

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED

16 October 2016

Poverty in regional Victoria: a community response

The [St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria](#) (the Society) is today seeking to raise awareness of the many, varied experiences of poverty in regional Victoria and the importance of a coordinated community response to this issue, to mark the beginning of [Anti-Poverty Week](#) (16-22 October 2016).

The purpose of Anti-Poverty Week is to strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship around the world and in Australia; and to encourage research, discussion and action.

St Vincent de Paul Society CEO, Ms Sue Cattermole, said the Society has more than 12,000 volunteers assisting people in need right across the state; and in regional areas, the impact of poverty is often felt very differently to those in metropolitan areas.

“Poverty is described as the state of being without means, resources, essential goods and services that are generally accepted as the standard of living enjoyed by the broader community. In regional and remote communities, there are often significant extra barriers to accessing these ‘basics’,” said Ms Cattermole.

“People living outside our cities generally earn lower incomes; have fewer employment opportunities; have reduced access to essential services such as health, education and transport; and greater vulnerability during natural disasters.”

During Anti-Poverty Week, the Society is seeking to raise awareness of the resilience of people living in regional and remote communities, and their true community spirit in responding to local people in need.

“The St Vincent de Paul Society has the largest geographical footprint of any charity in the state and our volunteer members are on the frontline, working with other charities and community groups, to ensure people in regional areas who need help, get help,” said Ms Cattermole.

“We support people to overcome hardships and prevent them becoming isolated, vulnerable and impoverished. Investing in prevention can help to address the cause of problems, and is far more effective and efficient than waiting for a crisis to occur.”

In the 2015-2016 financial year, the St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria provided over \$11.6million of emergency assistance to adults and children across the state, and over 42 per cent (\$4.9million) of this was delivered outside the greater Melbourne district in regional and remote areas of Victoria.

“We are proud to support a community-based response to fighting poverty. Without the help of our generous volunteers who give their time to take phone calls, make house visits, deliver material aid, and deliver meals to people in need, many people in regional areas would experience considerable hardship,” said Ms Cattermole.

Ms Cattermole said local charities and community groups are playing an increasingly important role in supporting those whose primary income source is government pensions and allowances to meet the rising costs of living.

“The cost of essential items such as food, gas, electricity, water charges, health and education is on the rise. Coupled with a 52 per cent increase in the cost of rent over the past decade, people are struggling to make ends meet,” said Ms Cattermole.

“During Anti-Poverty Week we want to recognise the work of our volunteers who are so generously giving their time to address this shortfall and stay true to the meaning of community to ‘love thy neighbour’.”

*To find out more about volunteering for the St Vincent de Paul Society please phone **1300 736 933** or email **volunteer@svdp-vic.org.au**. If you would like to make a donation to support our good works, please phone **13 18 12** or visit **vinnies.org.au**.*

FACTS ABOUT POVERTY

- An estimated 2.5million people or 13.9% of all people are living below the poverty line in Australia.
- Of these 2.5million people, 33% are single parents.
- Of these 2.5million people, 33.2% are employed and earn a regular wage (the ‘working poor’).
- 17.7% of all children are living below the poverty line in Australia.
- From 2001 – 2014, absolute poverty decreased from 12.9% to 3.9%. However, relative poverty (i.e. 50% of the median income) has remained relatively constant, decreasing slightly from 13% to 10.4%.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY: RESPONSE TO POVERTY IN VICTORIA

- **Prevention:** Many people face hardship in their lives. The St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (the Society) supports people to overcome these challenges and prevents them becoming isolated, vulnerable and impoverished. Investing in prevention and early intervention helps to address the cause of people’s problems, and is far more effective and efficient than waiting for a crisis to occur.
- **Emergency assistance:** This financial year, the Society provided \$11.6million of emergency assistance to adults and children in their local communities. Over 71 percent of this was food aid.
- **Vinnies Shops:** This financial year, the Society’s *Vinnies Shops* provided material aid to people in need valued at \$2million. The Shops also raised a further \$13.5m for community assistance programs.
- **Vinnies Soup Vans:** This financial year, the Society’s *Vinnies Soup Van Program* delivered 256,672 meals to people living on the streets, in boarding houses, and suburban areas in regional and metropolitan Victoria.

- ENDS -

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

SOCIAL MEDIA: Join the conversation online: #AntiPovertyWeek and #VinniesAPW

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.