

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pandemic puts focus on food poverty as Vinnies Victoria reports 94% of new callers ask for groceries

In Anti-Poverty Week this year (11 – 17 October), St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria wishes to highlight the growing prevalence of **food poverty and insecurity** in Victoria as demand for assistance with groceries rises due to the impact of coronavirus.

In the months of **September and August, 94% of new callers** to our Box Hill welfare phone line asked for food assistance – up 10% on the same period last year. In August, our Vinnies Soup Van service provided 37,472 meals to people struggling to put food on the table throughout the metropolitan area. The Fitzroy and Collingwood vans served 20,580 meals – an increase of 135% on the same period last year.

Vinnies Victoria CEO Sue Cattermole says: “People are stopping our Soup Vans in the streets of Melbourne to ask for food. We work hard every day to ensure that struggling Victorians do not go hungry, but we are beginning to see the terrible fall-out from the pandemic and we fear there will be much worse to come, especially if there is any further reduction to the level of JobKeeper in the future.

“Food insecurity means that people do not have a reliable amount of money every week to buy groceries and, some weeks, they have none. We are seeing more and more people who have never had to access our services before. They are often young families who were ‘just about managing’ before, but after losing casual employment in the hospitality industry, for example, have now been pushed into poverty.”

Vinnies Victoria has been working with a chef called “Tracey” – she does not wish to use her real name – who lost her job due to the pandemic to develop a new resource for people experiencing food poverty, especially for the first time.

In the **Good Feeds Story, Tracey shares powerful insights into the confronting nature of experiencing food poverty**, especially for someone who has spent her life feeding people. **Read her story [HERE](#)**. Tracey has turned her experience of making every cent count in a restaurant kitchen to her advantage though, and she offers invaluable advice on how she has managed these difficult recent months.

She has also kicked off an online **recipe resource of easy, budget meals** – and Vinnies Victoria hopes other chefs in Australia’s “foodie capital” might also contribute their suggestions.

Ms Cattermole adds: “Going hungry is distressing and obviously has a raft of health implications that no-one wants to see for our fellow Victorians hit hard by the events of 2020.

“We urge the government to take note of the impact we are seeing, and we ask the public to engage with Tracey’s story – and those who can afford it to donate to our Spring Appeal so we can continue our valuable work in this area.”

Find out more about what Vinnies is doing – and what the community can do – to help solve food poverty [HERE](#).

Sue Cattermole is available for interview throughout Anti-Poverty Week. Please get in touch to arrange.



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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.