

## **VINNIES VOLUNTEERS: BUILDING COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES**

On the first day of [National Volunteer Week](#) (21-27 May) the [St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria](#) (Vinnies) is sending a message of gratitude to its 12,000+ volunteers across the state and encouraging Victorians to consider how volunteering may become part of their lives too.

National Volunteer Week (NVW) is an annual celebration to acknowledge the generosity of more than six million Australians who volunteer their time to give back to their communities in a myriad of ways. In the spirit of this year's NVW theme, 'give a little, change a lot', Vinnies is also pausing to recognise their immeasurable impact.

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria CEO, Ms Sue Cattermole, said Vinnies volunteers are hard at work, ensuring that compassion remains an essential part of the fabric of communities – from small country towns to bustling cities.

"More than 12,000 Vinnies volunteers across the state work tirelessly to provide a hand up to people in need, all year round. They rarely seek recognition for their work, but feel a real sense of duty to support their communities. That is worth celebrating every day and, especially, during National Volunteer Week," said Ms Cattermole.

Vinnies volunteers support a variety of good works including Vinnies Shops; Vinnies Soup Vans; home visitation; tutoring programs; friendship programs for people experiencing mental illness; prison visitation; hospital visitation; financial support services; call centre services; and administration support too.

"Our volunteers are actively contributing to our national identity, as a country that cares, and I encourage everyone who has a little time to give, to consider ways in which they can give back too. Research shows that volunteers live happier and healthier lives and feel more engaged and connected – so there's much to be gained," said Ms Cattermole.

### **Just ask these Vinnies volunteers, who are sharing their stories as part of NVW:**

*"Look, I really enjoy giving back to others. Often in life we either walk past someone or read the statistics and don't often get the opportunity to chat and build a human connection. But Vinnies gives back in spades. Where else would I have these opportunities to connect on this level and be in a leadership role at such a young age? Tell me that."* – **Shaun Bourke, Fitzroy Vinnies Soup Van President**

*"The Vinnies Shop in Ouyen is very much a community. We'll always greet you with a smile and say hello. Having a Vinnies family is easy, and so, so rewarding."* – **Vickie Manley, Ouyen Vinnies Shop volunteer**

*"I just love it. It's as simple as that. Seeing the need out there—and believe me, it's everywhere—I can't stand around and do nothing. The need drives me. The soup van provides more than food, it provides friendship."* – **Allan Gray, Fitzroy Vinnies Soup Van volunteer**

*"You don't really know what the day will present you. All I know is that more people need our help."* – **Martin Rowan, Geelong Conference President (home visitation volunteer)**

*"I think volunteering has been great for my mind and I'm glad that I've made it a priority. It doesn't define me, but it means that I don't sit at home twiddling my thumbs. I feel like I'm part of a bigger world."* – **Genevieve Cormack, Vinnies Welfare Assistance Call Centre**

*"I get to be creative and it helps me with my teaching. I love that it keeps me connected with kids – it's a real buzz to see a student who may have been struggling with maths or English starting to get it. That look on their face when it finally clicks. I love that."* – **Qadrea Tahery, Dandenong Tutoring Program tutor**

*“For many people we visit, on the streets or in their homes, we’re often they’re only point of contact with the outside world.” – Lina Pahor, Footscray Vinnies Soup Van President*

If you would like to learn more about volunteering for the St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria and opportunities available in your local area, please visit [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au), email [volunteer@svdp-vic.org.au](mailto:volunteer@svdp-vic.org.au) or phone 1300 736 933.

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Interviews with St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria volunteers are available upon request.

**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; the Vinnies Soup Van program; 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 60,000 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](http://www.vinnies.org.au).*