

**1 October 2016**

## **Don't just respect your elders – celebrate them**

The [St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria](#) (the Society) is today pausing on the [United Nations International Day of Older Persons](#) (UNIDOP) to celebrate its 12,000+ volunteers who selflessly dedicate their time and energy to support people in need; a large number of whom are retired members of our community.

UNIDOP is an initiative that aims to take a stand against ageism by drawing attention to negative stereotypes and misconceptions of older people. It is a timely day of reflection, coupled with the release of the [Australian Catholic Bishop's Social Justice Statement](#) earlier this week, which focusses exclusively on social justice in an ageing society.

St Vincent de Paul Society CEO, Ms Sue Cattermole, said this statement affirms the right of older people to social and economic participation in our community.

“This is an important document for informing our views and actions towards older people, which includes acknowledging the intrinsic value they add to our community and taking action to address issues of isolation, discrimination and inadequate end of life care,” said Ms Cattermole.

It is also an opportunity to promote self-awareness in the way we relate with older persons and a sense of gratitude for their contribution to the community, which often goes unseen.

“The St Vincent de Paul Society is proud to be supported by a large network of volunteers, many of whom are of retirement age, who undertake active and meaningful roles within the community. Our volunteers are empowered through works of charity to connect with one another and share their wisdom, care and compassion,” said Ms Cattermole.

“On the International Day of Older Persons, we would like to formally thank these individuals for helping to rebuild the lives of people in need, of all ages, and for being so generous in sharing their life experience – as Vincentians, mentors, friends, grandparents and more.”

The Society's volunteers give their time in Vinnies shops and grassroots community groups, known as conferences, to ensure people receive food, friendship and access to a range of tailored assistance programs. This includes visiting people within their home, at their invitation; a care model that respects peoples' desire to be heard and to be treated with dignity.

“At the very core of our organisation is a commitment to building compassionate communities; which means taking the time to listen and taking action to ensure people are well supported. Many of our older volunteers give decades upon decades of their time to improving the lives of vulnerable people, which is an immeasurable legacy for humankind,” said Ms Cattermole.

“This month we released a collection of stories, *A Call to Serve*, which aims to celebrate the life's work of five of our longest standing and most respected volunteers, which are a true testament to the value of older generations.”

Through the power of story-telling *A Call to Serve* recognises the contribution of Annette Burkhalter from Greythorn; Hugh Cushing from Whitehills; Jack Daffy from Warrnambool; the late Dick Pepper from Bairnsdale; and the late John Robinson from Blackburn South.

“I would like to thank each of these volunteers for helping to change so many lives and for setting such a strong example for future generations. I encourage people of all ages to read their stories and to watch their videos online, as they provide a deeper level of understanding into the remarkable contributions of older people,” said Ms Cattermole.

The media is invited to share and celebrate the stories of the 2016 St Vincent de Paul Society *A Call to Serve* honourees, which may be accessed via the following links: Annette Burkhalter [HERE](#); Hugh Cushing [HERE](#); Jack Daffy [HERE](#); the late Dick Pepper [HERE](#); and the late John Robinson [HERE](#).

- ENDS -

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:** St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria Marketing & Communications Manager  
**Haley Price | [haley.price@svdp-vic.org.au](mailto:haley.price@svdp-vic.org.au) | 0448 386 917 | 03 9895 5884**

**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](http://www.vinnies.org.au).*