

**21 April 2021**

## ***Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* actor to appear at Vinnies' after-school reading club – along with international star from movie franchise**

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies Victoria) is delighted to host a special Harry Potter themed event next Tuesday at our West Heidelberg Reading Club featuring **Michael Whalley – the actor who plays Ron Weasley in the Cursed Child** stage show currently running in Melbourne – who will meet Eamon, the eight-year-old boy he tutored online for almost a year, for the first time in person.

Eamon, along with a 30-strong audience of students from the Vinnies' after-school reading club who are aged from seven to 12 years old, will also be joined by **Professor Sprout from the Harry Potter film series** – otherwise known as the inimitable **Miriam Margolyes via the wizardry of Zoom from the UK**.

**What: Harry Potter Stars visit Vinnies Victoria's West Heidelberg Education Program**  
**Where: St Pius X School: 431 Waterdale Road, Heidelberg West 3081**  
**When: Tuesday 27 April: 3:45pm – Michael and Eamon meet for the first time**  
**4.00pm – 5:00pm: Michael hosts reading session – see attached run sheet**

Michael and Eamon will meet for the first time **at 3.45pm ahead of the event, which the media is invited to photograph. A running sheet with the order of events is attached.** There is a brief amount of time prior to the event at **4.00pm and time afterwards at 5:00pm** for a photo opportunity and interviews.

When the Harry Potter show was shut down early last year due to lockdown, Michael turned to volunteering as a way to utilise his skills and contribute to society while his work was on hold. At the same time, Vinnies Victoria's after-school education clubs – in which hundreds of children across the state attend weekly one-to-one reading and homework sessions with volunteers – adapted to an online format because of the pandemic.

Michael answered a Vinnies advert for volunteers and, after he was cleared to work with children and underwent training, was matched with Eamon. They met for an hour every Tuesday via Zoom to work on reading and writing throughout lockdown.

Michael soon found that he and Eamon had a shared passion for animals and pets, which directed their strength-based learning activities. Michael says they played word games about Eamon's favourite subject and would research any that Eamon wasn't familiar with, which appealed to his love of science while improving reading skills. Michael said at the time: "I really enjoy working with Eamon and being part of the volunteering community. I'm learning a lot, Eamon knows more about science and maths than me! Getting a small person's view on the world is very healthy and humbling."

Due to Michael's commitments with the Harry Potter show when it resumed in February, his volunteering is on hold – but we just had to get he and Eamon to finally meet so we invited Michael to this very special after-school session.

We are delighted that Michael will read Harry Potter to the group and perform some scenes, as well as answer questions about his role in the stage show. And what better way to top off the event than with the wonderful addition of Miriam Margolyes popping in to say hello.

Everyone at Vinnies is extremely excited about this event and we hope that the media can join us to help spread the magic of our education programs while we put out the call for more volunteers to join us. For further background, read a [Q&A between Michael and Eamon here](#).

Visit our [Education landing page here for more](#).

**Michael and Eamon are available for interviews.**

*For any further inquiries, please contact our media office via the details below.*

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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; education and tutoring; and professional accommodation and health services through VincentCare. The St Vincent de Paul Society in Victoria has more than 12,000 members and volunteers, and more than 60,000 across Australia. Internationally, the Society operates in 149 countries and more than 950,000 members. To find out more visit [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au).*