

MEDIA RELEASE**17 November 2020**

Vinnies invites organisations in Victoria's Black Summer fire zones to take up Bushfire Community Grants

Vinnies Victoria is calling on community groups in bushfire-affected regions to contact Vinnies about helping them fund their local community rebuilding projects.

Groups or organisations can apply for the Vinnies Victoria Bushfire Community Grants to pay for repairs to shared facilities, such as halls or sports venues, funding to get a local service back on its feet, recreational activities to bring the community together and promote healing or counselling, and educational programs linked to the experience of the fires. These are just a few examples of what organisations in the impacted areas could apply for in our latest investment in the rebuilding of communities impacted by the 2020 bushfires. More information can be found on the [Vinnies website here](#).

Thanks to the additional generous support of Victorians who have continued to make donations to our long-term bushfire recovery projects, we have new supports, such as these community grants, available to expand our ongoing recovery assistance. Vinnies Victoria expects the Bushfire Community Grants to take a variety of forms and encourages organisations to be innovative in their applications. The community grants come at a targeted time in the long-term recovery and rebuilding process and complement a broad range of funds already being distributed and committed to bushfire-impacted communities by Vinnies Victoria throughout 2020.

So far this year, Vinnies Victoria has assisted many hundreds of families and individuals in the fire-affected areas by:

- Providing 38 higher education grants to the value of \$304,000.
- Funding the 12-month appointment of a trauma counselling social worker at Mallacoota P1-12 College
- Funding a \$250,000 rebuild of a basketball court and sports facility in Mallacoota.
- Working with local government to reach people who we have not yet supported.
- Providing emergency, recovery and rebuild payments to the value of \$3.03 million for people who have experienced loss and critical loss, including funds for land-clearing, water tanks, generators and fencing, as well as material assistance such as food, fuel, clothing, bedding, laptops, school uniforms education fees and other ancillary expenses.
- Providing additional support as identified by the community.

Vinnies Victoria CEO Sue Cattermole says: "We have been working together with the communities affected by the dreadful fires that ripped through East Gippsland and Victoria's High Country last summer. We already had a presence in some of the regions but working within communities has helped us further understand the need on the ground and our work is ongoing. Our members are part of these communities and we will never leave.

"When the bushfires hit, Vinnies made a commitment to Victorians to support their recovery in whatever they needed and that has guided our response. We are delivering an extensive range of relief packages after consultation with the families, individuals, organisations and schools in the fire zones aligned with their needs throughout the recovery.

"As we approach the first anniversary of the 2020 fires, we hope our latest funding support package proves instrumental in facilitating community projects that bring large numbers of people together in a way that continues the healing process."

Vinnies Victoria is an agency committed to long-term community rebuilding. Vinnies Victoria ensures that 100% of all donations received through its bushfire appeal are distributed purely for bushfire assistance and no monies are held back or repurposed for any other work.

Australia-wide, Vinnies received \$22.9 million in donations support and \$17 million has been spent, while \$5.9 million is committed to recovery projects in bushfire-affected communities from July 2020 to December 2021. More details [can be found here](#).

For any further inquiries about the Bushfire Community Grants or to arrange an interview with Sue Cattermole, please contact our media office via the details below.

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

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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.