

SPRING 2021

VINNIES

celebrating the
spirit of giving

MOMENTS

Feature

AMY'S BIKE RIDE TO FOOD

Inside:

VICTORIANS IN FOOD CRISIS

'WHAT'S INSIDE' ARE STORIES OF
YOUR SUPPORT IMPACTING LIVES.



St Vincent de Paul Society
VICTORIA
good works

TO SUPPORT ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY VICTORIA
DONATE TODAY VISIT vinnies.org.au

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Too many vulnerable people, including young people, children and groups of people who may surprise you, are living in food crisis in Victoria.

There has also been – and there continues to be – a growing demand for food brought on by the ongoing pressures of the pandemic crisis. Assistance with food is a growing trend in recent callers to our Welfare Assistance Line.

Access to food is another important factor. According to the World Health Organisation and the Australian government, people should have the ability to buy and transport food, access to home storage and cooking facilities and the knowledge to prepare nutritional food.

Our Footscray volunteers tell us that many international students are calling for food assistance, and there are a number of families who have recently lost jobs who have lost the ability to buy food.

People like 'Ben'. Due to his marriage breaking down, Ben's life took a turn he had never foreseen. A successful business development manager, he found himself unable to hold down any employment and without an income or a permanent home. Some days he found himself unable to eat. Ben went in and out of homelessness, sofa surfing with friends or sleeping rough. He says:

"I always knew I was mentally strong... but it was an extremely tough situation."

Our Vinnies Soup Van volunteers are also seeing more young people going

hungry. Our Soup Van volunteers – our 'Vannies' – tell us that more young people in their 20s and 30s have been accessing the soup vans.

People like 'Amy', whose story you can also read here. Despite finding affordable accommodation in the western suburbs, Amy had no fridge and, after paying her bills, had precious little left over.

The only option open to Amy was to hop on to her rickety old bike and ride 15km to our Vinnies Soup Vans in search of food and friendship.

Yes, for people like Ben and Amy hunger is a personal crisis, but thanks to the generosity and ongoing support of people like you Vinnies can, and will, continue to provide Victorians with food and friendship.

Thank you for keeping vulnerable Victorians from going hungry.

With my deepest gratitude,



Sue Cattermole

Sue Cattermole
Chief Executive Officer



If you would like to contribute to Vinnies Victoria and support people struggling to afford food, donate online now.

OUR FOOD PROVISION PROGRAMS

SOUP VANS

Our Vinnies Soup Van volunteers deliver meals, friendship and support for people experiencing poverty and homelessness in metro and regional Victoria. Since the pandemic, we also now deliver hampers, containing fresh fruit, veg and recipe cards, and rough sleeper packs.



CONFERENCES

Our members provide hampers, bread runs, and create speciality hampers for people with particular dietary needs. They also provide supermarket vouchers and coupons from neighbourhood butcheries, supporting local businesses, too.



VINNIES RETAIL

During the pandemic, The Warehouse and Logistics teams made up and distributed thousands of food hampers across the state.



NO INTEREST LOANS SCHEME (NILS)

People on low incomes can access no-interest credit to pay for household goods, freeing up disposable income for groceries.



VINCENTCARE



Ozanam House, run by our specialised housing provider VincentCare Victoria, provides thousands of meals for clients every year. O Café is supported by community and client volunteers to provide meals to drop-in clients and a barista coffee service.



VICTORIANS ARE GOING HUNGRY

No-one should have to skip a meal to pay their heating bill or because they can't afford to buy food, yet we know that is happening in Victoria today. Many people in our community call our Welfare Assistance Line every day of the week asking for support to buy groceries.

St Vincent de Paul Society's (Vinnies) programs include food aid through our statewide network of volunteers who deliver hampers packed full of fresh fruit and veg, and store cupboard essentials – as well as those items that bring a feeling of comfort and normality, like coffee and tea. They also provide precious support and kindness, so people know they are not alone.

And our nine Soup Van hubs provide meals and friendship to people who are sleeping rough or living in low-cost accommodation every night of the year.

WHY IS IT CALLED A FOOD 'CRISIS'?

The internationally-recognised Integrated Phase Classification (IPC)* food insecurity measure defines 'crisis' as including households that are only "marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies".

Vinnies Victoria visits households like these every day of the year to provide food and friendship to families and individuals who are struggling.

The IPC measure is commonly associated with developing countries, but too many vulnerable people, including young adults and children, are in food crisis across Victoria.

HOW DOES VINNIES SUPPORT VICTORIANS IN FOOD CRISIS?

Food assistance is what nearly all the callers to our Welfare Assistance Line ask for and is the type of support that Vinnies offers most.

Many people are coming to Vinnies for the first time because they have lost their jobs in the pandemic and are unable to afford food. From January 2018 to March 2021 we saw a 145% increase in first-time callers to our call centre.

We combine a unique pairing of professional services alongside strong volunteer-led assistance across Victoria.

OUR DONORS ARE AMAZING!

Without your generous donations we would not be able to reach the number of people we assist each day. Your donation could provide a family with food to eat tonight.

A lot of things were put on hold last year, but not the work of our Soup Vans. Our soup van volunteers carried on nearly every night throughout the pandemic to serve 550,000 meals last year.

Good Feeds Victorians in 'food crisis' – that's our 'Good Works' promise.

Make a donation to Vinnies today, because Good Works.

* Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) is a landmark in the fight against food insecurity.



AMY'S

BIKE RIDE TO FOOD

Can you imagine having to make a 15km round trip on your bike to get fresh fruit and vegetables? It sounds like a story from another time – or another country.

This is what Amy*, a young woman who visited Vinnies' inner-city Melbourne soup van service, felt she had to do so she wouldn't go hungry.

Amy is one of the cohort of vulnerable people who were homed in hotels during the pandemic as part of a Victorian Government housing program. Amy was assisted into accommodation in the western suburbs as part of the government's Homelessness to Homes program, but there was no fridge or other household items. After paying utility bills, she had little left over for food.

Vinnies Soup Van president Melissa Walton says:

"Amy had a tough time during the pandemic, because she had to move hotels a number of times due to a relationship breakup. Vinnies was serving her with a weekly hamper of food for around a year during that time."

MAKING SURE PEOPLE RECEIVE ENOUGH FRESH FRUIT AND VEG

"Along with all the people we served in the hotels, we always made sure Amy received lots of fresh fruit and vegetables to help with her nutrition. Amy is a happy person, even when you could tell she wasn't in the best of health," says Melissa.

Once she was rehomed in the western suburbs, Amy was put in touch with Vinnies services there, but she continued to visit the inner-city hub a number of times on her bike because of her link to the volunteers she knew – the 'food and friendship' offered by our soup van volunteers, the 'Vannies'.

Melissa says:

"We gave Amy anything we could find that would save her having to buy shopping herself, such as washing powder, cleaning products, tissues and toiletries."

VINNIES VANNIES ARE 'ANGELS'

Amy would sometimes also visit the inner-city hub on foot having travelled on public transport with her drawstring shopping trolley.

"We'd send her home again with her shopper full of fresh fruit and vegetables and other food for her cupboard, as well as frozen meals and sometimes clothes and blankets. Amy was fond of the frozen meals because they had meat in them and many people we assist can't afford to buy meat. Amy called the Vannies 'angels' for sending her home with it all."

Once properly connected with volunteers in Footscray, Vinnies helped Amy set up in her new home, providing a bed, drawers, a dining suite, crockery, a microwave, vacuum cleaner, along with Telstra and Vinnies Shop vouchers – and an all-important fridge. "She had everything she needed in her new home" says one volunteer who visited Amy. "She said, 'thank you, this is great'."



DEMAND FOR FOOD IN MELBOURNE'S WESTERN SUBURBS HAS INCREASED 145% WHERE:

- Demand has increased 145% due to the pandemic
- Vannies hand out 200 rough sleeper packs two nights a week
- Our Vannies distribute on average 350 hampers using contactless delivery
- Vannies provide enough food to feed 600 people

We thank all our donors who help us reach so many people in need.

PEOPLE STOP OUR SOUP VANS ASKING FOR FOOD

Vinnies Footscray Soup Van president, Tracey Vo, says that two new vans, donated by the Woodards Foundation earlier this year, are now based with her service, which caters to Footscray, West Footscray, Maidstone, Braybrook, Sunshine and St Albans, due to the need. "Our vans are often stopped by people asking for food, so we always carry extra hampers," she says.

Vinnies volunteers report that they are seeing a younger cohort of people using the service since the pandemic, particularly women and couples in their 20s and 30s, and, as long as they are here, so is Vinnies.



If you would like to support people experiencing a food crisis like Amy, donate to our Food Crisis Appeal today.

**Amy's name and image have been changed to protect her identity.*



FEEDING THE HEART

Over the years, our Gift in Wills & Estates Manager Sharon Wangman has met some wonderful people. Like Vera who, at 103, recited a poem when she visited her in her retirement home.

Or Bill who was vision impaired and showed Sharon around his home with his guide dog by his side.

Then there is Judith. Back in April 2019, Judith passed away and left all of her possession to Vinnies. At the time, the St Vincent de Paul Society was directed by State Trustees to arrange the pack-up and pick-up of everything in the home.

Sharon recalls it was an emotional and odd feeling to be in the home of a person you've never met and pack up their belongings, but a house always tells a story about the person who lived there, and Judith's home was no different.

Pictures adorned the walls, boxed set movies stored on bookshelves and photos of family and friends were everywhere – in other words, the home was filled with love. One way we show our love is by shared meals in company.

Food is such an essential item, yet many people go without. How can we change that? One way is to include a legacy in your Will to support people and programs that alleviate food insecurity, like Vinnies Soup Van program.

A legacy, too, isn't just about helping one person; it is about helping many. At the end of the day it is never about the amount someone has given. It is simply they have thought of giving to others. The St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria is very blessed to have people in our community who think of others

To find out more about how to leave a legacy for good visit [click here](#) or contact Sharon Wangman on **03 9895 5821 or bequest@sudp-vic.org.au**

FOOD CRISIS FROM THE FRONTLINE

MEET TRACEY OUR VINNIES SOUP VAN VOLUNTEER

This week we spoke with Tracey Vo, the president of our Vinnies Footscray Soup Van. For Tracey, being at the frontline of providing assistance has really increased her awareness of the food crisis many are experiencing in the western suburbs, and she's continually inspired by our supporters who help us provide meals to vulnerable people every day.



1. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN VOLUNTEERING? AND WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO VOLUNTEER FOR VINNIES?

I have been a Soup Van volunteer for many years now. I initially started volunteering once a week and now it seems like it's my second home, where I would pop in almost daily to help wherever I can. I was introduced to the Vinnies Soup Van by my mother Wendy, who was also a volunteer making soup.

2. TELL US WHAT A TYPICAL DAY LOOKS LIKE FOR YOU AT THE VINNIES SOUP VAN?

I would normally arrive at the Footscray depot around 2pm and, sometimes, a little earlier to organise and prepare the food that needs to be pre-packed and then loaded into the vans. I would also clean and sanitise the centre. Occasionally I would go on one of the van runs that evening and this would consist of delivering the pre-packed hampers and other necessities to households, boardinghouses and the street services to hand out food to people in our community.

3. HOW MANY HAMPERS DO YOU DISTRIBUTE EVERY WEEK? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE HIGH-DEMAND FOOD ITEMS WE PACK?

We distribute approximately 550 hampers, 100 individual sandwich packs, and we see 1,000 people in the Footscray inner west area. We have found the items of high demand are fresh milk, fruit/veggies and a variety of pantry items. Without our generous donors, we would not be able to reach so many people.

4. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T BELIEVE THAT THERE'S A FOOD CRISIS IN MELBOURNE'S INNER WEST?

I have had so many experiences during my time volunteering which highlight that many Victorians are indeed experiencing a Food Crisis, as I see this on a daily basis. The number of hampers required continue to rise, more people are being referred to soup van requesting assistance and our street services are picking up higher numbers of people requiring food so it is evident there is certainly a food crisis increase in our area.



If you would like to support a Vinnies Soup Van and assist us to provide more meals, **donate to our Food Crisis Appeal today.**





THANK YOU VANNIES BUT I'M OK NOW

As Ben Aghajani walked up to the door of the Vinnies Soup Van hub in North Melbourne, a mixture of emotions uncoiled inside him. It had been a long and, at times, desperate three years, during which he had gone from company executive to unemployment and homelessness.

While Vinnies volunteers are used to people dropping in to ask for assistance, Ben surprised the 'Vannies' who met him at the door by saying that he wanted to thank them for providing food for a year – but he no longer needed it because he was back on his feet.

"I was so pleased to be able to say that. I wanted the grocery hamper to go to someone else who needed it now," he said.

When Ben's marriage of 27 years broke down and he moved out of the home he shared with his wife and 15-year-old daughter in 2017, his life took a turn he had never foreseen.

Ben, 57, found himself without an income or a permanent home. He went in and out of homelessness, couch surfing with friends or sleeping rough.

Thankfully, Ben was assisted into a small public housing unit through another agency and after expressing low thoughts to the driver who took him there, he was put in the care of a

mental health team and in contact with a number of services, including the Vinnies Soup Van team.

"Vinnies was brilliant," he says. "Every week, the Vannies would provide me with two bags of food and that was a massive help. The hampers consisted of fresh fruit and vegetables, tinned food, rice, pasta, bread and other store cupboard staples."

Eating healthy food was a big part of his recovery. "The fresh fruit and veg were particularly helpful, as well as the beans that I added to my salads."

Ben's story is testament to Vinnies' belief that having access to nutritional food is vital to people's ability to recover and maintain their well-being.

In his new routine, Ben would spend every afternoon submitting job applications. After three months, he landed a new position.

"It's going fantastically well. My employers are over the moon with my performance and I am enjoying working again.

"When you are struggling, if you don't have support, you feel hopeless and worthless, and like ending your life because it feels as if there's no way out of it and nobody cares. The key is to get people who are struggling to feel that they are not worthless," he says.

Whether it's at Vinnies' hub door or a person's doorstep, our volunteers are always ready to offer support and assurance that people are not alone in their struggles.

"Vinnies was an immense help, amazing," says Ben.

Ben is in touch with his ex-wife and spends some beautiful days with his now 19-year-old daughter.

"It's great to feel as if I've come out the other side of all this, and to know that there is help out there for people who are really in trouble through organisations such as Vinnies. I'm extremely appreciative of the help I received when I was in need."



You can help a fellow Victorian struggling by **donating to Vinnies today.**

IGA #GOODFEEDS

Each week, IGA – a long-term corporate partner of Vinnies – delivers nutritious food items to our Fitzroy Soup Van Hub for our Vinnies volunteers to pack into food hampers distributed as part of the Vinnies' street service. During August, IGA donated enough food to fill 4,468 hampers, which equates to more than 25,000 meals. While this is an amazing contribution, it also demonstrates just how many Victorians are experiencing a food crisis.

The Vinnies Fitzroy Soup Van Service is once again experiencing an increase in demand for our 'rough sleeper packs'. These packs are distributed by our Vinnies volunteers who visit areas around Fitzroy, Richmond, Collingwood, North Melbourne, West Melbourne and the CBD offering a meal to people sleeping rough. IGA donates items which are easy for people living rough to manage – that is – meals which can be eaten without needing cooking or additional cutlery. Popular items include breakfast drinks, fruit cups, bottled water, tinned tuna, tinned baked beans, cheese and crackers.

Gareth, one of our regular Vinnies volunteers, fills hundreds of packs each week and finds these food items are essential to "helping everyone get through these lockdowns".

Vinnies values the support we receive from all our corporate donors, which enables us to continue our good works. A huge thank you to our corporate supporter IGA, who recognises local community matters.

If you're a business owner and have some ideas how you too can support Vinnies, please contact Corporate.Fundraising@svdp-vic.org.au



DONATE TODAY
VISIT vinnies.org.au
OR PHONE 13 18 12



St Vincent de Paul Society
VICTORIA
good works