

You are **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

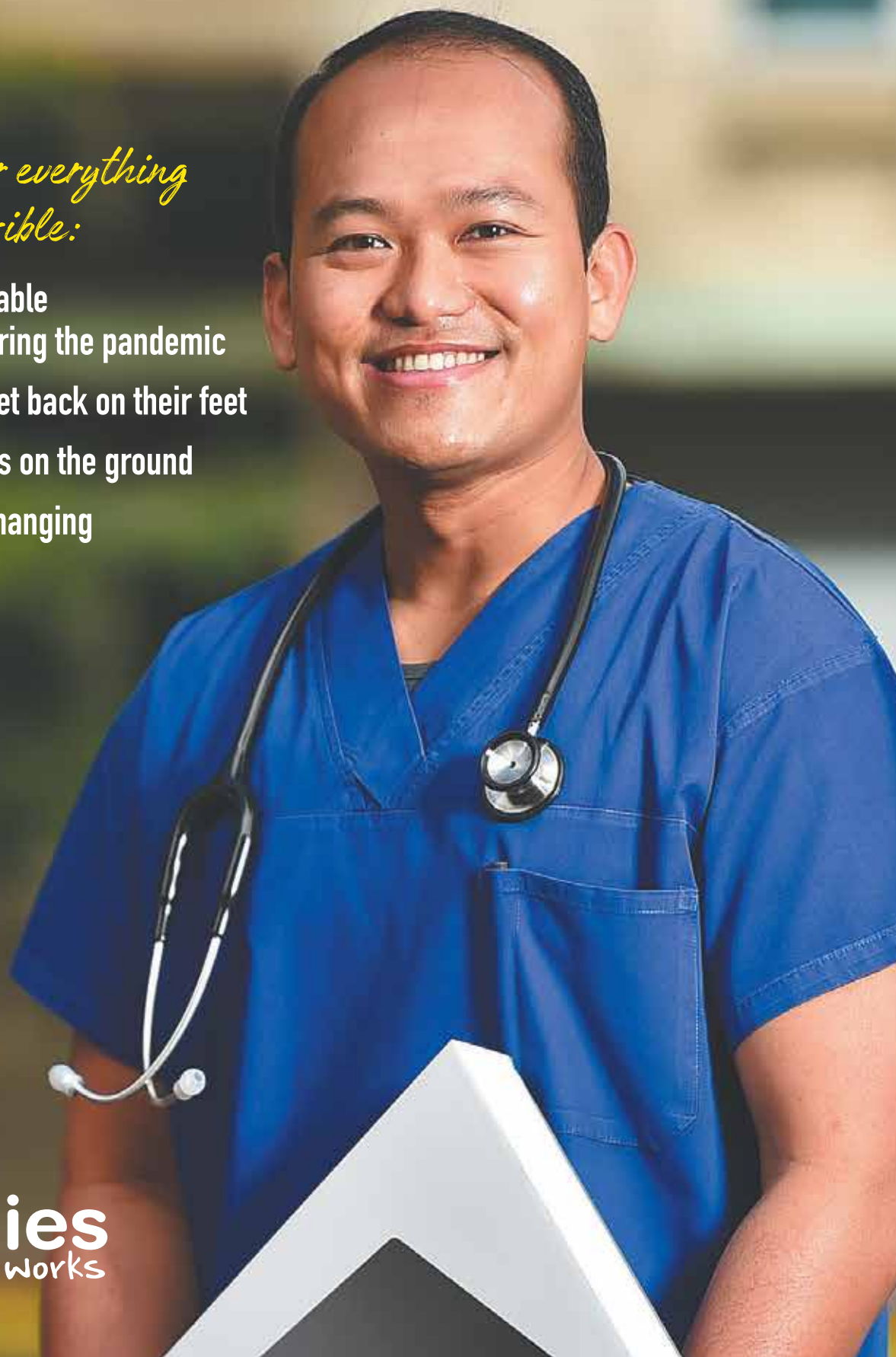
HOW YOUR SUPPORT OF VINNIES QUEENSLAND IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

SPRING 2020

*Thank you for everything
you make possible:*

Supporting vulnerable
Queenslanders during the pandemic
Helping farmers get back on their feet
Keeping volunteers on the ground
Sharing the life-changing
gift of education

 **Vinnies**
good works





Help *in a time of* crisis

You've helped keep Barbara's community pantry stocked with food.

Barbara is a Vincentian (Conference Member and volunteer) who has been serving with Vinnies for more than ten years in the south-eastern suburbs of Brisbane. In that time, she says, nothing has had a more devastating impact on so many families and individuals as the Covid-19 pandemic.

“There’s been a huge number of people, for the very first time, who have found themselves without employment. Professional people without enough money to buy food. Families falling into crisis.”

At the beginning of the pandemic, Barbara worried her team would simply not have the resources to meet the needs of the growing number of families turning to them for help.

“I worried for those at risk of falling through the cracks if we couldn’t help them. Where would they go? How would they put food on the table? How would they clothe their children and get them to school?”

But thanks to the wonderful kindness of people like you, Barbara and other Vinnies Conference Members and volunteers have been able to continue supporting people throughout Covid-19.

To protect the health of our Conference Members, volunteers and the people they work with, we’ve made some changes to the way we deliver support. We’re now doing contactless food drop offs for families struggling to put meals on the table. And we’re setting up accounts with local pharmacies to deliver medicines to the homes of vulnerable people. We’ve also given

Thank You

FROM OUR STATE PRESIDENT

From drought and last summer's devastating bushfires to Covid-19, it has been an extraordinarily difficult year for many Queenslanders. At no time in Vinnies' 126-year history has your compassionate support been so important.



If someone you know needs crisis assistance, please call us on 1800 846 643.

Like every individual, family and organisation in the community, Vinnies has felt the ongoing impact of the pandemic. We're doing everything in our power to continue providing a helping hand to those who need it, while keeping everyone safe. And we couldn't have done that without you.

In this edition of *You Are Making a Difference* you can read about the hope and support you are providing during these troubled times. You'll see your generosity hard at work helping mums like Dana and Catherine, who are struggling to cope during the pandemic. You'll read about how you are supporting Glynis and her family to bounce back after drought, bushfire then Covid-19.

You'll also find inspiring stories from the volunteers who are continuing to journey with people in their local communities during the crisis – and meet the business leaders who raised much-needed funds for the growing number of Queenslanders facing homelessness.

While the pandemic may have caused more than its fair share of heartbreak and distress, there are plenty of reasons to be hopeful. I'm delighted to report that at the time of publication, Vinnies have re-opened 129 of our 134 Queensland shops. We have also opened Karalee's first ever Vinnies shop.

Thank you for bringing much-needed hope and compassion to people in these challenging times. Vinnies simply could not provide them with a hand up without you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dennis Innes".

Dennis Innes, State President
St Vincent de Paul Society QLD

A blurred photograph showing a person, identified as Barbara, standing in a community pantry. The background is filled with various items on shelves, suggesting a well-stocked food storage area.

Barbara is overjoyed at the generosity of people like you who've kept her community pantry fully stocked throughout the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

our Vincentians who are at high risk the opportunity to take a step back and do some activities behind the scenes.

But one thing hasn't changed: our commitment to provide a hand up to those who need it at this difficult time. Without the compassionate support of people like you, that would simply not be possible.

Barbara painted a beautiful picture of the difference you are making:

“Because of that support, our pantry stayed full of food for families in need. We had warm blankets and jumpers to give out to children who might otherwise go to school feeling cold during winter. There was medicine to give the elderly gentleman who urgently needed it.”

Thank you for standing together with your local community in these difficult times.

A helping hand *when it's* needed most

Your kindness is making a powerful difference across Queensland.

Wan has had a tough 18 months. First, the Malaysian-born, final-year medical student at James Cook University lost most of his belongings in the February 2019 floods, including his computer.

He was left to line up for the computers at the local library to try and complete his studies.

After completing a clinical placement on Thursday Island, Wan returned to Townsville in March, believing he would go back to his part-time jobs as a waiter and event photographer.

But the global pandemic was unfolding and soon put him out of work. To make matters worse, he learned the Covid-19 crisis had also shut down his family's restaurant back in Malaysia, robbing them of their income and means to support Wan.

Wan was left with no source of income, and with libraries across the state in lockdown, no way to keep up with his studies. Not knowing where else to turn, he reached out to Debbie and the Vinnies Holy Spirit Conference.

Thanks to generous support of Vinnies supporters like you, Debbie was able to purchase a new laptop for Wan.

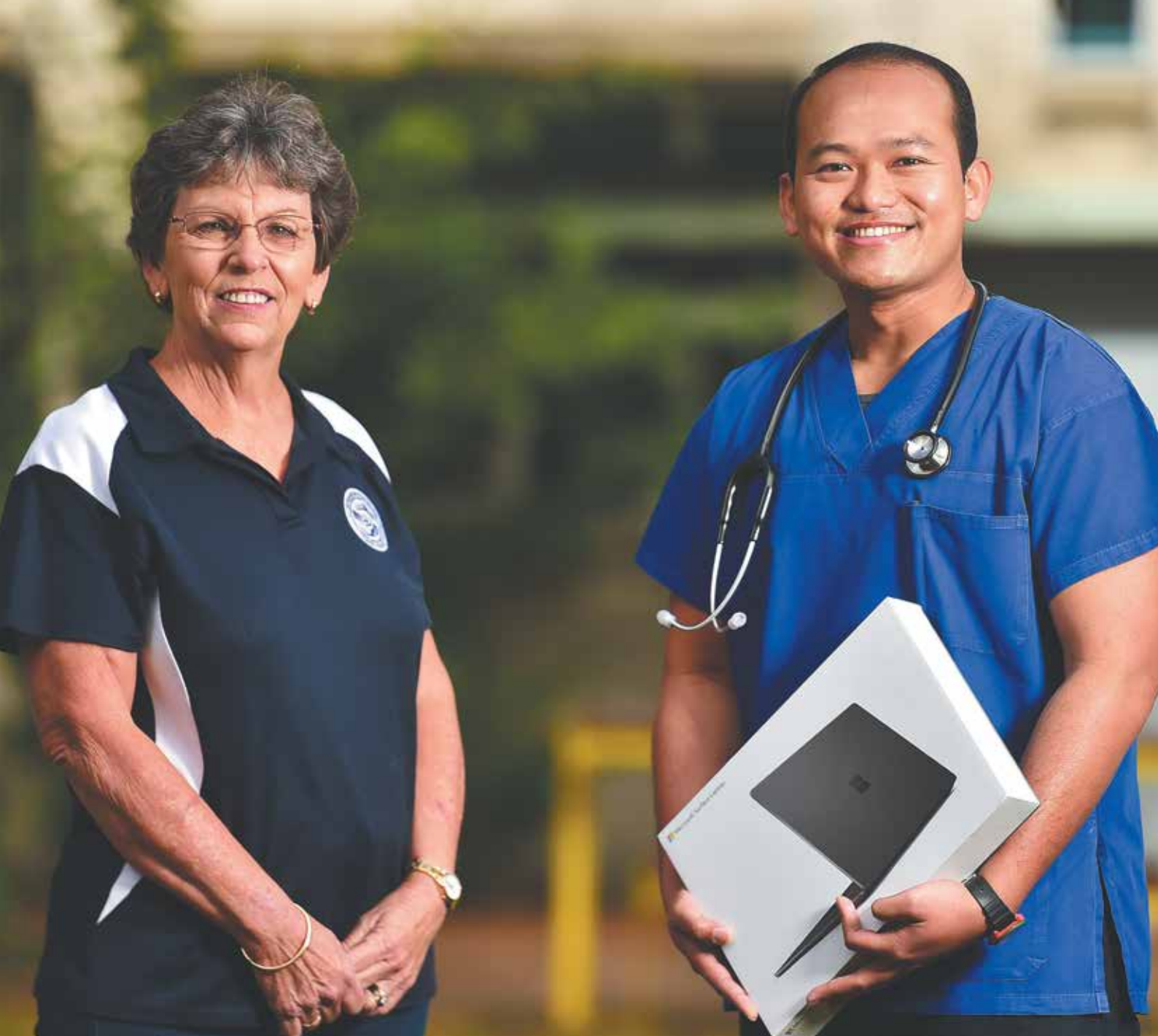
"I was very lucky Vinnies were able to help," Wan said.

He says he couldn't be more thankful for the support he has received, which means he can stay focused on his studies. He also has some advice for others who find themselves in the same situation he was.

"When things get hard, do not get frustrated," Wan says. "There are charities like Vinnies which are able to help you beyond your expectations."

When he has received his medical qualifications, Wan hopes he can give back to the community who showed him such generosity when he needed it most. He plans on becoming a GP or rural generalist in the region.

Thank you for standing with people like Wan in their hour of greatest need.



Your support allowed Vincentian, Debbie, to purchase a new laptop for medical student Wan.

You have been there for Queenslanders throughout the pandemic.

Thanks to you, Vinnies has been able to stay connected with individuals and families in need during the Covid-19 crisis. Every week, thousands of people are calling our Helpline and connecting with us through the brand new Live Chat function on our website to ask for support with rent, utility bills, warm clothing and so much more.



You've helped put food on the table and buy a new set of clothes, so now Sarah has many reasons to smile.

Life's basics covered *during the Covid-19 crisis*

Your kindness meant mum Dana could provide for all her daughter, Sarah's, needs.

We shared Dana's story in a letter earlier this year. When she first turned to Vinnies for help, her family was in crisis. Both she and her husband John were out of work – and with Covid-19 sending the economy into freefall, there was little hope of that changing.

Dana had maxed out all their credit cards trying to keep their heads above water. Unpaid bills were piling up and they were struggling just to put food on the table and a roof over their heads. She couldn't even afford new clothes for her daughter, Sarah.

But a visit from Vincentian (Conference Member and volunteer)

Jennifer changed everything for Dana, John and Sarah.

Jennifer provided practical support in the form of food vouchers as well as assistance paying bills. Jennifer also helped Dana negotiate a two-month rent reduction with their landlord. Most importantly, Jennifer offered companionship and dignity to Dana in a time of great distress.

Your support for Vinnies even helped Dana buy new clothes for Sarah. "She was going to school in a jacket she couldn't close or do up," Dana says. "Now she has one she can do up. It's a small thing, but it's such a lovely feeling."

Thankfully, Dana reports that things are starting to look up for her family. Both her and John are back working part-time, and the family are continuing to pay a reduced rate of rent. She says she couldn't be more thankful for the helping hand you provided to her family when they needed it most.

"At the worst time of my life, to meet such beautiful people and to know such goodness exists in the world."

A lifeline *for families* in crisis

Your kindness is keeping families afloat during the pandemic.

Ray, Ben and Catherine right before they relocated from the city to Eumundi. They are now getting back on their feet – thanks to you!



You may remember reading about Catherine in a letter we sent you recently. After recently graduating from a TAFE course in remedial massage, she was looking forward to starting a new job at an Allied Health Clinic. Her husband Ray was earning a good living as a personal trainer.

Then Covid-19 came and turned their world upside down.

Within days, the clinic where Catherine was due to start work all but closed its doors, leaving her without employment. All five of the gyms that were providing Ray with work also closed. Catherine says they were left wondering how they would be able to afford the rent, keep their home warm during winter and put food on the table.

With the bills piling up and money running out, she reached out to Vinnies for help.

The compassion and generosity of people like you provided

Catherine and her family the support they needed at that critical time.

“Vinnies was able to provide assistance with our electricity bill,” she says. “That stopped us from being disconnected. They also helped with jackets and jumpers. It is a great sense of relief, as a mum, to know my son was going to be warm.”

Since we first shared Catherine’s story, her family has relocated to Eumundi to take advantage of more affordable rents. We’re also pleased to report that Ray has been ‘inundated’ with work on the Sunshine Coast. A light has finally appeared at the end of their long, dark tunnel.

Thank you for being there for Catherine, Ray and Ben when they needed you most.

A prayer for strength during uncertain times

Lord,

In this time of unending uncertainty, and in the times that I feel hopeless, weak or stressed, give me the strength and patience when things look bleak to help me to see your will in all things.

I put forward to you my financial concerns and commit myself to being grateful for all that I have now in my life.

Help me to seek the serenity to know you are here with me, helping me to carry my burdens each and every day.

Help me to walk in your light and share the hope of our hearts with those I encounter.

Amen

Hope rising *from the ashes*

You've helped Glynis and her family survive one crisis after another.



Glynis, Ray and son Harrison have worked with Vinnies – thanks to your generosity – to rebuild after suffering drought, fire and now the Covid-19 shut downs.

Glynis's son Harrison and one of his beloved farm animals, which thankfully survived the fire.



When we last spoke to Glynis, she was still reeling from a devastating bushfire that tore through her family's property near Esk in December 2019, destroying livestock and income generating farm assets.

Glynis and Ray were left with no way to pay their bills, rebuild their farm or cover the cost of caring for the cattle that survived the fires.

Where many might have simply given up, Glynis and Ray set up a business selling fresh fruit and vegies at nearby Ferndale markets to pay the bills while they rebuilt the farm. Sadly, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, closing the markets and leaving Glynis and Ray wondering how they would ever be able to get the farm up and running again.

Fortunately, Vinnies – through your kindness – provided them with financial support to get on top of their bills, purchase stockfeed

and begin the long, slow process of rebuilding their farm.

Glynis and Ray have been through more heartbreak and hardship in the last year than many of us will in a lifetime, but thankfully things are starting to turn around.

Today, Glynis and Ray are looking forward to returning to the markets in the coming weeks. They have even started rebuilding some of the fences they lost in the fires.

While they still face a long road to recovery, Glynis says she draws great strength and hope from the kindness and support that people like you have provided her.

“I don't know how we would have gotten through this year without Vinnies. Knowing that we're not forgotten means everything to us.”

In the aftermath of last summer's devastating bushfires, you and other compassionate Vinnies supporters contributed \$22.9 million to help Aussie victims. Of that, \$17 million has already been spent or committed to support families and communities to rebuild.

A further \$5.9 million will be spent on long-term recovery efforts over the next 18 months.

Thank you for standing with farmers like Glynis and Ray in their hour of greatest need.

Glynis's story, featured in our last edition, inspired many of you and we were delighted to pass on your correspondence to the family.

From: Patricia [REDACTED]

Sent: Saturday, 9 May 2020 4:14 PM

To: Vinnies Qld

Subject: Re: Fire, drought and Covid-19 – this Aussie battler has seen it all

Thankyou for your moving story of the resilience of one Drought and Fire affected family and their property. Very inspiring. Great to hear how money is being spent as well. Great to know too that you have support from many to do the work you do. I will continue to add you to my donation list in tough times.....Best regards Patti

A brighter future

thanks to you

You're helping give young Queenslanders the best start in life.



Through the generosity of people like you, Vinnies has provided grants to help kids like Ciara achieve their dreams.

You may remember meeting mum Anna, Ciara and siblings in your Autumn edition of *You Are Making a Difference*. She believes passionately that education is the key to providing a better tomorrow for her five children. But as a single Mum, paying for the books, uniforms, tuition fees and sports equipment they all need is a massive challenge.

It costs an average of \$522 just to send a Queensland child to school each year – and that is money Anna simple doesn't have.

That's where you come in. In the last three months, thanks to your generous support, Vinnies has been able to provide grants to 25 families like Anna's through our Back to School and Study Fund.

Through that grant, you are

giving children and adults vital opportunities to learn and achieve their extraordinary potential in life. You've helped provide new laptops to a family with three kids in remote Charleville, so they can attend school through distance learning. And you've helped an adult learner from Inala get back into study.

You are also making a big difference to Anna's kids.

After working hard and achieving excellent results, Anna's eldest son Brendon, 16, has recently been accepted into a mechanics course at TAFE. He's still playing footy, got his Learner's Drivers Licence and looking forward to turning his passion for cars into a career.

Her eldest daughter Ciara, 14, (pictured) is going from strength to strength with her schoolwork and is

well on track to achieving her dream of becoming a midwife.

Ten-year-old Danny, who once struggled with Maths and English due to speech issues, has gone from a grade D to a grade A student.

Anna couldn't be prouder of what her kids have achieved. Inspired by the difference education has made to their lives, she has enrolled in and completed a Certificate III in Community Service. She has a job and is looking forward to giving back to her community.

Anna says she is deeply thankful for the life-changing support you have helped make possible. "If you're struggling, you can always rely on Vinnies."

New look CEO Sleepout

a great success

QLD bosses sleep rough to fight homelessness.

It took a bit of creative thinking, but business leaders from across Queensland and Australia found Covid-safe ways to get involved in Vinnies' annual homelessness fundraiser this June – and raised an amazing \$5.7 million nationally.

Dubbed the 'backyard' Sleepout, this year's event saw executives like Nick Herron, Managing Director of Herron Coorey Building Contractors, bed down for the night in their cars, driveways and backyards.

With the Covid-19 economic downturn threatening to push up to one in four Australians into poverty and increase their risk of homelessness, Mr Herron says the 2020 Sleepout was especially significant.

"Over the past decade, I've raised over \$92,000 and this year was my biggest yet, despite the almost everyone doing it tough this year. It's a reflection of just how important the cause is to the wider community at this time – and how much my network values Vinnies, and how much they want to support our most vulnerable.

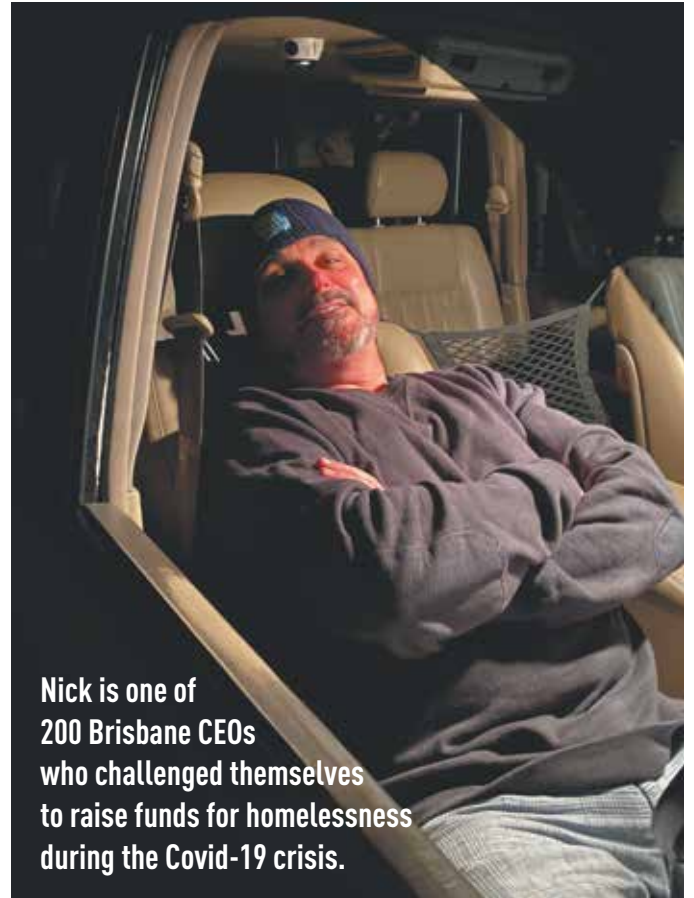
Sleeping in the 4WD this year was a luxury compared to previous years and an opportunity to reflect, and keep it real; a sobering reminder of what could happen to anyone.

It's a privilege to participate and keep homelessness on the agenda in my network."

The funds could not have come at a more important time. With rising unemployment and record numbers of Queenslanders out of work as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, more and more people are facing rent arrears and evictions. In fact, nine of Australia's top 20 'homelessness hot spots' are in Queensland¹.

The 22,000 Queenslanders on the public housing waiting list is set to grow dramatically. Our state simply doesn't have enough affordable housing to help everyone at risk of homelessness due to the pandemic.

To find out more about how Vinnies is helping those experiencing or at risk of homelessness through housing services and advocacy, please visit vinnies.org.au



Nick is one of 200 Brisbane CEOs who challenged themselves to raise funds for homelessness during the Covid-19 crisis.

Do you or a loved one need help?

The pandemic has led to unthinkable economic crisis for many Queenslanders. It's not easy to ask for help, but there is no shame in asking for it. If you know anyone struggling financially due to the Covid-19 crisis, please let them know we're here for them. They can call 1800 846 643 or simply live chat on:

<http://qld.vinnies.org.au/Covid-19-emergency-response>.

Vinnies can help with their rent, utility bills, household items, and so much more.

¹ Williams, E. (2020, August). State's shame: Our worst areas for homelessness. Queensland Times

