

Vinnies Victoria becomes first major Australian social welfare charity to be certified carbon neutral

The St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies Victoria) is proud to announce that it has been certified carbon neutral under the Climate Active initiative, underpinned by the Australian government. This is a significant achievement that sets Vinnies Victoria apart as the first social welfare charity in Australia to achieve the certification. Vinnies Victoria was supported by Telstra and Deloitte in the process and we are thankful to both organisations for their invaluable guidance and support.

The impact of climate change is on our minds more than ever as the coronavirus pandemic has made us all too aware of our collective vulnerability. Climate change has also been linked to the drought and bushfires that devastated communities around Australia this year. It is our experience of assisting people affected by each of these crises, as well as our daily work with people on the frontline of poverty and disadvantage, that underpins our commitment to achieving a sustainable, equitable future for all – #greenworks.

Our organisation is already working hard in the sustainability space through its contribution to the circular economy – last year Vinnies Shops sold almost 11.5 million items and garments to nearly 4 million customers, and through partnerships, diverted more than 3.5 million kilos of apparel and 10,000 mattresses away from landfill into reuse.

We are now taking accountability for the greenhouse gas emissions associated with these shop operations and our other charitable works. While the purchase of 10,000 tonnes of high-quality offsets is necessary this year, Vinnies Victoria commits to reducing our carbon footprint through a series of ongoing activities and supporting decarbonisation of the Australian economy.

Vinnies Victoria is acutely aware that society needs to decarbonise and leadership in this space is paramount. As Vinnies Victoria looks to provide practical assistance to people in need, we are motivated by the disproportionate impact climate change has on people living in poverty.

The support we have received from Telstra and Deloitte, brokered by our Policy and Research Manager Gavin Dufty, shows what can be achieved when business and the community sector work together.

Vinnies' Victorian CEO Sue Cattermole sits on the advisory panel of Melbourne University's Sustainable Society Institute and is passionate about the achievement: "The impact of climate change will be significant on social, economic and health system infrastructures and we know that the most vulnerable members of society will be worst affected. It is incumbent on all of us who can to reduce our contribution to climate change. We hope to be a driving force for positive change for other not-for-profits and businesses.

"We are delighted to have worked with Telstra and, through it, Deloitte to determine the level of our impact that needed offsetting. We were impressed by the genuine commitment that both organisations showed to what is a critical cause and the level of due diligence that Telstra undertook on the projects that it, and now Vinnies, has invested in to offset carbon emissions. Telstra displayed a genuine care for the societal impact and effect on human capital connected to particular projects."

Jules Scarlett, Telstra's Government, Regional Affairs and Sustainability Executive, said the telco was delighted to assist Vinnies Victoria: "We know from our own experience that the process of going carbon

neutral can be daunting, particularly for those organisations that do not have a background or experience in carbon markets or energy.

“Being able to share our knowledge and experience of going carbon neutral to help Vinnies Victoria achieve carbon neutrality was an opportunity to broaden the part we can play in taking action on climate change.”

Deloitte CEO Richard Deutsch says his team was thrilled to collaborate with Vinnies Victoria to achieve a measurable impact and lead the way for not-for-profits and charities. “Vinnies Victoria’s achievement is a game changer in the not-for-profit sector, and they are truly leading the way by becoming carbon neutral,” says Mr Deutsch.

Mr Deutsch says Deloitte, like Vinnies, is committed to achieving net zero emissions and assisting clients to tackle the climate crisis.

Through the purchase of offsets in hydro, solar and wind power, Vinnies Victoria is also investing in the renewable energy market so that other industries benefit. There has been much media commentary on a green recovery when the coronavirus crisis eases, and achieving carbon neutral certification means Vinnies Victoria is firmly part of the solution going forward. As we navigate the continually developing challenge of coronavirus, this is an important opportunity to talk about the future we want to build together.

Vinnies Victoria invites the media to interview Sue Cattermole, Gavin Duffy or Jules Scarlett to hear more on this fantastic achievement.

#greenworks

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Visit www.vinnies.org.au/shops for more information about Vinnies Shops. Share your finds online and hashtag #FoundItAtVinnies.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES: St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria PR & Communications Coordinator
Dee Rudebeck | dee.rudebeck@svdp-vic.org.au | 0438 804 023 | 03 9895 5915.

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; Vinnies Shops; youth programs; soup vans; assistance for asylum seekers and refugees; compeer programs for people experiencing mental illness; education and tutoring; and professional accommodation and health services through VincentCare. The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has more than 60,000 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.