

# Media Release

Thursday 6 April 2017



## Vinnies calls on CEO's to sleep rough

St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland has launched the 2017 Vinnies CEO Sleepout® in Brisbane, calling on CEO's and business leaders to rise to the challenge and sleep rough for one night so others don't have to for life.

The 2017 Sleepout will see participants sleep outside in the cold under the Story Bridge, while they fight homelessness in their sleep.

More than 200 business, community and government leaders will participate in the event on Thursday 22 June to raise awareness and much-needed funds to address homelessness within our community.

"The funds raised make a real difference to the lives of those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness," said St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland CEO Peter Maher, who will be participating in the event for the 7<sup>th</sup> year in a row.

"Over 9,700 Brisbane residents are homeless; in my mind, this is 9,700 too many."

Mr Maher said the Vinnies CEO Sleepout® is a great opportunity for business, community and government leaders to come together to make a real difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate.

"While you sleep, more than 105,000 Australians have no place to call home," Mr Maher said.

"Behind each statistic is the story of a fellow Australian — someone just like you and me — who has experienced the extreme isolation and desperation of homelessness."

Trevor came to Vinnies needing a roof over his head, and had been sleeping in his car until Vinnies was able to provide emergency accommodation.

"It was a lifesaver for me. Having a stable place to call home has helped me get my life back on track and secure employment," he said.

Queensland has the third highest homeless population in Australia, with more than 44,000 Queenslanders seeking assistance in the last year from a specialist homelessness service such as Vinnies.

Last year, Queensland leaders participating in the Vinnies CEO Sleepout® raised more than \$1 million, which has been earmarked for accommodation for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. In Brisbane, funds have been used to develop a program and partnerships to expand support for women and children experiencing family violence. Suitable accommodation is currently being identified, but it will eventually be a safe haven for women fleeing abusive relationships, with a range of counselling, social work and support services available to residents.

Vinnies provides crisis accommodation to individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as advocacy support, budgeting services, living skills programs, emergency relief, transitional housing and access to programs that help rebuild lives.

"Sleeping under the Story Bridge will be a real reality check, and an experience of what it can be like to be homeless. Together, we can help provide crucial support for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness," said Mr Maher.

Last year alone, Vinnies provided assistance to 265,000 people — one in every 17 Queenslanders.

To participate or donate, please go to [www.ceosleepout.org.au](http://www.ceosleepout.org.au)

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**Interview opportunity:** St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland CEO, Peter Maher (upon request)

**Vision opportunity:** Peter Maher under the Story Bridge

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