



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**10 October 2016**

### **Mental Health Month – combatting social isolation**

This October is Mental Health Month. The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is organising and supporting a number of events for people who are struggling with mental illness and to promote awareness of the issue.

“Mental health isn’t something you can fix overnight and many people struggle with mental health issues for their whole life,” said Denis Walsh, President St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.

“Our members are dedicated to helping people better manage their mental health and improve their quality of life by visiting them at home.”

Jack de Groot, CEO St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, explains that social isolation is one of the biggest challenges facing our society, particularly for those with mental illness.

“Mental health problems are incredibly complex and varied and affect people from all walks of life. Services run by Vinnies NSW are wide-ranging to help encompass as many individuals as possible,” he said.

“During October we’re asking people to get behind our programs that have been shown to help those struggling with mental health. Come along and participate or you can donate to support our crucial services.”

Now in its fourth year, the success of the Resilience Film Challenge continues to grow in both its reach and impact. Hosted by Vinnies’ Ozanam Learning Centre in Woolloomooloo, this inspirational program provides first-time filmmakers with the opportunity to write and create their own short film over five days. Many of these budding filmmakers are experiencing homelessness or are marginalised within their communities. A professional filmmaker will be lending their skills to the entrants to help them develop their films and Dendy Circular Quay will be showcasing the films at an awards ceremony in November.

“Social isolation is one of the biggest challenges facing people living with mental illness,” said Mr Walsh, “and being disconnected from friends and the wider community, they may end up very isolated and spend a lot of their time on their own. This makes managing their illness a big challenge.

“To address social isolation, we run Compeer, an international friendship program. This year we are celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this successful program in Australia, with the official launch of a refreshed program, by participating in the Beat the Blues Walk and holding a craft event.”

Compeer matches someone with a lived experience of mental illness with a volunteer to create a friendship.

Ability Links is another Vinnies NSW program that offers support to people with disabilities including helping them maintain their mental health. Ability Links is holding a ‘Wellbeing Hour’ in Newtown to encourage people to take time out and look after their mental health. They are also running a stall at the Maroubra ‘Feel Good Fete’ so come along to learn more or to get involved.

**Media contact: Phyllis Sakinofsky | [phyllis.sakinofsky@vinnies.org.au](mailto:phyllis.sakinofsky@vinnies.org.au) | 0417 446 430**