



St Vincent de Paul Society NSW  
Support Services *good works*

# Frontline

ISSUE 46 SPRING 2014

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF  
ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY NSW SUPPORT SERVICES

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Thank you for making a difference

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

It is with my deepest gratitude that I share with you the latest edition of Frontline. You have contributed to each of these stories, so as you read, I hope each one will touch your spirit just as your compassion and generosity has touched the lives of so many people.

The St Vincent de Paul Society continues to provide early intervention and prevention as well as long-term support for people experiencing homelessness.

You will read about how our members play a crucial role in assisting people at risk of homelessness, helping them to remain in their accommodation.

You will meet Jason, who, with the help of the Matthew Talbot Hostel, was able to overcome

the trauma of his violence-filled childhood and subsequent alcohol and drug addictions, to regain control of his life.

Research shows that people sleeping rough are more likely to succumb to mental health and general health issues. This is why the work of the Matthew Talbot Clinic is so important. You will read about Phan's story and how the Clinic was able to help him take control of his health issues and build a better life.

There are many other stories like these, and together we can work to help people regain control of their lives and break the cycle of disadvantage.

Yours sincerely,

**Beverley Kerr**  
President  
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Support Services

## PROVIDING CRUCIAL SUPPORT

**One of the Society's strengths as an organisation is our capacity to identify people at risk of homelessness via our members. Our Conferences provide a significant level of support for those people who are struggling financially and may be at risk of homelessness.**

With the Society's focus on early intervention our Conference members often step in early to prevent people from falling into arrears on their rent and being evicted. In Lismore, members stepped in to help Joan and William, whose life was turned on its head due to illness.

When Joan and William first migrated from England to the warm NSW coastal region of Lismore they embraced their new life with gusto. Everything was going from strength to strength until William was sadly diagnosed with cancer and was no longer able to work. Joan was facing health problems of her own battling serious osteoporosis which needed pain management medication.

The couple had lived in Australia for nine years but weren't yet Australian citizens so were unable to receive government support or health benefits to assist with their high medical costs. With no income and the bills mounting, the couple were struggling to keep up with their rent and food costs.

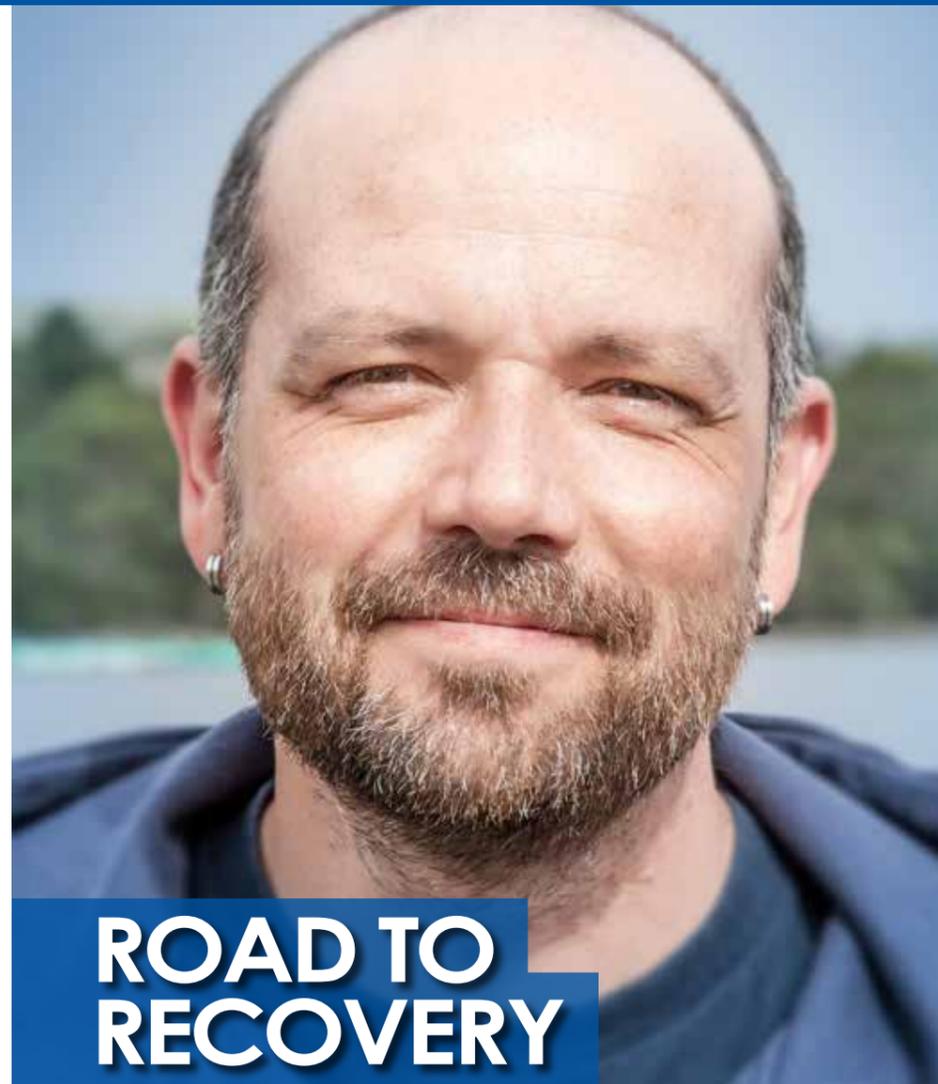
That's when they turned to the St Vincent de Paul Society.

The Society stepped in and provided urgent financial assistance for Joan's pain medication and the couple's rent. Staff also assisted them with their citizenship process meaning they were able to eventually get subsidised medications and a health care card.

Joan said that the financial and emotional support that the Society provided to them was a lifesaver.

"Without Vinnies I do not know where we would be. We are eternally grateful for what they have done for us and without their help we would not have survived," said Joan.

**Your support means that we can stop difficult situations from becoming worse by providing crucial financial support.**



## ROAD TO RECOVERY

**"I hadn't dealt with issues from my past and to open them was like opening Pandora's Box. Once you open it you can't shut it. The only way to shut it was through drink. I had to pretty much destroy myself to find myself," says Jason explaining his journey through homelessness.**

Growing up with an abusive alcoholic father, Jason never knew when his father would lash out next. His home life was volatile and Jason was constantly walking on egg shells.

Jason explains that his father was very temperamental and would randomly beat him or his mother. As he grew older, Jason isolated himself from others and refused to bring any friends home; afraid of what they might witness.

Unable to deal with his past, Jason turned to drugs and alcohol to deal with the pain.

Coming to the Matthew Talbot Hostel was the start of a long road for Jason. His road to recovery from

alcoholism and mental health issues was a long and tough one. What kept him on track he says was the support of staff at the Talbot.

"Whenever I would relapse I would tell my case worker straight away. He helped me become more open as a person as I didn't want to hide anything from him. I generally don't get along with people as I've been alone for the last 20 years. I tend to do things myself but getting along with people at the Talbot has been essential for me to move on from this place. They have helped me and watched me grow as a person," says Jason.

Jason became involved with the music room at the Ozanam Learning Centre where he taught himself how to play guitar, something he describes as "life-changing".

"I began writing my own music and even got many of the music staff to jam along with me! Before, I used to think that if it was a nice day I would go down and have a

few drinks in the park but now when I wake up and it's a nice day I'll go play some music. By the time I've finished playing the music the thought of having a drink has gone," says Jason.

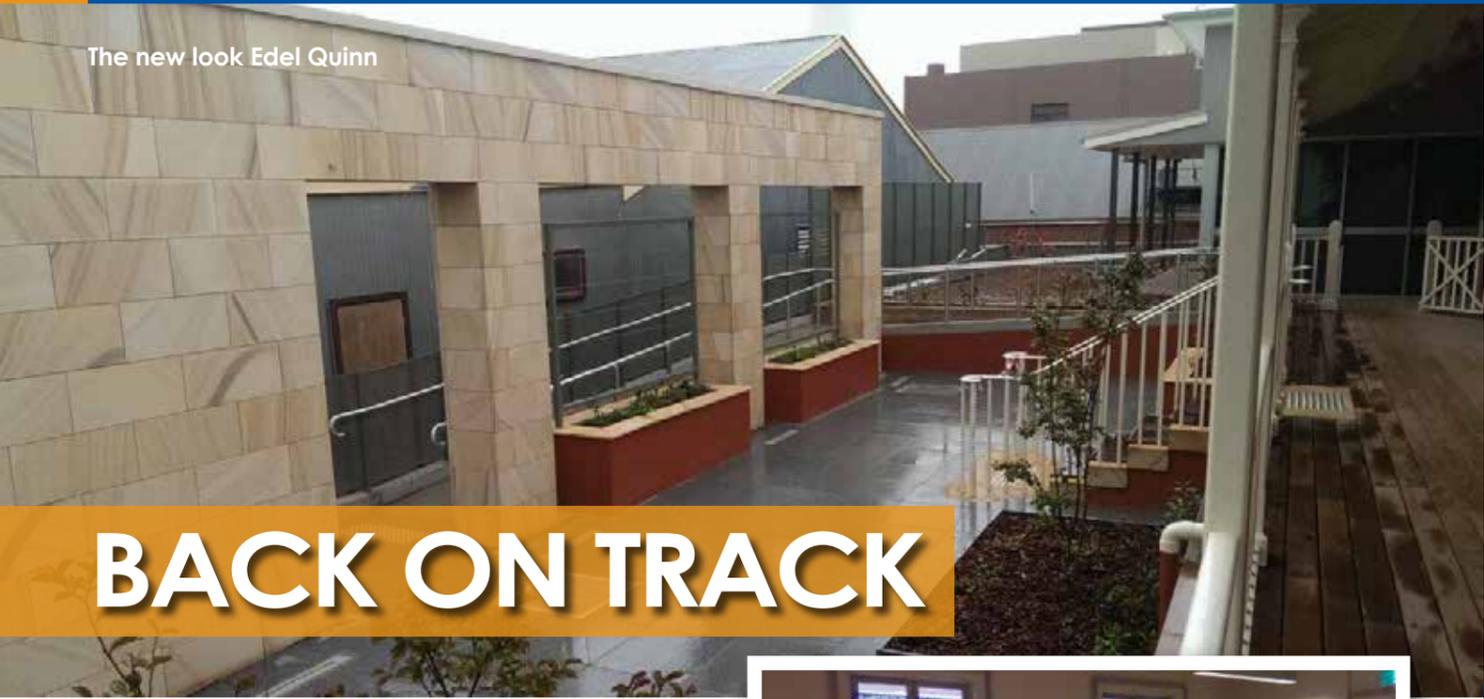
Through the Job Placement Centre, Jason was able to get a computer where he's able to write down all of his music as well as his poems and songs.

With a new confidence and strength, Jason has enrolled in a Carpentry and Joinery TAFE Certificate which he hopes will open up options for future employment.

"Thanks to the Talbot - they have motivated me to actually want to have a go and do things. This place is more than just a building. Without this place, I wouldn't be here."

**For people like Jason, the Talbot can be the catalyst for turning their lives around. With your generous support we can continue to make a real difference to people's lives.**

The new look Edel Quinn



## BACK ON TRACK

**L**osing someone special can often leave us feeling lost and bewildered. For Warren, the loss of his partner, son and father within a short period of time saw his whole world come crashing down. Warren was unable to cope and soon he fell back into homelessness, a situation he thought he had left far behind.

Warren began sleeping on the streets and moving around the State from one crisis centre to another for an occasional warm bed and meal. Desperate to get his life back on track, he moved back to his roots in Wagga Wagga. Back in familiar surroundings, Warren felt the strength to seek help for his issues, begin counselling and get in touch with the local Edel Quinn Homeless Service.

Edel Quinn has been providing specialised homeless services to men in the Wagga Wagga region for over 50 years. The service recently underwent extensive renovations allowing it to provide a holistic approach to homelessness including accommodation, individualised case management, counselling, specialised education and training facilities and importantly, outreach support to people living in the community. Edel Quinn has also expanded its services to support single women experiencing homelessness.

In line with the NSW Government's *Going Home Staying Home* reforms, the St Vincent de Paul Society provides a client-centered approach focusing on trauma informed care to better understand why people are experiencing homelessness.



With the intensive support of Edel Quinn case workers, Warren has now moved into his new home in Wagga Wagga. After his move, Edel Quinn arranged a new fridge and washing machine through their White Goods Program as well as furniture and other house hold items required to set up a home. Case workers continue to provide outreach support to Warren in his new home to ensure that he is able to maintain his tenancy.

Warren has become a valued member of the community and has started volunteering with his local Vinnies shop collecting and delivering donated items.

With the secure base of a home behind him, Warren is now focused on returning to the workforce and undertaking further training. Warren is determined to keep his life on track and when speaking about the support he received says, "When people work together, great change can happen."

**Thank you for supporting people like Warren who with the right support and opportunities can get their lives back on track.**

**F**or over 30 years the nurse led Matthew Talbot Health Clinic has provided comprehensive primary healthcare service to men who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The Clinic provides a range of health services to around 100 men each day. These services include medical, psychiatric, optometry, and podiatry care.

After Phan's marriage broke down he moved into an unlicensed boarding house

## PHAN'S STORY

until the landlord decided to sell, pushing Phan out onto the streets. Life became difficult for Phan and with no income and nowhere to store his medication; he stopped taking it all together.

With his physical condition deteriorating, Phan suffered two heart attacks and was referred to the Health Clinic by a local hospital that was worried for his wellbeing. Phan spent a long period of time in the sick bay where clinic staff managed his medication and diet and accompanied him to outpatient appointments to make sure that he understood the proceedings and outcomes of the visits. Staff connected Phan with the Metabolic Health, Heart Failure and Diabetic Clinics for more specific monitoring of his health problems.

Slowly, Phan's health began to improve. He began communicating with staff more openly, putting on weight and gaining a more positive outlook. With the help of Clinic staff, Phan started to take control of his medication, began managing his blood sugar testing and administering his own insulin.

Phan was achieving small milestones each day – small day trips out of the clinic, catching the train, going to



doctor's appointments on his own and buying his own food and clothes. Each small step gave him a greater sense of independence.

Phan has come a long way in a short time. With the right support from the Clinic and the Matthew Talbot Hostel and a great dose of self-determination, he is now living independently in community housing.

**Phan's story is just one of the many transformations that the Matthew Talbot Health Clinic sees every day. Your generosity means the clinic can continue to assist Phan and many others on their road to recovery.**



# CREATING POSITIVE FUTURES

**F**or many people, the decision to leave an abusive relationship seems an easy one, but the reality is far more complex. After years of suffering at the hands of her partner, Karla made the brave decision to leave with her four children.

After leaving the family home, Karla struggled with her traumatic past and the pressures of being a single mum. As depression set in, she found it increasingly difficult to keep her children engaged with school. Reaching her lowest point and fearing for her children's future, Karla was handed a lifeline by Vincentian House.

Vincentian House located in inner city Sydney, specialises in supporting families, women and children who are experiencing homelessness. Through a dedicated team of support workers, case managers and visiting clinicians and specialised services, Vincentian House provides trauma based care to assist families get their lives back on track.

Understanding the trauma that Karla and her children had endured, Vincentian House staff focused on the individual needs of each family member providing them with the best social, financial, psychological and emotional support.

After extensive work and support from Vincentian House staff, Karla and her family eventually moved into transitional housing and then their own Housing NSW property. During this time the family continued to receive case management support from Vincentian House and were able to work on their longer term goals.

At Vincentian House, Karla participated in parenting skills workshops and received support for her mental health issues, employment support and

financial counselling assistance. She also was given opportunities for specialised group counselling programs to deal with the demons of her violent past.

All four of Karla's children were involved with the Vincentian House Kids Engaged in Education Program (KEEP), which offers targeted support for children and young people who have experienced homelessness and trauma.

Education is a powerful tool in overcoming social disadvantage. The KEEP program provides opportunities for children to benefit from a meaningful and continued relationship with school and also linking them with new friends who have been through similar experiences. Karla's children also benefited from the Vincentian House tutoring and mentoring program. Caseworkers were able to link Karla's older children with a service that provides long-term mentoring and scholarships to provide school supplies such as laptops.

Karla is now doing a TAFE course to provide her with new skills and improve her chances of finding work.

**With your support Vincentian House can continue to create positive futures for more families like Karla's.**

## VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT SUCCESS

**T**he 2014 Vinnies CEO Sleepout was a great success with 1000 CEOs sleeping out around the country to raise over \$5.9 million for Vinnies homeless services. In NSW, fundraising reached \$2 million. This funding is crucial in helping Vinnies deliver a range of services and programs which address homelessness focusing on person centred care and early intervention and prevention.

Holly Kramer, CEO Best&Less and George Frazis, CEO St George Banking Group shared the title of joint Fundraiser of the Year for 2014. The retail and banking duo raised over \$212,000 each; calling on their respective customers and employees to help break the usually illusive \$200,000 mark.

Every year community and business leaders throw their support behind this event giving them an opportunity to not only raise funds to assist the more than 100,000 people experiencing homelessness in Australia, but to come together to learn more about the complexities of the issue and what we can all do to make a real difference.

This year the St Vincent de Paul Society also used the Vinnies CEO Sleepout as a platform to call on state, territory and federal governments to address the housing affordability crisis, a leading cause of disadvantage in Australia.

The Centre for Affordable Housing found that the number of affordable properties in the private rental market for low-income households in NSW decreased by 37% between 2006 and 2010. In addition, Shelter NSW found that in September 2012 only 10% of rental stock was affordable for very low income households and 27% was affordable for low income households.

With over 5,000 members in 420 communities across NSW, the Society hears the sobering reality of this issue as it visits almost 600 people in crisis every day. This places us in a unique position to understand the impacts of the housing affordability crisis.

Next year the Vinnies CEO Sleepout celebrates its 10th anniversary and we will be calling on previous and new CEOs to take part in the event as part of the 10 years, \$10 million, 100,000 reasons campaign.

**Thanks to our participating CEOs and supporters like you, we can continue to help people break the cycle of homelessness once and for all.**

## 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 NSW Support Services 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 NSW Support Services in my Will

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

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Post to: The Bequest Team,  
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Support Services,  
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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## BREAKING THE CYCLE



**The St Vincent de Paul Society is one of the largest providers of homeless services in NSW. The Society has a focus on early intervention and prevention, assisting people back into housing as quickly as possible, and importantly providing wrap-around services to ensure people can maintain their tenancy.**

The Society is supportive of the NSW Government's *Going Home Staying Home* strategy, as it aims to position services to respond much earlier, reducing the heavy reliance on temporary and crisis accommodation.

The Society is particularly excited about the focus on prevention and early intervention. Across the State, our members visit people in their homes and provide financial assistance to help meet cost of living pressures,

preventing people from falling deeper into crisis.

Under these State Government reforms all service providers had to tender for homeless services across NSW. The outcomes of the tenders were announced in June by the Minister for Family and Community Services.

The Society was successful in a number of tenders across the State covering a diverse geographical area including the Eastern Suburbs, St George/Sutherland, Inner City, Inner West and Fairfield/ Bankstown and Liverpool areas in Sydney, as well as the Macarthur, Wingecarribee, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Armidale, Illawarra and Murrumbidgee regions.

**With your ongoing support we can continue to work with people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to get them back into independent or supported housing.**

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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.

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Support Services

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## With your help we can make a difference

To make a **regular** or **one-off** donation to **St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Support Services**, simply complete the details below and post to: **PO Box 259, 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

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POSTAL ADDRESS

POST CODE:

PHONE NUMBER

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- monthly  
 quarterly  
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### Donation amount

\$100  \$50  \$300

\$20  \$500  Other: \$

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**Credit card details**  Visa  MasterCard  Amex  Diners

Credit card number:

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



**St Vincent de Paul Society NSW**  
*Support Services* *good works*

CALL THE DONATION HOTLINE: 13 18 12 OR VISIT: [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)

If you wish to enclose a **cheque** (marked 'not negotiable') or **money order**, please make payable to: **'St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Support Services'**. Post to: **PO Box 259, PETERSHAM, NSW, 2049**

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