says Melissa.



MELISSA’S STORY

Just one year later, Melissa would need to turn to the Society for assistance herself.

The Society has helped Melissa in numerous ways over the years including financial counselling, assistance with bills, advocacy, food and Christmas hampers and even holiday respite.

“The Society helped my family with a respite period, a holiday, which is something we could never have dreamed of providing for our children,” says Melissa.

More recently, Melissa has received help with back-to-school costs. For many families, the thought of having to purchase school supplies for their children is one that fills them with dread. The new bag, shoes, uniform, lunch box, books, pencils; the list goes on and on.

Melissa and her husband faced the daunting task of providing these supplies for three of their school-aged children. All of this whilst Melissa struggles with the emotional scars of having lost a child and her husband deals with mental health issues.

“With three kids at school now, we are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the costs. There are all of the basics and now we are also faced with school hats, library bags and sports hats, all at a cost to the parents,” she says.

The Society has helped ease the pressure on Melissa and her husband by helping out with their costs. These supplies mean that Melissa’s children will not feel like they are different or worse off than other children at their school.

Melissa says she doesn’t know where she would be without the help of the Society.

“I am so grateful and just hope that the support continues to be there for families like ours, and people who are in need. Thank you.”

Thank you for ensuring that Melissa and her children and many other families doing it tough are able to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

BRIGHTENING UP PEOPLE'S LIVES



While much of the St Vincent de Paul Society's core work of assisting people in need is achieved through home visitation, some Conferences are 'acting local and thinking global' through twinning.

Twinning is a partnership between an Australian St Vincent de Paul Society Conference and another Conference in one of several developing countries. The Society has over 950 twinning relationships.

In the New South Wales town of Orange, Conferences are helping our Pacific Island neighbours of Fiji by donating solar lighting systems.

A number of lighting systems have been sent to remote Fijian communities that have limited or no access to electricity. One of the motivating forces behind the initiative is Bathurst Central Council Twinning

Coordinator, Rosie Frecklington who moved to Australia from Tamavua in Fiji over 30 years ago.

Recently, Rosie headed back to her village in Fiji and witnessed the life changing effect the lights had. "There were a number of lighting systems already set up before I got there. It was wonderful to see the difference these lights have made."

Bathurst Central Council received a letter of gratitude from the community of Tamavua. Community leader Sophie Evans wrote, "What a wonderful thing for each and every one of us, as our homes were lit up by these lights. The darkness just seemed to disappear. You have all brought so much joy, brightness and smiles into our lives, families and homes. The school children will now have bright lights to read and write with and we, the older ones, can read also or do other things. The lights can be left on all night without us having to worry about paying higher bills."

Thank you for supporting the work of Conference members who last year made close to 220,000 visitations to people's homes, hospitals, prisons and nursing homes. Their work here in Australia and in small communities in developing countries makes a true difference to the lives of so many people.

EARLY INTERVENTION

The Metro South West Brokerage and Wollongong Brokerage programs work closely with people who are struggling to maintain their housing. Case management is provided to people at risk of homelessness to address any financial or emotional issues and people are connected to a range of services to receive specialist and long-term support.

Michael turned to the Brokerage program after he was diagnosed with a heart condition and could no longer keep up the long hours he had been working as a truck driver. With less income, Michael and his wife Beth were struggling to pay their bills and were facing eviction from their rental property.

The family had too many expenses including white goods rental, household bills, debt repayments and rental payments. Beth was becoming overwhelmed and wanted to file for bankruptcy.

With the threat of homelessness growing, Brokerage case managers worked closely with the family by advocating for reduced rent and a waiving of their eviction deadline. Brokerage also provided financial counselling to the family to help them manage their own budget as well as networked with service providers to manage the family's electricity and phone bills.

Thanks to your support of services like Brokerage, Michael and his family have regained control of their finances and have been able to stay in their home.



by pooling funds into the Blue Mountains Bushfire Mayoral Relief Fund which now has around \$3 million to assist those people who lost property or had property damaged by the fires. Other charities working with the Relief Fund are the Australian Red Cross and Anglicare.

A Society representative joined the independent committee set up by the Blue Mountains City Council to oversee the distribution of the funds to ensure a fair and equal process for everyone affected. Phase One of the Relief Fund has seen over 200 applications assessed with \$400,000 in payments distributed.

VINNIES BUSHFIRE APPEAL

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW was overwhelmed by the generous support of the Vinnies NSW Bushfire Appeal by people across the country. The Appeal, which raised close to \$1 million, is being used to support communities devastated by the fires last October in the Blue Mountains.

As always, the Society members were among the first on the ground helping people in crisis recover from these devastating fires. Dedicated Vinnies members worked around the clock providing emergency provisions such as food parcels, food vouchers, petrol cards, clothing, bedding and other material assistance as needed. Vinnies Parramatta Central Council also provided a free counselling service to affected residents and community members in Springwood.

Part of the long-term assistance that the Society is providing includes financial support, budget counselling, assistance with bills, food vouchers, material assistance such as furniture and clothing and essential advocacy and referral services. The Society also assisted many of the affected families with school supplies lost in the fires.

The Society is now working in partnership with the Blue Mountains City Council and other charities

More recently, 150 Phase Two applications have been assessed and funds will be distributed accordingly.

Alan Ruff, President Parramatta Central Council and the Society's representative on the Relief Fund Committee says that the Society had no hesitation in joining the committee.

"The Relief Fund ensures there is a high degree of transparency in the decision making process for the distribution of donated funds for relief purposes. The Mayoral Relief Fund Committee is dedicated to providing assistance to those directly affected by property loss and social dislocation," says Alan.

We thank you for your generous support of the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal which allows us to help people who have lost everything rebuild their lives.

The Society would also like to thank its very generous corporate supporters - Best&Less who asked customers to donate to the Appeal with any purchase across Best&Less stores in NSW raising over \$100,000; and IGA who supplied \$25,000 worth of food vouchers and distributed close to 30 pallets of food.

Almost one in two people in Australia will experience a mental illness in their lifetime.

People living with a mental illness can become disconnected from their friends and the community around them. Some people end up socially isolated and spend a lot of time on their own. This makes recovery from their illness challenging.

Compeer addresses this isolation by matching someone who is living with a mental illness in a one-to-one friendship with a volunteer. Compeer aims to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness by encouraging social inclusion and community education.

TACKLING ISOLATION

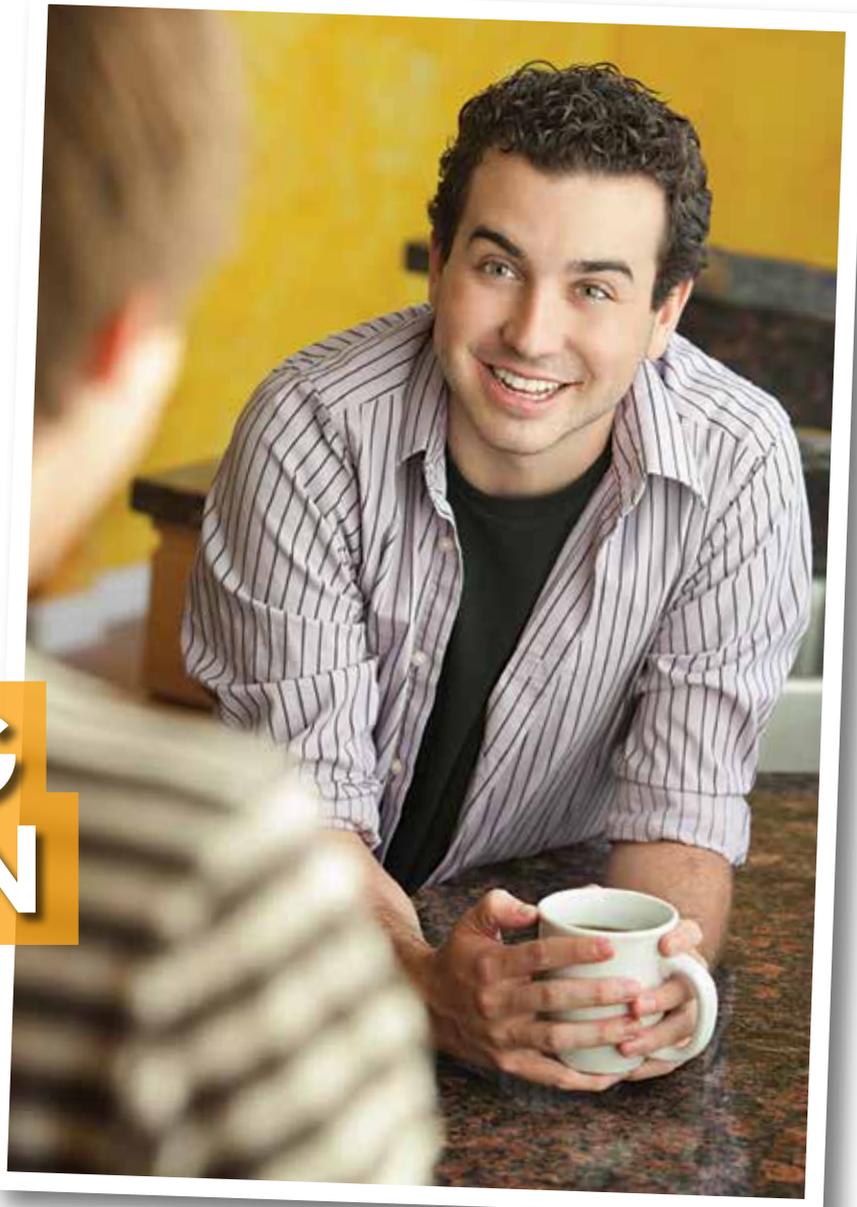
This friendship can have a big impact on the life of someone who is lonely, helping build confidence and a sense of connectedness to the community.

Following an accident that left him out of action for seven weeks, Jim began thinking about the many people who, through illness or injury, lose contact with family and friends and find themselves lonely and isolated.

Wanting to help out, Jim discovered Compeer and decided to volunteer. Volunteers meet with the people living with a mental illness for a minimum of four hours a month as a way of providing social interaction and breaking down the isolation.

Being in his mid-fifties, Jim was matched with similarly aged Thomas. Two and a half years on, neither of them have looked back.

“We meet up once a week for coffee to catch up on what has been happening with our families, work, sport, politics, music, and anything that comes up. Occasionally we go and see a movie or a performance as well.”



“Over time we have gotten to know each other much better. My wife and mother have both met him as we went to a musical performance together. Thomas is so easy to get along with and because he is about my age we have similar interests,” says Jim.

Having no experience with mental illness before, Jim has developed a greater understanding about people living with a mental illness and a great love of volunteering.

“I did not expect to get such a great sense of satisfaction in doing something for someone else. It is very rewarding,” says Jim.

Thank you for supporting programs like Compeer so that we break down the isolation that can so often lead to more serious problems.



JOIN THE 2014 VINNIES CITY2SURF TEAM TODAY

Are you interested in getting fit, fundraising for Vinnies and having a fun day out? Join the 2014 Vinnies City2Surf team today!

Registrations for this year's City2Surf on Sunday 10 August, are now open.

All funds raised for Vinnies will support people and families experiencing disadvantage across NSW. So whether you want to walk, jog, side step, skip, moon walk or run the course, your support will make a life-changing difference.

To register visit city2surf.com.au and select St Vincent de Paul Society from the charity listing menu.



Team members from 2013

Why not join the Vinnies team as a Gold Charity Runner?

- Registration fees will be covered on the proviso that you reach your pledged target.
- Start up the front on race day in a designated Gold Charity start group, leaving after The Sun-Herald red runners, with plenty of space and freedom to run.
- Collect your race pack from the exclusive Gold Charity booth at the Westpac Fitness and Health Expo, with no queue or wait time.

Hurry! Gold Charity spots are strictly limited or you can still do something about it through general registrations.

If you are interested in joining the Vinnies City2Surf team, either as a Gold Charity runner or a general runner please email kristina.kanaris@vinnies.org.au or call (02) 9568 0266.

Are you ready for the unexpected?

Life has a habit of throwing the unexpected at us, we never do know what's around the corner. That's why it's always important to be prepared, have our financial and legal affairs in order, and know how to access vital information quickly and easily. Having an up to date Will is a very good start.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has produced a free and helpful resource called Mapping Your Assets to assist you record your assets and important information.



Simply complete and return this coupon for your complimentary book.

Please tick all that apply

- I would like a FREE copy of 'Mapping Your Assets'
- I would like to remember the St Vincent de Paul Society in my Will – Please contact me regarding your honorary solicitor service in my area.
- 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

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

Last Name.....

Address

..... Postcode.....

Phone..... Mobile

Email.....

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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CORPORATE SUPPORT

The St Vincent de Paul Society is very thankful for the support we receive from our corporate partners in helping us to raise vital funds for our programs across the country.

IGA joined forces with Vinnies once again to help raise over \$420,000 nationally for the Vinnies Christmas Appeal. Throughout the Christmas period IGA customers could purchase a \$2 Vinnies Christmas bauble or specially marked products with all the proceeds going to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal. IGA



also auctioned off their IGA branded Vespa LML Star Series Scooter which was featured in their Christmas ad campaign raising an additional \$10,000 for Vinnies.

After the enormously successful fundraising effort by Holly

Kramer, CEO Best&Less at the 2013 Vinnies CEO Sleepout, the St Vincent de Paul Society and Best&Less entered into a new national partnership to continue support for people experiencing hardship around Australia. The *Shop for Good* initiative raised over \$225,000 to assist families struggling with back-to-school costs. By simply purchasing a \$2 Vinnies cardboard T-shirt in any Best&Less store, customers raised funds to provide essential school equipment and uniforms to kids who need it most.

Best&Less head office staff also built 25 children's bikes which they delivered before Christmas to a St Vincent de Paul Society refuge for women and children. One Best&Less team member said, "It was an amazing experience being involved, it was the most moving moment of my life. This is what the Christmas spirit is all about."

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ONE VOICE

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Responsibility for the content of this publication is taken by Julie McDonald.

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

For more information about the St Vincent de Paul Society, telephone: (02) 9568 0262 or visit: www.vinnies.org.au

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

Follow us on:



With your help we can make a difference

To make a **regular** or **one-off** donation to the **St Vincent de Paul Society**, simply complete the details below and post to: **PO Box 19, Petersham, NSW 2049**

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**.

Contact details

- monthly
- quarterly
- half-yearly
- annually

Donation amount

- \$100
- \$50
- \$300
- \$20
- \$500
- Other: \$

First donation commencing _____ (date) until cancellation.

Credit card details Visa MasterCard Amex Diners

Credit card number:

Expiry date: / Name on card:

Signature:

OR I would like to donate by Direct Debit Please send me a direct debit form



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If you wish to enclose a **cheque** (marked 'not negotiable') or **money order**, please make payable to: **'St Vincent de Paul Society'**.

Post to: **PO Box 19, PETERSHAM, NSW, 2049**

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Note: Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. A receipt will be mailed.