

MEDIA RELEASE

27 June 2017

COMPEER: 10 YEARS OF CARING IN BENDIGO

A compassionate community initiative that has been supporting people living with mental illness in the Bendigo region for over a decade, [The Compeer Program](#) (Compeer), will celebrate its 10th anniversary this Thursday 29 June 2017.

Compeer is a collaboration between the [St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria](#) and Bendigo Health, and over the past decade has assisted more than 141 locals experiencing mental illness to forge meaningful friendships within a supportive network.

“Our Compeer Program provides a unique and flexible structure to support individuals who are seeking a greater level of social contact, who may not have the pathways, relationships or confidence to do so on their own,” said St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria State President, Michael Liddy.

“We are so proud celebrate our 10-year anniversary for Compeer in Bendigo, as it means so much, to so many people.”

The celebration will include an invitation-only afternoon tea for more than 60 local professionals and volunteers who have had, or continue to have, an association with the program on Thursday 29 June. The media is invited to attend.

“We are welcoming a special line up of speakers for the afternoon, including those closest to the inauguration and ongoing operation of Compeer in Bendigo, to provide a detailed history and personal insights into how the program has enriched so many lives,” said Bendigo St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria Compeer Coordinator, Sandra Attwell.

Guest speakers will include St Vincent De Paul Society Bendigo Regional President, Brian Lenten, who was instrumental in establishing Compeer in Bendigo; Director of Nursing, Psychiatric Care Bendigo Health, Tim Lenten; St Vincent de Paul Society State President, Michael Liddy; Bendigo Compeer Coordinator, Sandra Attwell; and a selection of long standing Bendigo Vinnies Shop volunteers and Compeer volunteers.

“Our team of 48 volunteers located in Bendigo, give their personal time to meet with people one on one, to undertake a variety of activities including going for a coffee, op shopping or seeing a movie together. Often, this compassionate hand up is just what people living with mental illness need, to feel empowered and to reconnect with our community,” said Ms Attwell.

The Compeer Program does not come with any formal responsibilities, other than to offer a hand in friendship to someone with similar interests. There is no requirement to offer counselling or support services, but rather to offer a pathway into leisure time and friendship for as little as one hour a week.

“Compeer is designed to break down the barriers of isolation and loneliness that often affect people experiencing mental illness. Our volunteers find the experience just as rewarding as the friends they’re meeting with, which is a credit to the culture of volunteering,” said Ms Attwell.

Visit [The Compeer Program](#) page on the St Vincent de Paul Society website for more information.

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES: St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria Communications & PR Coordinator
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MEDIA CALL RSVP:

WHEN: 2:00pm – 4:00pm, Thursday 29 June 2017

WHERE: National Hotel (Pearl Room), 182-186 High St, Bendigo

RSVP: Members of the media are invited to the event. Please RSVP St Vincent de Paul Society Bendigo Compeer Coordinator, Sandra Attwell, by emailing Sandra.attwell@svdp-vic.org.au

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 in Victoria include home visitation; Vinnies Shops; youth programs; Vinnies Soup Vans; assistance for asylum seekers and refugees; Compeer 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 60,000 volunteers. Internationally, the Society operates in 149 countries and has over 950,000 volunteers. To find out more visit www.vinnies.org.au.