

MEDIA RELEASE**UNDER EMBARGO****1 May 2018****GET READY FOR ONE NO-FRILLS NIGHT**

The St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies) has today—1 May—launched a campaign to support recruitment for the 2018 Vinnies Diamond Valley Community Sleepout.

Vinnies is inviting members of the Diamond Valley community to rally behind local community and business leaders who are preparing for one no-frills night sleeping out to support the tireless efforts of Vinnies volunteers who provide a hand up to local people in need.

The Diamond Valley Community Sleepout, now in its third year, will be hosted at the Banyule City Council Office/Watermarc Building Carpark on Saturday 7 July 2018. This is a new venue, designed to cater for over 50 participants who are brave enough to sleep outside in the thick of winter. Their goal, to raise \$50,000 to support Vinnies' vital community services.

The Diamond Valley Community Sleepout is an initiative of the St Vincent de Paul Society's Diamond Valley Regional President, Mr John Ellis, and a team of dedicated local volunteers. John said the event is a chance for the community to focus on what's really important—supporting local people who are in dire need of assistance.

“In the last financial year, in the Diamond Valley region, our volunteers visited 3,312 households (which included visiting more than 3,160 children) and provided invaluable assistance to people in need of material aid and a listening ear in times of crisis,” said Mr Ellis.

The Vinnies Community Sleepout is an opportunity for business and community leaders to lead conversations about the direct impact of poverty in the Diamond Valley region and to raise funds that enable Vinnies volunteers to support people experiencing hardship in their local community.

“Right now in Diamond Valley there's a crisis in waiting. Private rentals are so steep that many people, single parents in particular, are finding it near impossible to pay the rent and keep their heads above water. They're often one high utility bill away from homelessness.

“We're currently working closely with several families to help them out of the rental trap by providing the basics that are critical for surviving day to day and for regaining their independence. Every dollar donated to our sleepout will help us to not only continue, but to expand this invaluable work.”

The Diamond Valley Community is being encouraged to support this event by making a donation and rallying behind local community and business leaders.

**Local community and business leaders are invited to register now for the 2018 Vinnies Diamond Valley Community Sleepout on 7 July 2018, or to make a donation to someone braving the cold.
Visit Vinnies.org.au/diamondvalleysleepout.**

- ENDS -

MEDIA: For further information or resources to assist with your story, please contact:

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EVENT DETAILS:

- **Register online:** Vinnies.org.au/diamondvalleysleepout
- **When:** 9.00pm, Saturday 7 July 2018 – 6.00am, Sunday July 2018
- **Where:** Banyule City Council Office/Watermarc Building Carpark Mezzanine Level, 1 Flintoff Street, Greensborough.
- **Who:** 50+ local community and business leaders.
- **What:** Participants will take part in one 'no-frills night' sleeping out to raise awareness and much-needed funds for the work of Vinnies volunteers in the Diamond Valley region.

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; 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.

ABOUT VINNIES COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL SLEEPOUTS:

The St Vincent de Paul Society encourages community and school groups to host Vinnies Community Sleepout and Vinnies School Sleepout events as a way to raise awareness of the lived experience of poverty and homelessness, and crucial funds to support local people experiencing poverty and homelessness. The events are hosted annually, usually in the coldest months of the year, to provide an experiential insight into the physical and emotional challenges experienced by people living in crisis or extreme hardship. Organisers must be over the age of 18 to host a sleepout event, but participants of all ages are welcome with appropriate consent. To find out more visit [Vinnies Community Sleepouts](#) and [Vinnies School Sleepouts](#).