

Thursday 30 April 2020

BOSSES TO SLEEP IN BACKYARDS IN FIRST EVER VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT – HOSTED BY ANDREW ROCHFORD

Business and community leaders across Australia will unite in a unique national, interactive and **live-streamed event on 18 June** to raise essential funds for Vinnies' homelessness services.

The event will be hosted by TV personality Dr Andrew Rochford.

To keep our communities safe during the COVID-19 crisis, the Vinnies CEO Sleepout will take place in **backyards, cars and on couches** as participants join the event via their phones, tablets or computers.

The public can also take part in the conversation for the first time and hear stories of people's lived experience of homelessness, as well as insights into Vinnies' frontline services and the impact of COVID-19.

"I've seen the difference that Vinnies' homelessness services make first-hand, and the Vinnies CEO Sleepout is such an important fundraiser to make sure they can continue helping thousands of people every year," Dr Rochford said.

In past years, the Vinnies CEO Sleepout has comprised several events in major cities across Australia. In Victoria, these took place in Melbourne and Geelong, but in 2020 for the first time, **CEOs and business and community leaders from regional centres and rural areas can also sign up to participate.**

Participants can also involve their partners, children and pets – helping the whole family to learn more about the growing issue of homelessness and how they can help.

The 2019 Vinnies CEO Sleepout raised \$7.9 million for our homelessness services across Australia, which include emergency accommodation, domestic violence refuges, food, clothing, blankets and sleeping bags, as well as counselling, healthcare and individualised support to address barriers such as debt and unemployment. Vinnies' ultimate goal is to provide a way out of poverty and into a permanent and safe home.

"It's great to see Vinnies and business and community leaders who participate in the Sleepout can adapt to ensure this year's event will go ahead in the midst of coronavirus. The onset of a global health crisis means people facing homelessness need that support more than ever," Dr Rochford said.

All participants are invited to nominate their own sleeping location, such as their car, couch or backyard. Each of these locations reflects the reality for many of the 116,000 people experiencing homelessness across the country. Of these, around one in 14 people are "sleeping rough", but many more are hidden from sight "sofa surfing" or in insecure, dangerous and unsuitable places to sleep or boarding houses.

Vinnies Victoria CEO Sue Cattermole welcomed the adaptation of the Sleepout to an online event: "The Vinnies CEO Sleepout always promises participants a cold and uncomfortable night – along with a small insight into what the 25,000 people experiencing homelessness in Victoria face every day.

“This year, I am excited by the digital format and the chance to reach a large audience when those of us with homes have perhaps been spending more time than usual in them – what a perfect opportunity to reflect on this issue and what we can do to help alleviate it.

“I am especially pleased about the fact that CEOs and community leaders can involve their families this year, which will no doubt create a valuable learning experience for all involved.

“I will be sleeping in in my car on 18 June, and I hope CEOs, executives, entrepreneurs and leaders from all sectors and walks of life will join me to raise money for homelessness services at a time when it’s desperately needed.

“Please register online at www.ceosleepout.org.au.”

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ABOUT THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY:

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; youth programs; soup vans; assistance for asylum seekers and refugees; compeer programs for people experiencing mental illness; education and tutoring; and a range of professional accommodation and health services through the VincentCare network. The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has more than 40,000 members and volunteers. Internationally, the Society operates in 149 countries and has over 950,000 members. To find out more visit www.vinnies.org.au.