

Mini Vinnies



STARTER KIT



St Vincent de Paul Society

CANBERRA/GOULBURN

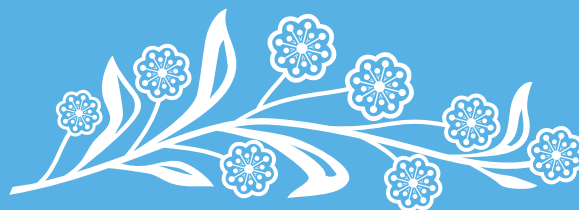
*good works*

## OUR MISSION

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

## OUR VISION

The St Vincent de Paul Society aspires to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering “a hand up” to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope, and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.



The St Vincent de Paul Society acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land upon which we work, and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.



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## WHAT IS MINI VINNIES?

Mini Vinnies empowers primary school students to become advocates within their school and local community by putting their values into action. Students meet regularly to learn about social justice issues, develop leadership skills and engage with the wider Vinnies community.

## WHAT DOES MINI VINNIES DO?

Mini Vinnies members, with the guidance of school staff, meet to discuss and raise awareness of social justice issues and organise ways to help others in need within their own school community and beyond.

Mini Vinnies is also a great opportunity for students to reflect on the needs of those they want to help in their community, help shape compassion and understanding with their fellow students and share their passion to raise awareness about social justice issues. Vinnies provides engaging resources and on-going support to help you empower your students to create a more just and compassionate society today and to build the foundation for a more equitable future.



## WHY START A MINI VINNIES GROUP?

By encouraging your students to get involved, you will be building the capacity of students to raise awareness about important issues, to fight for social justice and to be proactive within their school and wider community.

Your school would be joining hundreds of primary schools across Australia working alongside Vinnies to build up the next generation of social justice advocates, creating a more compassionate and caring society. It also gives your school the opportunity to recognise and respond to the needs in your local community.

The support of schools assists us to provide services in the Canberra/Goulburn region including; Emergency Relief, Specialist Homelessness Services, Food Distribution, Energy Efficiency programs, respite and more.

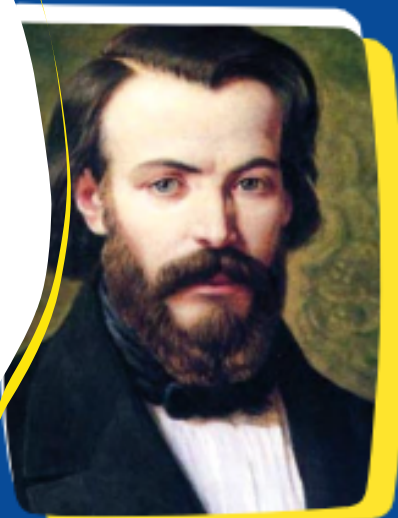
# HISTORY OF THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

The St Vincent de Paul Society, well-known as Vinnies, is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to assisting those affected by poverty and inequality throughout the world. In striving to achieve our purpose, we employ the ambitions and actions of our founder, Frederic Ozanam.

Frederic was a 20 year old university student who, felt the desire to alleviate the suffering around him in war torn France in 1833. Responding to the great poverty in the Paris of his day, he and a group of friends began visiting the homes of those in need, bringing practical assistance of food and firewood, as well as something less tangible - empathy and love. Frederic and his friends began meeting regularly and formed the first conference. They decided to adopt the name of the St Vincent de Paul Society after the patron saint of charities.

Conference is a French word meaning “coming together”. A Conference is a group of people who get together on a regular basis to meet and discuss ways to address particular needs in their community.

**FREDERIC OZANAM, THE SOCIETY’S FOUNDER ONCE SAID, “YOURS MUST BE A WORK OF LOVE AND UNLIMITED KINDNESS... YOU MUST NOT BE CONTENT WITH TIDING THE POOR OVER THE POVERTY CRISIS: YOU MUST STUDY THEIR CONDITION AND OFTEN THE INJUSTICES WHICH BOUGHT ABOUT SUCH POVERTY WITH THE AIM OF LONG TERM IMPROVEMENT”.**



# WHAT WE DO

## VINNIES AROUND THE WORLD

Vinnies has grown since its beginnings in nineteenth century France, now being present in 153 countries helping over 30 million people daily. In the heart of all that we do is connection; we support a range of people including families, young people, the elderly, people who are sick, people experiencing homelessness and people from a refugee or asylum seeker background. We also work to care for our common home through sustainability and recycling initiatives.

## VINNIES IN CANBERRA/GOULBURN

We address social injustice through the following services:

### Homelessness

- Family Homelessness Services
- Justice Housing
- Night Patrol Van
- Samaritan House
- Street to Home

### Poverty and Financial Disadvantage

- Blue Door
- Emergency Relief
- Energy Efficiency
- St Joes Youth Program

### Social Disadvantage

- Compeer
- Migrant and Refugee Programs
- St Nicks Carers Program
- Clemente
- Community Inclusion Program





## VINNIES SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY

St Vincent de Paul Society members cannot see injustice and let it go unchallenged. We advocate on behalf of the people we assist and speak out on the barriers that keep people in a cycle of poverty and disadvantage. We call for solutions to injustice by engaging government, working with other agencies and raising awareness across the community.

**Our key areas of advocacy include:**

- 1. Income Support, Poverty and Debt**
- 2. Australia's First Nations People**
- 3. A Fairer Tax and Welfare System**
- 4. Housing and Homelessness**
- 5. People Seeking Asylum and Refugees**
- 6. Energy Cost Awareness**

Schools can play a key role in this advocacy work by running awareness-raising campaigns, participating in Vinnies initiatives such as; School Sleepouts, Winter Appeal, Essential Packs, Christmas Appeal and Giving Tree as well as raising funds for our work engaging government and other agencies to enact change.

Together we can work towards addressing entrenched injustice and create a fairer society.





## GETTING YOUR SCHOOL INVOLVED

### 1 Let your school know

Let your school's executive staff know you'd like to start a group in the school.

Let the children in your school know what Mini Vinnies is all about and find out if they are interested in forming a group. Generally students in Years 4, 5, 6 are best suited, though each school is different.

If you already have a social justice group, Mini Vinnies activities can be a great source of information and discussion points to add to your program, and connecting your group with Vinnies can help the group to explore current needs within their community.

### 2 Find a coordinating staff member

Find a coordinating staff member (if not yourself) to be the Vinnies Champion. A Vinnies champion is your school's elected staff member that will guide and supervise the Mini Vinnies group. This could be any staff member within the school who is willing to support these students to learn about social justice issues, think of ideas to make a positive change, and help them run awareness-raising and fundraising activities.

The role of the Vinnies Champion is to guide group discussions, help the students put their passion and ideas into action, and support students in their individual and collective growth.

Generally, we ask that this coordinator:

- Organises regular group meetings.
- Helps their group learn and think in new ways.
- Keeps in touch with their local Vinnies team so we can support you and share your successes with others.
- Ensure administrative tasks are complete such as the collection of permission slips as required.

### **3 Connect with your local Vinnies team**

Form a connection with your local Vinnies team – our contact details are in the back of this booklet! We have dedicated school engagement staff who are capable and excited to support you in this work.

### **4 Recruit Mini Vinnies Members**

Recruit your Mini Vinnies members and hold your first meeting. Put posters around school, make daily notices, and assembly announcements to invite students to join. Make your first meeting fun and exciting, share a bit about Vinnies and what the group is all about and include a nice reflection about positive change. Start a brainstorming session about some of the issues the students care about and what they could do to help. Your group can choose how structured or relaxed it would like its meetings to be.

### **5 Recognise their Commitment**

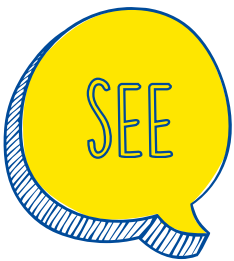
[Optional] Hold a Commissioning Ceremony to recognise your students' commitment to helping others and identify them as leaders in the school. This can be part of an assembly or special event; usually the students are thanked and presented with a certificate and a Vinnies badge by the school principal or a representative from Vinnies.



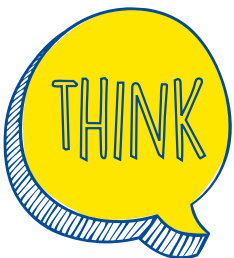
## TAKING ACTION WITH MINI VINNIES

**An easy mantra we like to teach our Mini Vinnies students that can help to guide meetings is to See, Think and Do.**

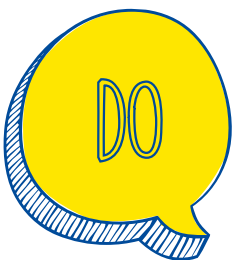
This is a model adapted from the Young Christian Workers movement.



An opportunity for students to learn about some of the social justice issues affecting people in their community and beyond. This stage helps students to develop empathy for those in need and challenges them to recognise what social injustices exist in their local and wider communities. This can be done in a structured way where they learn about the topic in the meeting or informally through reflection and activities. Images, videos and stories are helpful tools to make it easier for students to relate and engage with these topics.



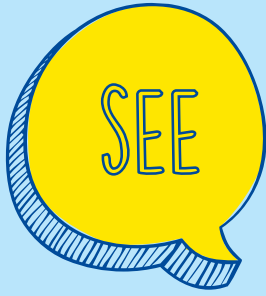
Develop the students' understanding of social justice issues in a personal way through reflection, research, discussion and expression. Reflect on what can be done about this issue – what they can do about this issue, individually and as a group. Ideas and guidance can come from your local Vinnies Conference or local Vinnies Youth team. This can be done during meetings or at home.



A time for action - the students' enthusiasm will be needed at this stage!

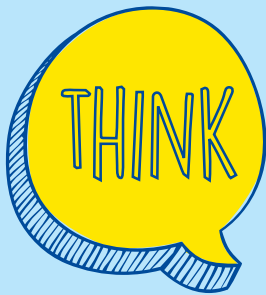
It's really up to them (provided it's safe and appropriate) to make decisions about what actions to take. Your students may want to share a positive thought for those experiencing disadvantage or create a poster to put up around the school about the importance of keeping the playground tidy, fundraising for a specific issue or looking out for one another.

## Example

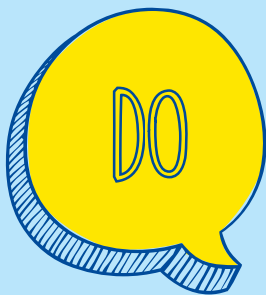


A student was in the city with their family and saw someone sleeping outside. They observed that the person had a sleeping bag and was using a rolled-up jumper as a pillow. The student asked their family why someone would be camping in the city. Their family said that the person was most likely “sleeping rough” and didn’t have a choice.

When the student went to school the next day, they asked their Mini Vinnies teacher if they could learn more about sleeping rough. The Mini Vinnies teacher found some videos explaining homelessness and used the Vinnies Winter Appeal Kit to find activities they could do with their Mini Vinnies group.



After learning about homelessness, the Mini Vinnies teacher leads the students through a discussion about what they think they could do to help, individually and as a school. The students decided they would like to do a fun fundraiser for people to raise awareness!



The Mini Vinnies group hosts a whole school Talent Show during lunch. Anyone can perform and audience members give a gold coin for their entry fee. The Mini Vinnies group has a bake sale near the entry point to raise further funds. They raised \$503 which they donated to a charity that helps people experiencing homelessness.





## MAKE MINI VINNIES YOUR OWN

How you decide to run Mini Vinnies to best fit your school is up to you. Some ideas below may guide you throughout the year.

### Awareness raising & advocacy

Educate others in your school community about injustices:

- Present at an assembly
- Hold a stall or event that draws attention to that issue
- Make posters to display around the schools

Then start advocating for change:

- Write letters to a government representative or local council telling them how you feel about the injustice and why it needs to be changed.
- Write a letter of compassion/solidarity to those experiencing hardship.
- Collect signatures for a petition.

### Appeals

Vinnies hosts two annual appeals throughout the year. They are our Winter Appeal and Christmas Appeals, which raise much needed funds to assist people experiencing hardship at these difficult times of year.

### Essential Packs

Throughout the year you can help to provide people in need with the basic essentials through Vinnies Essential Packs. These packs include hygiene products, food and winter woolies.

[Click here for more information about Essential Packs](#)

## Giving Tree

At Christmas time we collect Christmas Gifts and Pantry Essentials for our Companions through the Vinnies Giving Tree. These donations help to make Christmas an easier time for our Companions who often find Christmas to be a difficult time of year. We request gifts for all ages.

[Click here for more information about Giving Tree](#)

## Sleepout

A national initiative to give people a small glimpse into the realities of homelessness by 'sleeping rough' for a night in the middle of winter, whilst raising awareness and funds to provide crucial assistance to people experiencing homelessness. Schools and universities across Australia host Sleepouts, as well as hundreds of community groups and CEOs.

## Assist a Student

Support a student in an overseas country to get an education through our Vinnies Assist a Student program.

[Click here for more information about Assist a Student](#)

## Other fundraising opportunities

Be as creative as you want – crazy sock days, rice days, pyjama days, etc.





## MINI VINNIES PLEDGE

**As a member of Mini-Vinnies I promise to  
make a difference in my world by:**

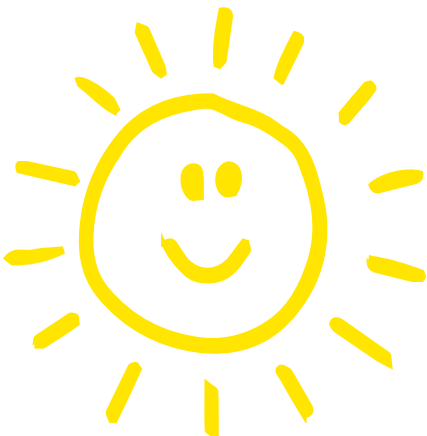
Caring for, respecting and loving myself.

Caring for others in my school and social community by  
befriending those who are alone, in need or in trouble.

Contributing to the happiness of my family by my willing help,  
respect, consideration, joy and kindness.

Caring for, appreciating, enjoying and nurturing the world  
around us.

Treating others the way I would  
like them to treat me.



## MINI VINNIES PRAYER

Lord, open our eyes that we may see the deepest needs  
of your people.

Move our hands that we may feed the hungry.  
Touch our hearts that they may bring warmth to those  
who are sad.

Let us share our time and possessions  
with those in need.

Give us the care that strengthens the sick.  
May we all be a source of support and  
encouragement for each other as we strive  
to build a more loving society.

AMEN.



While this pledge and prayer has been widely  
adopted by Mini Vinnies groups, you may adapt  
them to suit your school's needs.



# Yearly Planner Guide

	Event	Donation
Term 2	School Sleepout	Money
	CEO Sleepout	Money
Term 3	Winter Appeal	Money
	Essential Packs	Winter Clothing, Hygiene Items, Non-Perishable Food, Vouchers, Bedding
Term 4	Christmas Appeal	Money
	Giving Tree	Gifts, Vouchers, Non-Perishable Food
Year Round  If you want to donate towards a specific cause, Vinnies has a range of services you can donate to anytime of the year	Assist a Student	Money
	Youth Programs	Money
	Street to Home	Money
	Conference	Money, Non-Perishable Food

# CONTACT US

## Schools Team

[schools.cg@vinnies.org.au](mailto:schools.cg@vinnies.org.au)

## Emergency Relief

13 18 12

## Volunteer Services

[volunteer.cg@vinnies.org.au](mailto:volunteer.cg@vinnies.org.au)



Mini Vinnies 