



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

One Voice

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A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I bring you the latest edition of One Voice. It is with the generous support of people like you that the Society can continue to help people experiencing disadvantage who turn to us for assistance each and every day.

You will read about the grassroots work of our members in Lismore, who provide crucial assistance to people struggling to keep their heads above water. Last year our 5,000 members in NSW undertook 218,000 visits and provided almost \$20 million in financial assistance.

Recently, Holly Kramer, CEO of one of our most supportive corporate partners, Best&Less joined our members on a home visit in Sydney. You can read about Holly's experience in this edition.

We also thank the more than 280 CEOs in NSW who slept out in the cold on 19 June to raise funds for Vinnies homeless services. The event raised \$5.9 million nationally and over \$2 million in NSW.

Mental health and disability is a common issue among the people who turn to the Society for assistance. You will read about Compeer and Mary MacKillop Outreach, two Society services that strive to ensure people living with a mental illness or disability can do so with dignity and support.

You will be touched by Amanda's story – who with her daughter in tow – was courageous enough to flee her home and abusive partner. Read how, with the right support, she has been able to build a new life for her and her daughter, free of fear and abuse.

These stories are just a small example of the difference your generous support makes. You truly are making a difference. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

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

GRASSROOTS SUPPORT

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 provide crucial financial support and with that stop difficult situations.



ART TO ART

John with one of his artworks

Since he was a child John has had a passion for art, finding inspiration in creating beautiful things. Living with an intellectual disability, John would escape into his art, finding a place to express himself freely.

Some years ago, John became involved with the art therapy program at Mary Mackillop Outreach (MMO), a Special Work of the St Vincent de Paul Society that provides social, recreational and educational programs for people living with a mental illness and/or a disability.

Volunteers and staff quickly identified John's natural talents and began assisting him to develop his professional arts practice. John works across a variety of art mediums and often references his passions for dinosaurs and vehicles as well as many things from his personal world.

MMO Case Worker and Art Coordinator Vicki believes that John has one of the most prolific and imaginative minds at the Centre. She explains that John has a unique unconventional frenetic style of drawing that produces distinctive vibrant artworks that are full of movement.

"When John first came to the Centre he would draw cars all the time. The teachers began to introduce new materials to him and now he creates all sorts of models, paintings, tapestries and even jewellery," says Vicki.

Last year John exhibited some of his art at the local Council run arts exhibition that gives artists with a disability the opportunity to showcase their work. From this exhibition John was awarded a \$1,500 mentorship at Sydney College of the Arts funded by Leichhardt Council in partnership with Sydney College of the Arts.

John works one on one with his mentor Justene for two hours a week and has been given the opportunity to work with new materials and attend mainstream art classes. John interacts with other art students who have shown a great interest in his artwork.

Without the initial support of MMO John would not have been able to develop his skills and gain this wonderful opportunity.

With your generous help we can continue to assist more people like John to develop their passion and reach their full potential.



A NEW LIFE

For many women escaping an abusive relationship, the main motivation for leaving is to protect their children. Caught in a volatile and frightening world, children are often the silent sufferers of domestic and family violence.

For Amanda, giving her daughter Olivia a chance at a better life without the violence and fear was paramount.

After leaving her partner, Amanda found herself without a home, a job or anywhere to turn. She found temporary solutions at refuges or by staying with family or friends but eventually found herself with nowhere to live.

Amanda explains that it was at this time she was referred to the St Vincent de Paul Society by a friend.

“It really helped a lot and if I am honest I could have come here almost every week and asked for some sort of help, but I never actually did. It was always the Client Support Officer, Rhonda, asking if I was ok for food, if I needed anything,” says Amanda.

Amanda says that having someone to turn to was crucial as she didn’t have family or friends that she could lean on for support.

After spending some time at a Society women and children’s service, Amanda and Olivia eventually moved into a small studio apartment, where they have finally found some stability.

“We are in a place where we can stay, we don’t have this person in our life that is being abusive, we don’t have that stuff going on. Now you have to stop and face all of your problems and you have to start feeling it all and dealing with it and it is really difficult,” says Amanda.

Amanda explains that now that she is feeling better about herself, she is focusing on getting Olivia to a happier place.

“Even though she is the sweetest, prettiest girl that you could ever meet, she just has this really warped sense of self. She thinks she is ugly, she is dumb. She doesn’t have great self-esteem. It is hard,” says Amanda sadly.

Olivia has been seeing a psychologist and has also been attending the Buddies program run by the Society; something which Amanda says has been of enormous help to her daughter.

“They have been really great, always taking her to places that I can’t afford to take her, so to Luna Park, the zoo, movies, so many different activities. She looks forward to going. She knows a couple of the kids that go regularly and there are always a few familiar faces. Just knowing some of the people there is enough for her,” says Amanda.

Despite all that she has seen and the issues she faces each day, Amanda explains that her daughter is empathetic and appreciative of what she does have.

“She misses out on a lot, just because of our situation but she is just so appreciative. I will get her a book and she is so thankful because she understands that Mummy doesn’t have money for that,” says Amanda.

Olivia has been experiencing a few problems at school and is struggling to keep up with her school work. She has been diagnosed with a hearing problem that has caused her great setbacks with her reading and writing.

The Society has offered to accompany Amanda to interviews at Olivia’s school to try and develop a plan for Olivia that will help her settle both socially and educationally.

Despite all of the hurdles that Amanda and her daughter are yet to overcome, they have come a long way and are starting to turn the corner.

“I’ve always said that one day, when I am out of it all, I really want to help other people. I really do. I would do Rhonda’s job. I know exactly what it is like. I have been there, done that, been through it all.”

It is the generous support of people like you that gives women and children escaping domestic violence an opportunity at a life free of violence and fear.



VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT SUCCESS

The 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.



Holly Kramer and George Frazis

A FRIEND IN NEED

Being diagnosed with a mental illness can be a lonely and daunting experience. Having friends to rely on can be vital in the journey towards recovery. The Compeer program aims to reduce loneliness and stigma by connecting people living with mental illness with friends in the community. For Rachel, the Compeer program opened up a whole new world of friendships and allowed her to develop a new found confidence.

From her first day with Compeer, Rachel felt welcomed and valued. Rachel was given regular updates by Compeer throughout the process of matching her with a Compeer friend which helped ease her initial anxiety.

Rachel was matched with Michelle who, after almost five years, is now one of her closest friends.

From their first meeting, Rachel could see that Michelle was caring, understanding, helpful and most importantly non-judgemental. This was important to Rachel as she had experienced a lot of isolation in the past due to her mental illness.

“In addition to being a great friend, Michelle is also a supportive companion, confidant and positive role model for me. She has always provided great advice and guidance whenever I have needed it,” says Rachel.

Rachel says that she has created many special memories through Compeer like her 40th birthday, where Michelle spoilt her and took her to a high tea at the Gold Class cinemas. Or another birthday, which happened to fall on the Compeer annual dinner, where over 100 Compeer friends, sang her happy birthday.

Rachel would recommend that anyone living with a mental health issue get involved with Compeer.

“Compeer has helped me rediscover a sense of fun in friendship and expanded my life experiences. Thanks to Compeer I’ve been looking at volunteering with other organisations so that I too can give back to the community,” says Rachel.

Thanks to your generous contribution, we can continue to help people like Rachel make positive change in their lives.

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.....

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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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HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Holly Kramer, CEO Best&Less says a recent home visit she undertook with dedicated Society members left her "heartbroken" as she got a glimpse at the plight of the people the Society assists each and every day.

"It's hard to imagine what would happen to the people I met that night - all single adults who were lonely and had suffered unfortunate circumstances in their lives - without the help of Vinnies," says Holly.

It was a recent cold winter's night when Holly decided to join Society members to undertake a home visit,

the core work of the St Vincent de Paul Society across the State. Each year members undertake 218,000 visits to people's homes, hospitals, nursing homes and prisons providing financial and emotional assistance to those people who need it the most.

Holly says she didn't know what to expect on the visit but was struck by what she realised were holes in the social safety net that many of us assume will catch those people left behind. This she explained makes the work of Vinnies and other organisations even more invaluable in helping people in 'at risk' situations.

Speaking of the visit Holly says, "I was also reminded that most of us take so much for granted in our own lives: family, friends, jobs, food and shelter."

Holly Kramer has participated in the Vinnies CEO Sleepout in 2013 and 2014 raising over \$350,000 for the Society's homeless services.

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

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POSTAL ADDRESS

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- monthly
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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



St Vincent de Paul Society
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CALL THE DONATION HOTLINE: 13 18 12 OR VISIT: 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'**.

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

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