

AUTUMN 2020

VINNIES

celebrating the
spirit of giving

MOMENTS

Feature

EDUCATION:
YOUR
IMPACT

Inside:

SPECIAL
BUSHFIRE
UPDATE



St Vincent de Paul Society
VICTORIA
good works

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Firstly, I would like to welcome you all to 2020. For many, it's been a tragic start to the year but I have been reassured about what lies ahead as I witness communities coming together and supporting each other during times of crisis.

The bushfires, which tore through East Gippsland and Victoria's high country over the Christmas and New Year period, have been on the forefront of everyone's mind, and our committed Vinnies members and volunteers have been there – as they were during previous natural disasters – providing assistance and support on the frontline.

Our presence on the frontline is only possible because of the Vinnies network of supporters, generously providing the essential funds required to help families and ultimately, entire communities, recover and rebuild. You are there beside us during a crisis, and through the long-haul.

Right now we are also assisting communities affected by the bushfires to get back to school. This is the message we have received loud and clear from the frontline. Families need to ensure their children and young people are able to focus on their education, but as they try to get back on their feet, the financial burden can be overwhelming.

However, with the constant presence of Vinnies, and the support of people like you, we can make a lasting difference. Last financial year we provided almost \$1.2 million worth of assistance for school items such as shoes, uniforms, books, stationary, iPads and laptops, but also for school fees, camps and excursions – and we expect these figures to rise significantly this year.

Vinnies understands that education is a key pathway out of poverty and we are dedicated to not only helping get children to school by helping provide the essentials, but also to supporting them in their education.

Our education programs provide essential one-on-one assistance to children and young people who experience disadvantage. By building their confidence and their sense of community, we encourage students to realise their full potential.

During emergencies such as the bushfires, or for people who struggle to make ends meet every day, our education programs are a vital part of our 'Good Works'. Together with our generous supporters, we are building more compassionate, better connected communities. The stability, security and hope that the Vinnies community brings to struggling families and their children is the foundation for a lasting recovery and this is something that we should not only be reassured by, but also deeply proud of.



With my deepest gratitude,

Sue Cattermole

Sue Cattermole

FROM THE ARCHIVES

First Vinnies Tutor

Did you know that our first ever education program was started in Dandenong 11 years ago? Katia (pictured as she looked then) was there from the very beginning;



"Helping children with their reading and homework has been rewarding and at times great fun. I've learnt lots myself. I hope very much that I've made a difference to the wonderful children that come along each week.

It's amazing watching them learn, grasping concepts and acquiring new skills."

Today, the Dandenong Vinnies Education Program has 180 registered students with 80 who come to the club every week.

The students are supported by 85 dedicated volunteers who become role models and mentors to the students by providing consistent support.

The program helps children from at least 27 different international backgrounds and 44 different schools.



YOUR IMPACT ON EDUCATION

At this time of the year, we see many families struggling to provide the basics for their children's education.

Families are faced with impossible choices and sometimes educational costs simply cannot be met. But, through a crisis and every day, Vinnies is committed to assisting children and young people with their education needs, empowering them to develop skills and reach their full potential.

Vinnies offer volunteer-run education programs based on tutoring and homework support, reading clubs, breakfast programs and tertiary entrance support programs. These programs are complimented by our home visitations where our dedicated volunteer members provide financial assistance where necessary to alleviate the burden of back-to-school expenses to families in need. Kids Camps and Kids Days Out, run by our Youth Teams, also create a welcoming environment for kids in need of support, respite and fun.

Our impact in the last year has been great, but the demand for our services continues to grow. We know with the generosity of our dedicated supporters in the coming year, we will work towards a better future for our children.

A student receiving one-on-one support from one of our dedicated education program volunteers.



\$1,173,150

worth of assistance for children and education in 18-19



\$104,604

Uniform & shoes



\$95,651

Books & stationery



\$146,274

School fees and scholarships



\$82,933

Camps, incursions, excursions and other extra-curricular activities



7,373

hours of tutoring provided

Source: St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria 2018-2019 Philanthropy Report

THANK YOU FOR SHARING THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

Customarily, Christmas brings up images of family time, food and joy. But sadly, for one in eight Victorians, Christmas is a vastly different reality; hunger, anxiety and hardship.

That is why we are eternally grateful for the wonderful support to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal. Because of the generosity of our Vinnies community, families had food on the Christmas table and maybe a gift under the tree. And during a particularly challenging Christmas period due the devastating bushfires, your Christmas time gift brought the true meaning of Christmas to many people around the state. Thank you.



Sam and Laura with a Vinnies volunteer.



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SPECIAL BUSHFIRE UPDATE

WE ARE HERE. This is the simple message that we wanted to send to the many communities in Victoria's Eastern Gippsland and highland regions who have been devastated by bushfires. "We" represents the dedicated Vinnies volunteers on the frontline and the generous Victorians who supported our special bushfire response.

Together we have been providing practical assistance such as direct cash payments, food and fuel vouchers, water, clothing, bedding, crisis accommodation education costs and referrals to specialist services. Most importantly, we are providing people with the emotional and ongoing support they need, when they most need it.



Cath McMahon, our dedicated volunteer and Bairnsdale Conference President.

HERE FOR PRACTICAL SUPPORT

"Many people are so distraught – they are physically and emotionally wrecked and exhausted, so we make calls on their behalf so they don't have to continue to relive the trauma." Bairnsdale Vinnies President and volunteer Cath McMahon reflects on how they are helping people in fire-ravaged communities.

"We had a lady in yesterday who needed help with buying her stock feed. We also paid a large bill she had despite being evacuated from her home during the fires."

Cath has also provided practical assistance to the younger members of the community by helping cover back-to-school costs. Cath and our dedicated Bairnsdale volunteers have been working tirelessly in the community, before, during, and will continue long after the bushfire crisis.

"For one young fire-impacted family I know, we completely paid the costs to get their child back to primary school - the winter and summer uniforms, books and school fees, everything they needed!"
– CATH McMAHON



Alan West, Volunteer President, Ballarat Conference, with fellow volunteer, Kevin Elliot.

HERE TO HELP REBUILD

While rebuilding after devastating bushfires is overwhelming, the road to recovery starts with one step at a time. It was this thought that inspired Vinnies volunteers in Ballarat to organise a collection of tools to take to East Gippsland.

The volunteers also raised \$5,400 to help buy new tools and hardware for people who lost property. Alan West, president of the Vinnies volunteer group in Ballarat, organised this helpful contribution to help with the bushfire relief.

After spreading the word around his local parish, Alan soon had a ute and trailer full of tools, which they had oiled, sharpened and tagged. "We had a marvellous response from people. We were absolutely laden with rakes, shovels, axes and electrical tools," says Alan.

The tools were transported to Tralagon and distributed to people who needed a helping hand to rebuild after the fires.

"It was the thought of people affected by the fires heading back to their properties, and trying to work out where to begin. It's a small gesture, but having a rake or a shovel might give them that little impetus to make a start somewhere."

– ALAN WEST



Sue-Ann Hess, Bushfire Relief Call Centre Team Leader.

HERE ON THE HELPLINE

Calls to the Vinnies' Bushfire Assistance Call Centre are coming in at a steadily increasing rate. Team Leader, Sue-Ann has worked in call centres before, but these calls are particularly challenging:

"Many of the people phoning in are still shell-shocked and disoriented. They are only just returning to their homes - or coming to terms with the loss of theirs. People are traumatised and don't really know what they need yet, but we are here to listen and try to help."

Some people who call are really eager to talk about the particulars of what they've experienced, but others are exactly the opposite. They simply want to access what help they can get and then move on.

Other callers have additional needs. People who have been affected by the fires but are also elderly, people with disabilities or people with physical and mental health needs call us about bushfire relief, but these needs have been compounded by what they've experienced.

The Vinnies Bushfire Relief Call Centre was quickly assembled in response to the bushfire crisis to make it as easy as possible for people affected by the emergency to request help. Whether it is financial assistance, practical aid or referrals to other resources, Vinnies are focused on providing what's needed when it's needed.

"We try hard to reassure everybody that we are here to help, that we care and that we have resources available to help."

– SUE-ANNE HESS





Recent Footsteps of Frederic graduates receiving their awards.

YOUTH EMPOWERING YOUTH

The St Vincent de Paul Society’s Vinnies Youth programs such as the Footsteps of Frederic engages young people in building more just and compassionate communities.

We believe in investing in youth and helping to further develop their leadership skills, build their self-confidence, educate them in social justice and advocacy. We aim to empower young people to be actively involved in making a difference in their communities.

The program provides a unique platform for young leaders to grow, develop and from being mentored

by the Youth Engagement Team, become mentors themselves.

Footsteps of Frederic is a year-long program where school leavers immerse themselves in the Society and participate in or initiate special projects. Through a newly formed Footsteps of Frederic Special Works Conference with their alumni, they are working with primary and secondary

school students to make a difference in their local communities.

It all starts with a three-day leadership retreat run by the Vinnies Youth Engagement Team and continues with three learning days throughout the year. It then concludes with a Graduation Ceremony where there is an opportunity to recognise the impact of their ‘good works’.

A SPECIAL WAY TO GIVE

A legacy dedicated to the St Vincent de Paul Society’s Education Program is a legacy of opportunity for the children and young people that the Society helps. And this was the inspiration for a special legacy left by a generous supporter.

The executor of the Will explained that her late aunt wanted her legacy dedicated to special works in support of children and education.

The bequestor’s niece recalls tales from her aunty about her schools days and how she strongly believed a good education was the key to future opportunities. Her aunty told her:

“In life, we never stop learning, we learn to read, learn to swim, and learn the importance of values. A good education is the greatest gift you can give yourself or someone else.”

Though this special gift to the Society remains anonymous, the legacy of a good education and opportunity will be recognised by all who benefit.



For a caring and confidential conversation about how you can leave a lasting legacy by remembering the St Vincent de Paul Society in your Will, please contact Sharon Wangman on 03 9895 5821 or email bequest@svdp-vic.org.au.



Jason D'Silva (left) and Nathan Weinberg (right) from Ralph D'Silva Hyundai with the students before the game.

DAY AT THE SOCCER FOR DANDENONG EDUCATION PROGRAM

At the Dandenong Education Program, incursions are part of the experiences offered to the students who access the service and excursions are less frequent but extra special.

Changing the surroundings is a great learning tool and gives them the opportunity to practise interpersonal and communication skills, while tutors learn about the students in another environment.

Last year, students were treated to a typical Melbourne experience for many families – an excursion to a soccer game. With the generous support of the Melbourne Victory

(Soccer Club) and Ralph D'Silva Hyundai, 50 very excited students and tutors attended a Melbourne Victory game at AAMI Park in Melbourne.

Everyone got into the spirit of the game and enthusiastically cheered on their team. There may have been some croaky voices at the end of the day, but many memories were made for students and volunteer tutors alike. One student, Wajeaha said "When

I go back to school I am going to play soccer." Perhaps this may be a new direction for her, a chance to connect more into her school community.

Jason D'Silva was happy to be involved and help facilitate the students' day out:

"They were really excited. I suspect many of these students would not get an opportunity to go to a soccer game with their peers."

Thank you to the team at Ralph D'Silva Hyundai for your support and "Go Victory!"

EXPANDING EDUCATION SERVICES

Due to the generosity of the Vinnies community, and a special grant from the Australian Communities Foundation, our Vinnies Education programs are able to help more students with their education.

Building on the success of our existing programs located in Dandenong, West Heidelberg, Maidstone, Noble Park and West Warnambool, we are introducing education programs in Northcote, Braybrook and East Warnambool.

The new programs will provide one-on-one literacy support for primary school-

aged children from migrant, refugee and disadvantaged backgrounds who reside in these areas.

Vinnies Victoria Education Programs Team Leader, Linette Etheredge says the key to success in Vinnies' programs is the one-on-one support that students get from the volunteer tutors:



A student with one of our regular volunteers.

"Many kids are seeking someone who's just got the time and the patience to be with them regularly. They respond positively to that consistency. Children and young people living in poverty are already at a disadvantage, but given the right support, we can work to minimise how this impacts on their schooling."



JEWISH COMMUNITY HELPS GET KIDS BACK TO SCHOOL

Like many communities in Victoria during the Bushfire crisis, the Jewish community came together to support one very important purpose – to enable all children and higher education students to resume their education as quickly as possible.

A special fund has been set up for children and people undertaking all levels of education – from kindergarten through to primary school, secondary school, TAFE and university – to ensure that students have what they need to continue their studies.

The financial support is available for all types of practical assistance – for example, school fees, transport, communication, uniforms and more.

Dealing with the aftermath of a disaster such as the recent Victorian bushfires is overwhelming so this generous contribution from the Jewish community will make an enormous impact on the hundreds of students who can return to their education just that little bit sooner.

Pictured above, from left to right: Fran Heath, Corryong College Principal; Regan Nugent, school captain, Rosanne Hill, Upper Murray Vinnies President, Ruth Alter, Blake Dakin, David Smorgon; Zoe Nugent, Sacred Heart School Principal.

“Following the bushfires Vinnies will be there supporting many Victorians, and this specific project of helping young people return to education is very special. Education has always been a pillar of the Society’s work in Victoria and we understand how important it is to get young people back into education as quickly as possible. We are thankful for the wonderful generosity of the Victorian Jewish community and thank them for partnering with us in this way.”

– SUE CATTERMOLLE, CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria

“We wanted to ensure that children and young people affected by the fires had the basic things they needed for their education. We are very impressed by the practical and professional approach taken by St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria when they assist people in need. Furthermore, Vinnies are a volunteer-based organisation meaning that every single cent donated to the Bushfire Appeal will go directly to the people who need assistance.”

– DAVID SMORGON OAM, on behalf of the Victorian Jewish Bushfire Relief Appeal



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