

MEDIA STATEMENT

Thursday 28 May 2020

VICHEALTH CEO DR SANDRO DEMAIO JOINS THE ONLINE VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT

It is three weeks to go until Vinnies Victoria hosts our flagship annual fundraiser – and we are delighted that the head of the **Victorian Health Promotion Foundation** will be joining us to help raise essential funds for Vinnies' homelessness services.

This year the Vinnies CEO Sleepout will be a unique interactive and **live-streamed event on 18 June**. To keep our communities safe during the COVID-19 crisis, the event will take place in **backyards, cars or couches** and CEOs will join the event via their phones, tablets or computers.

A global public health expert, Dr Demaio is the CEO of VicHealth and also known for his role as a presenter on ABC's *Ask the Doctor* and his cookbook *Doctor's Diet*, along with his previous work at the World Health Organization, EAT Foundation and as the architect of healthy eating and lifestyle campaign festival²¹.

"I have long been impressed with Vinnies Victoria's work in the community and am proud to get behind this important initiative," Dr Demaio said.

"This year's Sleepout shines a light on health and the impact of coronavirus on our most vulnerable Victorians. On any given night, over 24,000 Victorians are homeless, sleeping in cars, on someone's couch, or on the streets.

"As CEO of VicHealth and a medical doctor, I strongly believe that having a stable home is critical to achieving good health and wellbeing. I urge everyone who can to support the Vinnies CEO Sleepout and help us make a difference for the hundreds of thousands of Australians experiencing homelessness."

The public can also take part in the conversation this year and hear stories of people's lived experience of homelessness, as well as insights into Vinnies' frontline services and the impact of COVID-19. A two-hour live national broadcast, hosted by another medical TV personality, Dr Andrew Rochford, will also cross to a number of CEOs sleeping out across the country.

In past years, the sleepout has comprised events in major cities throughout Australia. In Victoria, these took place in Melbourne and Geelong, but this year, **CEOs and business and community leaders from regional areas can also join in and we urge them to sign up**. Participants can involve their partners and children too – helping the whole family to learn more about this important issue and how they can help.

The 2019 Vinnies CEO Sleepout raised \$7.9 million for our homelessness services across the country, which include emergency accommodation, domestic violence refuges, food, clothing and sleeping bags, along with counselling, healthcare and individualised support around alleviating debt and unemployment.

All participants are invited to nominate their sleeping location – car, couch or backyard – as each of these reflect the reality for many of the 116,000 people experiencing homelessness in Australia. 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.

Dr Demaio is available for interview.



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

Resources:

Videos

Media grab version: [HERE](#)

Social media: [HERE](#)

Helpful links

CEO Sleepout

<https://www.ceosleepout.org.au/event/melbourne>

Dr Demaio's bio at VicHealth

<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/media-releases/dr-sandro-demaio-appointed-vichealth-ceo>

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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.