

Media Release

13 April 2022

Vinnies CEO Sleepout hoping to make homelessness a thing of the past

This year's Vinnies CEO Sleepout is expected to be the largest yet, as community and business leaders from all sectors join in solidarity to raise awareness and funds for the increasing number of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in South Australia.

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout, held in 2021 as an in-person event at Lot Fourteen which was livestreamed to regional participants, raised more than \$934,000 – a record for the state.

For 2022, Vinnies has set the bar even higher and is aiming to raise more than \$1million to support its homelessness services across South Australia.

The event will be held across the nation on Thursday 23 June, with the South Australian leg of the event taking place at the SA Museum. Breakfast radio presenter Ali Clarke will partner with Vinnies to host the high-profile evening, which is the organisation's largest fundraising event.

Vinnies SA CEO Michelle Kemp says they are seeing some worrying trends in the number of people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

“Although we haven't yet seen the results from last year's Census, we won't be surprised to see the official data reflect the trends we are noticing: more people reaching out for help to access food, to pay bills, or to meet their rental payments. Most can't meet even the most basic costs of living and are just hanging on by a thread. It doesn't take much for them to be pushed into homelessness,” Ms Kemp said.

Homelessness can happen suddenly, with a relationship breakup, illness, unemployment or other crisis often the catalyst into a spiral of poverty. Domestic and family violence is now the most significant contributor to women and children becoming homeless, compounded by a lack of affordable housing.

“The real estate boom in the wake of COVID is also putting what were once affordable rental properties out of reach, meaning whole families have nowhere to go. We are seeing families living in tents or moving into friends' homes that are already overcrowded. These arrangements simply aren't sustainable,” Ms Kemp said.

Funds raised at the Vinnies CEO Sleepout will enable Vinnies to keep up with the increasing demand for its Fred's Van meal service; to provide people with the basics such as clothing and furniture and help to pay their rent; and provide support for hundreds of men, women and children staying at the organisation's crisis accommodation centres.

More than 50 business and community leaders have already signed up for the 2022 Vinnies CEO Sleepout, with a pleasing mix of new participants and those returning for a second, third and even 11th time.

“Given last year we saw record amounts of rain fall during the evening, we are very grateful to have already received significant interest in this year’s event. And while its primary purpose is to raise funds for and awareness about homelessness, the Sleepout also provides a platform for us to connect with influential members of the South Australian community who can readily advocate for change,” Ms Kemp said.

This last point means that, despite the event’s name, it is not just CEOs who are welcome to take part.

“When the event was founded in Sydney 17 years ago, a group of about 10 CEOs got together to sleepout and raise funds. The name ‘Vinnies CEO Sleepout’ then took on a life of its own, but participants don’t need CEO in their title to sign up – community and business leaders, owner operators, heads of family businesses are all welcome. We’re looking forward to bunkering down together at the SA Museum, which is kindly hosting the event, to help make homelessness a thing of the past,” Ms Kemp said.

Registration for the Vinnies CEO Sleepout is via the ceosleepout.org.au website. Participants can register individually or as a team.

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For more information or interview opportunity, contact:

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Notes for editors

About the St Vincent de Paul Society (affectionately known as Vinnies)

The St Vincent de Paul Society has been an integral part of the South Australian community since 1884. Providing assistance throughout metropolitan and regional SA, Vinnies is committed to assisting people experiencing disadvantage with a hand up through a focus on food, clothing and shelter.

Services include:

- Vinnies Assistance Visit program which supports approximately 50,000 South Australians each year with food, clothing, furniture and emergency financial assistance.
- Vinnies Men’s Crisis Centre, accommodating 500 men each year
- Vinnies Women’s Crisis Centre, accommodating more than 1,000 women and children and 160 pets each year
- Vinnies Refugee & Asylum Seeker Service, supporting 3,500 refugees and asylum seekers
- Fred’s Van meal service – serving 40,000 meals across 10 locations in SA

Along with practical support, Vinnies offers a compassionate, non-judgmental approach to supporting people in need, and we advocate on behalf of those who do not have a voice on issues such as the need for more affordable housing; the inadequacy of social security payments; refugee and asylum seeker policy and more.
