

MEDIA RELEASE**23 December 2016****‘TIS THE SEASON FOR CELEBRATING THE WORK OF CHARITY**

The St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies) is today welcoming Opposition Leader and Federal Member for Maribyrnong, the Hon Bill Shorten, to its Vinnies Shop in Ascot Vale to celebrate the meaning of volunteering in the lead-up to Christmas and the profound impact of charities in supporting people in need all year round.

The Opposition Leader will today be invited to meet with Vinnies Shop volunteers to learn about the many, varied roles they play in giving pre-loved goods a new lease on life and generating much-needed funds to support grassroots community programs all year round.

St Vincent de Paul Society CEO, Ms Sue Cattermole, said Minister Shorten will have to roll up his sleeves and work extra hard to keep up with the volunteers, who are aged between 15 and 91 years of age, and have over 350 years of work experience at Vinnies between them.

“Ascot Vale was the first Vinnies Shop to open in Victoria 90-years-ago in 1926, so today we’re introducing Minister Shorten to one of the finest groups of volunteers in the country. These are our resident experts, who are highly skilled, loyal and entrepreneurial,” said Ms Cattermole.

“He’ll be tasked with pricing, sorting donations, sweeping, merchandising, dusting, and of course, serving our all-important customers in the lead up to Christmas. He’ll get a first-hand taste of the festive season retail rush and a nice morning tea to make it worth his while too!”

Vinnies is one of Australia’s most unique charities; a 60,000-strong volunteer-run organisation, which responds to people experiencing poverty and disadvantage within remote, regional and metropolitan areas. This includes over 620 shops across the country, which are an iconic part of local streetscapes.

“Between our Shops and localised groups of volunteers called ‘conferences’, Vinnies covers almost every corner of the map. Our conferences facilitate face-to-face assistance to people in their place of need - in homes, on streets, in cars, and more - and our shops generate funds to support their good works,” said Ms Cattermole.

Vinnies volunteers spend time changing, even saving, lives every day. Having meaningful conversations; restoring peoples’ dignity and hope; delivering material aid; supporting education; and raising money to support community activities via our Vinnies Shops, one of Australia’s most cherished social enterprises.

“I have great pleasure in asking our parliamentarians and wider community to join me in saying THANK YOU to our Vinnies volunteers as we enter the festive season. Their generosity of spirit, all year round, is a quality that deserves to be celebrated in our community,” said Ms Cattermole.

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SUPPORT VINNIES THIS CHRISTMAS:

- **Donate to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal:** Visit vinnies.org.au/ChristmasAppeal to donate directly to community programs.
- **Shop at Vinnies:** Visit vinnies.org.au/shops to find your local Vinnies.
- **Give a Vinnies Unwrapped gift:** Visit bit.ly/UnwrappedGifts to purchase a virtual gift for someone in need.
- **Give a Vinnies Gift Card:** Visit bit.ly/VinniesVictoriaGiftCards to purchase a gift card for Vinnies Shops.

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