

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**12 October 2023**

## **This Anti-Poverty Week, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria invites Victorians to join award-winning education program helping lift young lives**

During Anti-Poverty Week (15 – 27 October 2023) with this year's focus to end child poverty, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (SVDPV) reaffirms its commitment to social justice by spotlighting education as a fundamental human right and a powerful way to transform lives.

Recognising that education is a key driver for breaking the cycle of poverty, the charity's award-winning strengths-based, and trauma-informed free education programs have demonstrated over the past 15 years that education support is a powerful tool for positive growth and transformative change.

"Education is not just a privilege; it's a right that every child deserves. Our programs, recognised for their excellence, are instrumental in providing children with the skills and confidence needed to overcome the challenges associated with poverty," says St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria Group CEO Dr Jennifer Fitzgerald AM.

This year, our eight education programs across Victoria have doubled their efforts. Comparing the previous financial year with the one before:

- **Number of students supported has risen by 93% (6,200+ students)**
- **Number of hours provided has risen by 115% (10,600+ hours)**

"Our waiting lists are indicative of the pressing need for our services," says Dr Fitzgerald. "We call upon individuals willing or able to make a difference to join us as volunteers, and we commit to providing the necessary training to ensure impactful contributions."

Dr Linette Etheredge, SVDPV Learning Services Manager, emphasises: "Our focus goes beyond just building academic skills. We are committed to building self-confidence, resilience and a growth mindset in all the children and young people who attend our education programs each week. This holistic and strengths-based approach ensures that every child feels valued and capable of achieving their dreams."

In the context of SVDPV's programs, trauma-informed principles ensure that children facing disadvantages and adversity receive social, emotional and academic support that considers and addresses the potential effects of trauma on their learning and wellbeing. Empathy, sensitivity and a focus on creating a safe and supportive environment for healing and growth are delivered by highly trained staff and experienced volunteers. In fact, Dr Etheredge believes this is one of the key successes of the program.

SVDPV and its volunteer members are also actively involved in addressing the financial barriers to education. In addition to education programs, volunteers provide essential support for education costs, ensuring that no child is left behind. This includes assistance with expenses such as laptops, school uniforms, excursions and necessary textbooks.

Dr Fitzgerald adds: "Poverty hurts us all, but together, we can make a difference. Let us unite to lift every child out of poverty and ensure that they have the opportunity to thrive, learn and break free from disadvantage."

More information about volunteering in the SVDPV education program here: [Education Equals Opportunity | Vinnies Victoria](#) or to donate please see visit [vinnies.org.au/get-involved/donate](http://vinnies.org.au/get-involved/donate).



Anti-Poverty Week, occurring from the 15–27 October, champions a collective effort to raise awareness, understand, address and eradicate poverty.

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**ABOUT THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY VICTORIA:**

*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 11,000+ 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/vic](http://www.vinnies.org.au/vic)*