

**MEDIA RELEASE**

11 August 2020

## **Vinnies Victoria launches \$250,000 Bushfire Education Scholarship fund**

With great thanks to the generosity of our funding partners, the Jewish Community of Victoria, the St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies Victoria) is delighted to launch a \$250,000 fund dedicated to tertiary education scholarships for students impacted by the devastating 2019–2020 bushfires that tore through East Gippsland and Victoria’s high country.

We can only imagine how challenging it has been for these students to remain engaged in their education during 2020 dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic while recovering from the trauma of the fires. After facing such adversity, financial distress should not be the reason that students are unable to pursue their aspirations through further education.

Applications for the scholarships are now open and each one is available to the value of \$8,000, provided over two semesters. We hope that with this assistance, students will face less financial stress, and have more capacity to focus on their studies and remain engaged in their learning.

The program is the initiative of Vinnies Victoria’s Community Relationships Manager Maddie Pearce, who was herself a recipient of a charitable education scholarship after her family’s Kinglake home was lost in the Black Saturday bushfires of 2009.

“Aside from the physical devastation that bushfires cause, they can also disrupt normality and routine in a young person’s life,” says Ms Pearce. “It can be incredibly difficult to remain focused on studies when your sense of home and familiarity has been lost. I know that a hand-up such as a scholarship can be the difference students need to reset them on a positive course. I’m excited that through my experience, I am able to help ‘pay it forward’ to other students who I know will really benefit from this scheme.”

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria CEO Sue Cattermole adds: “I am very pleased to launch this scheme. We have long recognised that education is the linchpin of building a brighter future for all. I hope these scholarships help students impacted by the fires to rebuild their confidence and continue their studies so that they reach their full potential and contribute to a lasting recovery in their communities.”

**Applications close 30 September.** More information about the scholarships, including eligibility, can be found [HERE](#). For inquiries, please email [bushfirehelp@svdp-vic.org.au](mailto:bushfirehelp@svdp-vic.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; 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](http://www.vinnies.org.au).*