Business and community leaders arrived at Etihad Stadium prepared for a cold, uncomfortable and, at times, challenging night at the fifth Vinnies CEO Sleepout held in Melbourne.

After registering, 119 CEOs were allocated their cardboard and claimed a sleeping space in the open areas of the stadium.

While the temperature started to drop, the CEOs were served a simple dinner by our Vinnies soup van volunteers on the lower concourse area.

Soup van volunteers not only served the meals but they also chatted to participants about their work on the vans and the reality of what they see on the streets every night.

Participants gathered upstairs for the official welcome and proceedings which included presentations from author Andrew MacLeod, three people who have experienced homelessness firsthand and VincentCare CEO, John Blewonski.

To celebrate our fifth Vinnies CEO Sleepout, special five-year participation certificates were presented to the 10 CEOs who have consecutively slept out in Melbourne.

After the formalities participants headed back to the lower concourse where their cardboard and sleeping bags were waiting.

The roof of Etihad Stadium remained open adding a great but chilly view of the city. The overnight low was a breezy 8ºC.

The next morning CEOs rose early and enjoyed a hot breakfast of porridge to get them started for the day. Acting State President, Carol Messer, thanked and farewelled participants. By 6.30am everyone had headed off to reflect on their previous night’s experience and share it with their colleagues, families, friends and donors.
On Thursday 19 June 2014, 119 CEOs and business leaders gathered at Etihad Stadium to sleep rough on a wintry night raising money for and awareness of the issues of homelessness in our community – in all their complexity and diversity.

The participants and guests were challenged during the evening with presentations from Andrew MacLeod who spoke on corporate social responsibility and John Blewonski who shared the experiences of VincentCare in relation to the causal links of trauma and homelessness.

Most challenging of all were presentations from three quite remarkable and brave Victorians who had found themselves in the destructive spiral of homelessness. Their presentations told of their individual stories, but more importantly challenged the societal structures and policies that allow the soul and life destroying issue of homelessness to continue to exist in our country. There was plenty of food for thought for the participants as they spent the rest of the night on the cold concrete of Etihad Stadium!

In Victoria, $442,458 has been raised to date and nationally, $5,679,325 – a fantastic effort!

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Victoria will use the money raised to continue its responses, both in early intervention and prevention of homelessness and in delivering programs designed to offer safe havens and the potential to break out of the spiral.

Thank you to all who assisted in hosting and supporting a very successful evening; hard work and dedication was very evident!

Frederic Ozanam wrote in 1839:

May the Society of today, of which we are a part ... be a place where there shall be but one thing to learn — a thing that is irresistible, acceptable, convincing all, an admirably simple thing — which is none the less sublime and eternal as the God from whom it comes – a man called Charity.

I believe that this desire of Frederic Ozanam was well and truly fulfilled at the CEO Sleepout!

Thursday 18 June 2015 will see everyone (we hope) reconvene to keep the issue alive in the community’s hearts and minds.
THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

A huge thank you to all our sponsors for their generous support of the 2014 Vinnies CEO Sleepout.
Congratulations and thank you to all our CEOs for rising to the challenge, sleeping out and raising awareness of the issues relating to homelessness in Victoria.

- Ian Grisold, St Vincent’s Private Hospital Melbourne $22,367
- Paul Wolff, Porter Davis $17,475
- Anthony Roberts, Porter Davis $13,160
- Martin Day, St Vincent’s Health Australia $11,170
- Craig Dent, State Trustees $9,960

THE MORNING AFTER...

CEOs woke to a cold Melbourne morning at Etihad Stadium. After an uncomfortable night they gathered for a chat and shared a warm breakfast prior to being officially thanked and farewelled by the Society’s acting State President, Carol Messer.