

MEDIA RELEASE**21 August 2016**

Celebrate National Op Shop Week!

The St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies) is encouraging people of all ages to ditch the department stores and step out of their shopping comfort zone during National Op Shop Week, which is being held from 21 August to 27 August 2016.

The first Vinnies Shop in Victoria opened its doors in Ascot Vale in 1926 and there are now over 100 shops across the state. Ninety years on, Vinnies Shops have become an iconic part of local streetscapes, in country and metropolitan areas alike, and one of the community's most precious social enterprises.

Vinnies Shops Retail Merchandising Manager, Liz Randle, said in an age where consumers are wanting more from their retail experience, op shopping is the perfect place to start.

"We've seen an enormous shift towards online shopping in the past decade, primarily due to retail price wars and sophisticated e-commerce channels. Traditional retail outlets are now working hard to win back the hearts and wallets of consumers with clever instore marketing," said Ms Randle.

"In this changing economy, Vinnies has always kept its unique edge. When shoppers set foot in our shops they are challenged to find things that deserve a fresh lease on life. There are surprises. Good conversation. Trends fit for revival. Clothes and homewares you can't find anywhere else. Now THAT is a memorable shopping experience."

Funds generated from the sale of goods in Vinnies Shops are invested back into local community welfare programs. Over 12,000 Victorians volunteer their time in shops and special works programs, to ensure people in need receive food, friendship and access to a range of tailored assistance programs.

"Social enterprises are making a huge revival, which is fantastic to see, and Vinnies Shops are a stellar example of how this business model works best. The community donates pre-loved goods to our shops, our volunteers sort and price those goods, which are then sold to the public, with funds generated used to assist people in need, in that local community" said Ms Randle.

Our dedicated team of volunteers are ready to open their doors with pride every day. Op Shop week is the perfect time to shine the light on their tireless work and encourage all Victorians to shop with an open mind and an open heart.

"It's retail therapy at its best! Feel good shopping, knowing that every dollar we receive has the capacity to help change a life."

Visit www.vinnies.org.au/shops to find your local Vinnies. Share your finds online and hashtag #FoundItAtVinnies and #NationalOpShopWeek.

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria Marketing & Communications Manager
Haley Price | haley.price@svdp-vic.org.au | 0448 386 917 | 03 9895 5884

- Interviews with Vinnies Victoria Merchandise Manager, Liz Randle, are available upon request.
- Photos at your local Vinnies store with volunteers, special displays and unique finds are available upon request.

ABOUT THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY:

The St Vincent de Paul Society and its wide network of members and volunteers provide practical frontline support, advocacy and friendship for the most vulnerable members of our community. Key services include home visitation; youth programs; soup vans; assistance for asylum seekers and refugees; compeer programs for people experiencing mental illness; education and tutoring; and professional accommodation and health services through VincentCare. The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has more than 40,000 members and volunteers. Internationally, the Society operates in 149 countries and has over 950,000 members. To find out more visit www.vinnies.org.au.