



EMBARGOED
28 June 2018

GEELONG VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT: NO MORE SLEEPS

The St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies) will tonight welcome over 55 [business and community leaders](#) to GMHBA Stadium in Geelong for the state's first Vinnies CEO Sleepout event in regional Victoria.

As part of this fundraising and advocacy event, participants are encouraged to raise \$200,000 to support the work of over 2,200 local Vinnies Victoria volunteers, who rebuild lives and actively prevent homelessness, and to spend one night examining **#PovertyHomeTruths** outside their comfort zone.

Vinnies Victoria CEO, Ms Sue Cattermole, said the event is an invaluable meeting of minds and inspires influential leaders to unpack complex social and economic issues which they can personally influence in their leadership positions.

"We know that over 725,000 Victorians are living below the poverty line and according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data, homelessness has risen by over 11 percent across the state in the past five years," said Ms Cattermole.

"If we don't pool our energy now to address the unique causes of poverty in regional Victoria and proactively alleviate crisis, more and more people will end up experiencing homelessness – which is an absolute tragedy."

Proceeds from the 2018 Vinnies CEO Sleepout will be used to support Vinnies' local home visitation service, which has risen by an average 68 percent in demand in the greater Geelong district over the past three years – the highest rise in any part of the state.

"Home visitation is one of the primary ways our volunteers alleviate poverty and ensure people are empowered to keep a roof over their heads. We help with the basics when people have nowhere else to turn, providing food, utilities, education resources, medical needs and more," said Ms Cattermole.

"Visits happen confidentially, face to face, in peoples' homes or community assistance centres. In a world that moves so fast and at times, feels self-centred, it is heartening to stop and appreciate the work of Vinnies volunteers who invest their time giving back, by responding to calls for help in regional centres and country towns."

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout theme is **#PovertyHomeTruths**, which is designed to highlight the real, lived experiences that Vinnies volunteers see repeatedly in their service to the community. The Kardinia Park Stadium Trust has proudly sponsored the event and participants will sleep on a windy concourse at GMHBA Stadium for one, no-frills night.

One of tonight's keynote speakers is 46-year-old Diana Connell, a single mother of two who has received assistance from Vinnies volunteers. She will bravely share her experiences – her 'truths' – as someone who has survived family violence, homelessness, and is supported by Vinnies in her ongoing struggle to make ends meet.

"Would you believe me if I told you my family and I are living in the grips of poverty? Or that I spent three weeks living in a car in country Victoria, with my teenage son, when he was in the final stretch of year 12? Or that I still, to this day, keep bags permanently packed in the car, just in case we have to flee our home quickly? Because most people don't believe me. Simple as that," she said.

Following tonight's formalities, Vinnies CEO Sleepout participants will be challenged to brainstorm their own ideas and pledge the support of their business and/or networks to positively impact the lives of people experiencing hardship.

"Leaders who are participating in the very first Vinnies CEO Sleepout event in regional Victoria are truly leading the leaders. So we'll be inspiring their thinking with a number of case studies which clearly demonstrate the home truths of poverty. Our goal is to start a special kind of ripple effect in the lives of local people who need our help."



With tonight's forecast set to reach temperatures as low as 3°C, Vinnies wishes all participants a good night's sleep and recommends very, very warm attire.

"We are so grateful for the enormous investment of personal time and energy these local business and community leaders have made to support our charity. Remember, it's not too late to donate to support their efforts," said Ms Cattermole.

Support the 2018 Vinnies CEO Sleepout by visiting ceosleepout.org.au and join the conversation online using the hashtags #CEOSleepoutAU and #PovertyHomeTruths.

- ENDS -

MEDIA:

To register your interest to attend the event and/or to request to contact interviewee/s, please contact:

- Vinnies Victoria Marketing & Communications Manager
Haley Chartres | haley.chartres@svdp-vic.org.au | 0448 386 917 | 03 9895 5923
- Vinnies Victoria Communications & Public Relations Coordinator
Jen Vuk | jen.vuk@svdp-vic.org.au | 0418 863 719 | 03 9895 5877

SPOKESPEOPLE:

We have a variety of excellent spokespeople available in the lead up to and on the night of the event. See full list of Vinnies CEO Sleepout participants in Geelong [HERE](#).

RESOURCES:

- **Video:** See [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)
- **Fact sheet:** See [HERE](#)
- **Infographic:** See [HERE](#)
- **Website:** ceosleepout.org.au

EVENT:

- **When:** Thursday 28 June 2018. **Media call:** 6:30pm – 7:30pm. | **Formalities:** 7:30 – 9:00pm.
- **Where:** GMHBA Stadium, L1 Concourse, Brownlow Stand, Kardinia Park, 10 Kilgour Street, Geelong.
- **Bring:** Please bring photo identification.



ABOUT THE VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT:

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout was initiated in 2006 by a St Vincent de Paul Society volunteer in Sydney and has now grown into a successful national event, hosted annually during winter in every state and territory around Australia. It was hosted for the first time in Melbourne in 2010 and will be hosted for the first time in regional Victoria in 2018.

The event collectively raises around \$6.5m across the country every year, which is used to support vital services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty, including crisis accommodation, food vouchers, soup vans, rent assistance, referral services and more.

The event is experiential, allowing participants to reflect on the experiences of people living below the poverty line or without secure accommodation, by sleeping outside for one night on a piece of cardboard. To find out more visit ceosleepout.org.au.

ABOUT THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY VICTORIA (VINNIES):

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; soup vans; 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 vinnies.org.au.