



## Media Release

4 November 2019

# Help a family put food on the table this Christmas

The St Vincent de Paul Society (Vinnies) has today launched its annual Christmas Appeal, and is asking the community to think of people who - without their support - won't experience the joy of Christmas because of food insecurity.

According to food relief charity Foodbank, food insecurity is a situation that exists 'when people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life'.

Despite Australia being known as the 'land of plenty', food insecurity is a growing problem. The most recent Foodbank Hunger Report exposes a frightening statistic: 1 in 5 (more than 5 million) Australians have been in a situation where they have run out of food and been unable to buy more.

For many households, food is the only item in the household budget over which they have some control. Paying the rent, and paying bills such as gas and electricity take priority, and what little remains is used to buy the weekly groceries. But too often, their budget falls short of what they need.

In addition, many households on low incomes have no choice but to live in more affordable locations far from shops and services. They then incur a 'poverty penalty' when forced to pay for transport, or to purchase food at more expensive prices from a local convenience store. In some parts of the State, groceries – and particularly fresh food – are prohibitively expensive for families on low incomes.

The consequences of food insecurity are grave – particularly for children – with impacts including lethargy and tiredness, and a higher likelihood of experiencing psychological distress.

The Vinnies Christmas Appeal this year tells the story of 11 year old Sam and his mum Laura, who have fled a domestic violence situation. Laura has lost her job, and coupled with the expenses of setting up a new household, money is tight. So tight, that Laura often skips meals so that Sam has something to eat, but even that's not enough. Soon Sam's school notices his near-empty lunch box and puts Laura in touch with Vinnies. Laura reaches out and Vinnies volunteers come through with a food hamper and food vouchers to get her through this tough period.

According to Vinnies CEO David Wark, Laura and Sam's experience is just the tip of the iceberg and he hears stories like theirs every day.

"Can you imagine how hopeless people must feel not knowing where their next meal is coming from? As a parent, I couldn't think of anything worse than not being able to provide for my children," Mr. Wark said.

"This time of year it seems especially cruel, because images of Christmas are already all around us, and I just wonder how some people must feel in the lead up to Christmas Day, knowing that they might not have the means to enjoy a special meal. And that's why Vinnies is asking for your support, so that we can help put a meal on the table for families this Christmas – and beyond."

Last year in SA, money raised during the Vinnies Christmas Appeal went towards funding a range of initiatives that offer hope to people living in poverty or experiencing crisis - including food insecurity - with more than 40,000 meals being served through Fred's Van alone. As Vinnies receives little government funding, the organisation relies on the generosity of donors to help those who need it most.

To make a donation to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal 2019 visit [vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au) or call 13 18 12.

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For interviews with David Wark, CEO St Vincent de Paul Society SA please contact Jo Dinnison, Communications Officer on (08) 8112 8730 or 0419 940 721 [jdinnison@svdpsa.org.au](mailto:jdinnison@svdpsa.org.au)

***Overleaf: Notes for editors:***

**Vinnies in SA:**

South Australians in need can contact Vinnies on its assistance line 1300 729 202.

Vinnies assistance for South Australians experiencing hardship includes:

- A home visit program assisting around 60,000 people each year with food, clothing, furniture & emergency funds
  - 10 Fred's Vans providing over 40,000 meals across the State
  - A Migrant and Refugee Centre assisting new arrivals to SA
  - Financial and specialist counselling services
  - Vinnies youth programming supporting children living with disadvantage
  - A 47 bed Vinnies Men's Crisis Centre
  - A 20 room Vinnies Women's Crisis Centre
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