

7 June 2023

Popular Street Soccer coach named Vinnies CEO Sleepout MC

Well-known community advocate – and national coach for the popular Street Soccer Program – **George Halkias** has been announced as MC for **2023 Vinnies CEO Sleepout**, to be held on Thursday 22 June.

If anyone is familiar with the issue of homelessness in Australia, then it's George Halkias. The co-founder of the Big Issue Community Street Soccer Program, and well known for his tireless work in working alongside and promoting the Homeless World Cup, George has worked with vulnerable Australians for almost 20 years.

"I am excited to be involved in this special awareness raising and fundraising event that makes such a real difference. Especially as I am very familiar of the services that St Vincent de Paul Society offers and have seen first-hand the positive impact they have on the lives of people experiencing homelessness and disadvantaged," says Mr Halkias.

"George's amazing personal and professional journey and his knowledge and work's impact across the community and sector will bring an insightful addition to the night," says Paul Turton, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria Interim Group CEO.

Vinnies CEO Sleepout is the St Vincent de Paul Society's annual flagship fundraising event held on one of the longest and coldest nights of the year. Senior executives, business owners and community leaders are invited to sleep out and raise money to support a range of Vinnies services, which assist Australians experiencing homelessness and extreme poverty.

In Victoria, this year's goal is to raise \$1.2 million and to promote the message #ChangeNeedsYou. The panel discussion – including a person with lived experience of homelessness – hosted by George Halkias will be an integral part of the event.

With the cost of living on the rise the demand for our services is growing. "Our VincentCare Northern Community Hub in Glenroy receives 800 calls every month for support. On any given night, we have 10 families in emergency accommodation, and we support 100 households each month with brokerage to establish or maintain their private rentals," said Mr Turton.

"We also know that our assistance centres in regional Victoria see more women – single and with children – coming through their doors to ask for help since they became homeless. Statistics tell us that family violence is a leading cause of homelessness, especially for young people."

Ghislaine Entwisle, Managing Director of Protiviti Australia, a global business consulting firm, will take part in the Vinnies CEO Sleepout for the fourth time this year. Ms Entwisle, says what motivates her to return each year is that homelessness and poverty shouldn't exist in such a wealthy nation as Australia – especially when it involves women and children escaping intolerable problems at home.

"It is vital that senior leaders call on their peers to lean in and make a difference. Together we can improve the quality of life for so many and assist St Vincent de Paul Society in the help they provide to people at the most vulnerable time of their lives.

"It is important to realise that even the most secure executive may be only one significant life event away from requiring help, too."

Mr Turton says: “Our theme this year is ‘Change Needs You’, because we simply couldn’t provide the help that’s needed out there in the community without the generous backing of the executives and their supporters. It’s our social responsibility to help those who need assistance.”

Registrations for this year’s Vinnies CEO Sleepout are still open and Mr Turton urges all leaders to either register or nominate a CEO, executive, business or community leader to take part in this year’s event. Last year, 1,500 CEOs, business owners, executive and community leaders to raise \$82+ million nationwide to support Vinnies’ much-needed services. They include crisis accommodation, food, healthcare, counselling, education, employment support, and more.

The event is hosted in every state and territory – visit ceosleepout.org to see all locations. In Victoria, the Vinnies CEO Sleepout will take place from 6:00pm Thursday 22 June 2023 – 6:00am Friday 23 June 2023 at the Timber Yard, Port Melbourne.

Registration: www.ceosleepout.org.au

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES: Claudia Loeber-Raab | Media & Content Lead
claudia.loeber-raab@svdp-vic.org.au | 0438 804 023

Jen Vuk | Communications Manager
Jen.vuk@svdp-vic.org.au | 0418 863 719

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 more than 10,000+ 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.