

Vinnies News

Rent Relief Program Update

More than \$2.1 million in rental assistance has been distributed to vulnerable tenants struggling with cost of living pressures to help keep a roof over their heads.

Under the \$24.4 million program, which is being managed by Vinnies WA and Anglicare WA, eligible private tenants can be supported by payments of rental arrears, and up to 50% off future rent costs for up to three months, capped at \$5000.

So far, 527 households have been helped with rent relief, which is paid directly to the landlord or via a property manager.

Three-quarters of the recipients were from metropolitan Perth, while a quarter reside in regional WA. The average payment has been \$4141.

Vinnies WA Executive Manager, Community Engagement Services, Andrew York says rental stress and cost-of-living pressures are hitting all sectors of our community.

“Vinnies WA is working with hundreds of clients who are doing it tough. Many are battling to keep a roof over their heads, are facing eviction or in severe rental stress,” Mr York said.

“The reality is that rental prices in Perth are at an all-time high and the tight market means there has never been a more difficult time to find a private rental. More and more people, even those who are holding down jobs, are feeling the pinch financially. This initiative will go some of the way to alleviating these pressures.”

The program was announced in November last year, with the first funds released in late December.

Girrawheen Vinnies shop now open

Vinnies WA’s first-ever retail store inside a shopping centre has opened in Girrawheen.

Vinnies Girrawheen has moved to a new site at Hawaiian’s Newpark Shopping Centre and has been a popular addition since opening its doors on March 1.

The shop is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Saturday.



Wandjoo Bidi marks six month milestone providing accommodation and homeless support

Vinnies new accommodation and specialised support service, Wandjoo Bidi, has marked its six-month milestone, providing safe, secure accommodation for up to 33 tenants every night.

Wandjoo Bidi opened its doors in Murray Street, West Perth in September 2023 after a massive undertaking by Vinnies WA staff to convert the building to cater to the complex needs of vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness.



From transforming individual rooms into safe and welcoming spaces with ensuite bathrooms to establishing communal areas like kitchens, laundry rooms, and common areas, Vinnies undertook a significant amount of work to ensure the facility provides holistic support and dignified living conditions for up to 33 residents.

Wandjoo Bidi is a low-barrier supported accommodation service meaning it does not exclude individuals on the basis of the complex issues they may present with.

The new service, funded by the Department of Communities, comes as recent data shows more people are experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough in Perth. In February, Shelter WA reported that 1889 people were experiencing homelessness, up from 1373 two years ago.

Vinnies WA Manager, Strategic Programs, Si Lappin, says Wandjoo Bidi staff have created a friendly, welcoming, and safe service that fosters the conditions for change, as well as emotional and psychological support for tenants.

“Staff have established social and activity-based interactions with tenants, including cooking, gardening, arts and crafts, and games in the common area. It has been really wonderful to see,” Mr Lappin says.

“Not only has this supported a closer connection between staff and tenants, but it is also contributing to fostering a sense of community, which helps social and positive dynamics in the service.”

In October, Wandjoo Bidi accommodated 12 clients from another city service, Boorloo Bidee Mia, for three weeks while that service was temporarily closed.

Partnerships have also been established with key stakeholders, including Housing First Support Service, Homeless Healthcare, Mobile Clinical Outreach Team, Street to Home, and HEART outreach teams, as well as SecondBite and OzHarvest for food donations. The Vinnies WA North Beach Conference has provided material aid.

LotteryWest supports Vinnies WA Emergency Support Assistance Program

Community Services Minister Sabine Winton took time out of her busy schedule in April to present a \$1 million LotteryWest grant to Vinnies WA’s Emergency Assistance and Support Program.

Minister Winton toured Vinnies’ Canning Vale operations, including the distribution centre and call centre, speaking with our volunteer call takers who help connect people in need with vital emergency assistance.

Vinnies WA has experienced a significant increase in calls for emergency relief, receiving 19,090 calls in the first three months of this year, compared to 14,952 in the same period last year.

The program helps people in financial crisis with practical assistance. This might involve having a friendly chat or it might include providing information, advocacy, food or food vouchers, clothing, furniture, budget support, assistance with utility bills or back-to-school costs.



Wandjoo Bidi case study: Meet John*

Life has changed for the better for John* since he took up residence at Wandjoo Bidi six months ago, affording him stable accommodation and an opportunity to reclaim what he loves in life.

After sustaining a neck fracture, the 57-year-old became one of Wandjoo Bidi's first residents, moving to the West Perth service during his recovery.

Since then, John has re-established his personal goals and reconnected with his hobbies, including his love of coin collecting and gardening.



Money raised from the collections is used to buy soil, seedlings and plants for the gardens onsite, which John tends to most evenings, making a significant improvement to the grounds.

Having stable accommodation at Wandjoo Bidi and establishing a good routine also meant John was able to save enough money to visit family in South Australia for four weeks over summer.

During the trip, he reconnected with his daughter and his mother, which he says was valuable to re-establishing these relationships.

Now back home, John is well supported by his Housing First case manager and intensive support coordinator, while he remains on the housing priority list.

John has initiated a Containers for Change fundraiser at Wandjoo Bidi, enthusiastically enlisting the help of other residents to collect empty cans and bottles, raising 10 cents for each container recycled.

Vinnies WA Chief Executive Officer Susan Rooney says there is an overwhelming need for emergency relief in the community, with a growing number of first-time callers seeking help in the current cost-of-living crisis.

Last year, the Vinnies WA call centre significantly expanded due to the increased demand, growing from just six desks to 15.

“The LotteryWest funding is absolutely crucial to

enabling Vinnies to assist West Australians in need, alongside the support provided by generous members of our community. The structure of our organisation and the member volunteers that are at the core of the service delivery, enables us to have a very local response to the needs of vulnerable people and helps the funding to go further,” Ms Rooney says.

Last financial year, Vinnies WA provided services to more than 58,000 people across WA.



Vinnies Winter Appeal 2024

Many people in WA are struggling to afford the basics of life, such as food and fuel, and a worsening housing crisis is threatening to push them over the edge.

Recent reports show that the number of rental properties that a person earning minimum wage can afford has dropped below 1%.

It means that more people like Luke and his dad, Colin, simply can't find anywhere to live.

Luke and Colin were living in rented accommodation, until it was sold. Luke was working five days a week in a bakery, but he just couldn't find an affordable rental. Father and son, together with their dog, Ruby, tried living in boarding houses. However, it was unsafe and expensive and they had no choice but to start sleeping rough. It was the beginning of the hardest year of their lives.

One day, they met Dennis, a dedicated Vinnies member-volunteer, who was walking his dog in the park. **Dennis later went back to meet Colin and Luke and offered them some food vouchers and store cards.** He could see they needed much more than that.



They needed to get off the streets - and fast, before Colin's health got any worse. Colin suffers from a lung disease that makes it hard for him to breathe.

Dennis helped Luke check his dad into hospital - and arranged for Luke to stay in a nearby motel. He also secured a shared room in crisis accommodation for them, where they could have good sleep, decent meals and safe, secure shelter. After just a few weeks, they were getting back on track.

Luke and Colin are not alone.

Right now, every single month, a staggering 1,600 people in Australia are being forced into homelessness. They urgently need your help. When you donate to Vinnies, you help Vinnies to provide immediate assistance to people like Luke and Colin, as well as long-term support to help them find a place of their own. You also help us advocate for more affordable and social housing, so that everyone can have a home. Please give generously to our Winter Appeal today. Together, we can make a very real difference to people's lives.



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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect. May Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured. May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith, and reconciliation.

**To respect the privacy of the people we assist, some of the names and images may have been changed.*