

A MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC...

Thank you for your concern for the wellbeing of our volunteers. We are also concerned about the wellbeing of our people - our volunteers, our members, our employees and of course, the people we serve in the community.

As such we have sent a clear direction to all our people that if they have any pre-existing conditions (auto-immune diseases, poor health, cancer treatments, heart or lung conditions etc.), or if they are in the most affected age group (60+), they are advised to take a break from volunteering.

For those who choose to continue to volunteer, we are ensuring we provide as safe an environment as possible. We are cleaning regularly, keeping to the recommended 1.5m distance between people, and providing gloves and hand sanitiser. We are regularly assessing and upgrading our safety measures.

Please note we have used the word 'choose', as volunteering is a choice. Our responsibility as an organisation is to ensure the safety of people when they're engaged in our activities, not to strip them of their dignity of choice.

It is important to remember our volunteers have personal agency, and have capacity to make their own decisions. We have encouraged our vulnerable people to take necessary precautions, including staying home, but forcing them to do so does not respect the dignity of individuals, which is a core Vinnies value.

Please also remember that one of the worst symptoms of this crisis is the loneliness from social isolation. For many of our older volunteers, Vinnies and/or church are their connections with community, and the opportunities to connect with people in these places are diminishing rapidly. While many people have embraced technology for virtual socialising, often the older generation have difficulty accessing this, and thus are feeling even more isolated. It is therefore understandable if some of these people choose to risk their physical health for the sake of their mental health. We will allow them that dignity of risk.

If you have concerns about a family member, please discuss those with them and find solutions to address the needs they have to get through this crisis in good physical and mental health.

Our shops are vital for raising funds used for providing assistance to people in need in the community – something which will become more and more critical as this situation continues. We appreciate everyone's efforts to get our communities through these tough times safely and cooperatively.