



Monday March 23, 2020.

## St. Vincent de Paul Society reveal COVID-19 service delivery strategy.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society convened its strategy group to prepare its service delivery strategy as the COVID 19 pandemic continues to affect the homeless and the most vulnerable across Tasmania.

St. Vincent de Paul Society's CEO, Lara Alexander, said that the Society has worked tirelessly to find solutions to difficult service delivery objectives that still assist those in need, while protecting the health and wellbeing of its volunteers and staff.

"As the majority of our volunteers fall into the elevated risk of infection category, dignity of choice must be at the heart of all of the decisions we make that affect their service. We have a responsibility to detail any risks in line with government advice, and let our dedicated volunteers decide if they want to continue volunteering during the current circumstances," Mrs Alexander said.

"Effective immediately, the Society will consolidate its Vinnies Stores into operations that allow for social distancing to occur, while still offering retail services to those in need. This means that in the north and northwest of Tasmania, for the time being we will only operate Vinnies stores in Queenstown, East Devonport, Upper Burnie, Devonport, and Launceston store in Boland Street will remain open.

"In the south of the state, the following Vinnies Stores will continue to operate. Argyle Street, Claremont, Glenorchy, Huonville, Kingston at Westside, Moonah, New Norfolk, Rokeby, Rosny, and South Hobart.

"We intend to review this situation in 14 days, in line with Federal and State Government directives that apply to the retail sector. Our priority must be to look after the most vulnerable in our communities, but we must also take care of our staff and volunteers who are on the frontline of service delivery.

"Wherever possible we will be redeploying our volunteer workforce to assist where we need help the most. We have been gratified by so many new people offering their time to assist us but given that we have a strong volunteer base to call on, we are only able to take expressions of interest from new volunteers at this time.

"In relation to collection bins and the donation of furniture and clothing, the Society has decided to bring forward the maintenance of the collections bins. This means all collection bins will be picked up and thoroughly cleaned and fixed before being redeployed.

"We ask that people hold on to the furniture and clothing they wish to donate until after the COVID-19 pandemic is over. We cannot put our collection teams at risk, neither are we able to sort items safely under the current circumstances. We are currently asking donors to replace food donations with cash donations. This way, we can still supply food vouchers to families and vulnerable people in need, without jeopardising the health of our volunteers.

"The St. Vincent de Paul Society will continue to offer as many services as we can during the COVID-19, but new guidance means everyone should be minimising their social contact, reducing unnecessary travel, and staying at home. This includes our members and volunteers, who we must protect while continuing the good works of the Society.

"Finally, we at St. Vincent de Paul Society invite everyone to become honorary Vincentians for the duration of the COVID-19 epidemic. Telephone your neighbours to reduce the feelings of loneliness, offer to pick up a few items of shopping for those who are housebound when you are going to the shops, and help keep everyone safe and healthy by adhering to and disseminating information from the Tasmanian Government Health Department's website about COVID-19.

"This is going to be a tough period and things will change every day – but we can get through it by thinking of each other with every action; and taking care of the most vulnerable in our communities, our neighbours, and ourselves," Mrs Alexander said

**MEDIA NOTES:** The St Vincent de Paul Society was founded in Paris, France in 1833 by a 20-year old Italian student, Frederic Ozanam. Today, the Society operates in 153 countries and has over 800,000 members. Australia has over 60,000 members, dedicated to assisting people in need and combating social injustice. The Society started in Tasmania in 1899 when founders established a Conference in Launceston. From humble beginnings, the Society has grown to 25 Conferences within three Regional Councils across Tasmania. Each Conference undertake a variety of good works, the most recognised being the traditional Vincentian home visits and the annual CEO Sleep-out to draw attention to homelessness.

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