



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

Impact

The difference
you make

SPRING 2020
ISSUE 09



SUPPORT WHEN IT'S NEEDED MOST

FEATURES **RUSSELL'S STORY • BUSHFIRE ASSISTANCE**
• ROOFTOP GARDEN BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

**VINNIES
RENEWS
REBUILDS
RESTORES**



Dear friends

2020 has hit us hard. We still don't know how much harder it will get.

In late 2019, "Coronavirus" was just a word. Now in 2020, it resounds

with meaning - with global disruption unseen before by our generation.

This global disruption is local and personal. Our cities are at a standstill, thousands are without work, any of us could get sick or die. Some have been hit much harder than others.

We, the volunteers and staff in the Society, have continued our support for those affected.

For many this is the first time they have needed to call a charity. They are struggling and fear how they will survive the pandemic and support their families.

Thanks to your generosity and continued support we are giving them a hand up. You are helping us show them Christ's love for each of them, to catch them, and help them back on their feet.

Peter McNamara

State President

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

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Because we respect the privacy of the people we assist, names in this newsletter may have been changed, stories summarised and pictorial models used.

For more information about the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, contact:
(02) 9568 0262 or vinnies.org.au. Correspondence can be sent to media.nsw@vinnies.org.au

Follow us on:



Messages of thanks

HERE ARE SOME WORDS OF THANKS AND HOPE FROM PEOPLE WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN TURNED AROUND THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT.

○ We're not going to get tossed out of our home - we have Vinnies to thank for that. - Rosa

○ It is such a comfort to know I have someone I can turn to when I need it. - Mary

○ Vinnies has been brilliant - the ongoing support has been so important to helping us get through. - Al

○ Getting the food and assistance is awesome - it's saved me a couple of times from starvation and the worry. Knowing that there's people you can go to and talk to, it's really helpful and just so nice. - Lynn

○ Vinnies has been so great - they've helped with my bills, finding a place to live, ensuring I have enough food for my son - it's made a big difference. - Maria

○ When I had a place of my own the weight had been lifted off my shoulders - I don't know what I'd do without Vinnies. - Cassie

OUR BUSHFIRE RESPONSE

SINCE LAUNCHING THE VINNIES BUSHFIRE APPEAL LATE LAST YEAR WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ASSIST PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES DEVASTATED BY THE BLACK SUMMER BUSHFIRES.

Here are some of the highlights - made possible thanks to the generosity of supporters like you, as well as our amazing volunteers, members and staff.

 **\$22.9 MILLION**
— how much we have raised to support households and communities affected by bushfires

 **\$17.0 MILLION**
— the amount we have distributed and committed to individuals and families since January 2020

 **\$5.9 MILLION**
— the remaining funds committed to recovery and rebuilding projects over the next 12-18 months

 **45,000**
— the number of local volunteers and members at the heart of our community-level response

 **4,560**
— the number of households we have assisted so far

*Figures as of July 22, 2020

Help for a young family struggling through coronavirus

WITH A BABY ON THE WAY AND A TODDLER AT HOME, IT WAS TERRIBLE TIMING WHEN THE CORONAVIRUS CAUSED MARK TO LOSE HIS JOB. TO MAKE MATTERS EVEN WORSE, HIS PREGNANT WIFE, MICHELLE, WAS WORKING AS A NURSE IN A HOSPITAL DURING THE PANDEMIC.



When Mark first lost his construction work back in March, the family tried to make do.

"At first it was OK, but then when the savings went it was a challenge to balance everything, especially with my pay which is fortnightly," Michelle said. "And so now it's the sole income that will pay bills, rent and everything else. And with a baby on the way and a son as well, it's quite hard."

Michelle had no choice but to keep working until the baby was due. Meanwhile, Mark tried multiple times to access income support payments through Centrelink – waiting for long periods on the phone and in a queue outside his local service centre – but was told there were complications because of an outstanding tax return. Michelle believed that was an error.

"It's frustrating because Centrelink is not really assisting us at the moment," she said. "They have turned around and said that he didn't do his tax return – it's been almost a year and you're telling us that now?"

Having spent their savings and run out of money to put food on the table, Michelle and Mark came to Vinnies. We immediately provided them with food, nappies and supermarket vouchers, as well as help paying for their electricity and mobile phone bills, plus petrol for the car.

Being able to use the car again meant that Michelle didn't have to catch the train home after her late-night shifts at the hospital. It also helped keep her and the growing baby safe.

At a time when nurses should be receiving thanks and praise for their selfless work containing the COVID-19 pandemic, Michelle says they encountered abuse instead.

"If you leave the hospital in your scrubs, people class you as dirty because they think you're going to be carrying the COVID-19 virus. Some people spit at us. It's starting to get to the point now where we're being asked to change into our normal clothes before we leave, for our safety."

She was relieved when she went to pick up the supplies from Vinnies, still dressed in her nurse's scrubs, and "they treated me like a normal person".

"They were really approachable. As soon as we got talking it was like, I felt really relaxed. I just felt comfortable talking with them."

Michelle said it was "really scary" working on the frontline of the pandemic. "People don't realise how serious it can get, and then when you see it first-hand, it's like wow, OK."

Although she was daunted by what laid ahead, she was comforted knowing that Vinnies was there for her growing family.

"I'm really so appreciative, it's helped us amazingly. We're just so thrilled that a place like Vinnies can offer so much support to a family."

VINNIES
REBUILDS

VINNIES IS COMMITTED TO BEING THERE FOR PEOPLE IMPACTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

During this time of crisis we have had to adapt the way we deliver assistance with large sections of our staff moving to working from home arrangements, support being provided through phone and video conferencing, and our base of members and volunteers doing less face-to-face work due to the health risks associated with the virus.

To ensure we are able to meet the needs of people seeking assistance while remaining socially distant, we have implemented a range of strategies including dropping food parcels to people's doorsteps and checking in with them to ensure their wellbeing.

We have also increased our advocacy work to ensure the increased rate of JobSeeker is maintained so that people avoid falling into poverty during this time of financial uncertainty.

With the health and safety of the people we assist our highest priority during this time, we are continuing to operate our housing and homelessness services to ensure the most vulnerable in our communities are safe. In instances where social distancing has placed our services at capacity, we have been able to house people in hotels with tailored individual support provided on site.

For the latest updates on Vinnies' COVID-19 response, visit our website at www.vinnies.org.au and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.

"I'm really so appreciative, it's helped us amazingly. We're just so thrilled that a place like Vinnies can offer so much support to a family."

A safe space to grow

WHEN PEOPLE FALL ON HARD TIMES
VINNIES SERVICES ARE THERE TO GET
THEM BACK ON THEIR FEET.



In the heart of Sydney, the Matthew Talbot Hostel (MTH) serves as a beacon of hope for men experiencing homelessness. Next door, the Ozanam Learning Centre (OLC) provides disadvantaged members of society with a safe space to belong and gain skills.

Connecting the two iconic services in Woolloomooloo is a rooftop garden where MTH residents tend to a range of fresh produce, which is used by patrons of the OLC as part of its education and living skills programs.

With some of the many challenges facing people experiencing homelessness being poor nutrition and an inability to afford fresh produce, the services offered through the MTH rooftop garden are helping to reduce that disadvantage.

For Laura Frangelli, our Community Inclusion Leader based at the OLC, the chance to put her background in permaculture and sustainable agriculture to use helped to turn a skyline view into a vibrant haven for people on the margins.

"When I started at the OLC about three years ago, I noticed that there were a number of large planter boxes on the MTH rooftop that were unused, un-kept and in dire need of love and attention," explains Laura.

"When I raised the idea of revitalising the space it was received with a mix of excitement and hesitation. There were thriving gardens in the past, but there were concerns over the space it was going to take up."

Replicating the gardening program run by the nearby Bourke Street Community Garden to the MTH rooftop, in the space of three months a cast of 50 residents and service users helped to develop an edible garden that formed the basis for something larger.

"Over time people embraced the change and came to appreciate the beauty and opportunities it could provide."

Expanding to a vegetable and fruit garden midway through last year, aspiring gardeners have been provided with employment pathways as part of the TAFE horticulture course, while OLC patrons are able to make use of the fresh produce during weekly cooking classes.

"There are usually two garden sessions a week – garden group and Introduction to Horticulture run through TAFE. Outside of those times there are a number of engaged people who manage the maintenance and watering of the garden.

"The garden supplies a bounty of fresh fruit and vegies every week for the cooking and baking classes to make use of. There's also the opportunity to learn about food and where it comes from, as well as a deeper connection to nature and what we put into our bodies.



Having been involved with Vinnies from her days as a teenage volunteer, Laura continues to support our good works by bringing people together through food.

"It has been incredible watching people's faces light up as they see a broccoli grow for the first time or the pride people display when the food they grew is being eaten and enjoyed by a group of people.

"One of the most beautiful garden moments was last Christmas when we harvested mounds of fresh corn, zucchini, tomatoes, basil and so much more and the cooking class members cooked an incredible feast for 70 people!"

Thanks to the support of our donors, services like the rooftop garden are able to give people the skills they need to succeed.



“Without Vinnies I wouldn’t have survived”

RUSSELL NEVER EXPECTED TO FALL INTO HOMELESSNESS.

Having worked his entire adult life only to become unemployed in his late 50s, the once-fiercely independent man soon found himself with no savings and living day-to-day in fear for his safety and health. Trapped in a vicious cycle of seeking assistance from Centrelink and applying for government housing, the toll of depression and severe anxiety saw Russell’s mental well-being decline rapidly.

“I didn’t want to know ‘me’ and what I had become,” explains Russell. “I stopped seeing friends so they didn’t feel like they had to help me out or have to see me as a failure.”

With his ‘new normal’ reduced to “eating for the moment and ‘being’ without any purpose”, the support of Vinnies proved to be a turning point.

Meeting Narrabeen Conference Member, Margaret, at the Northern Beaches Community Support Centre, Russell was assisted with food but found the greatest nourishment in being seen after spending months marginalised by society.

“She listened to my situation with interest and empathy. I had met someone who really did care and

wanted to help me out of my dark situation.”

Continuing to visit the Brookvale office for assistance, a fateful call from Margaret led to a breakthrough Russell feared would never come.

“I needed a place to live and Margaret understood my immediate need. As an older single male, I wasn’t a first choice for tenancy. She went into bat for my character and ability to be a good tenant. No one else anywhere was going to do that!

“I’m not a religious person, thankfully Margaret had enough faith for both of us.”

Moving into a social housing unit in his local area operated by Amelie Housing – a community housing provider established by Vinnies – with nothing more than some clothes, Margaret and her husband Tom stepped up once again with a bed, fridge and furniture to turn the unit into a home.

Having gone through the hardest period of his life, Russell credits the support of Vinnies for bringing him back from the brink.

“Without Margaret and Vinnies, I wouldn’t have survived - it’s that simple and I am forever grateful for their wonderful work.”

VINNIES
RESTORES





New additions to Vinnies Shops

VINNIES SHOPS ARE REOPENING THROUGHOUT THE STATE WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES IN PLACE TO KEEP CUSTOMERS, VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF SAFE.

After making the difficult decision to temporarily close our iconic retail shops back in April, customers are once again able to pick up a bargain at one of our 237 sites across NSW.

To ensure the safety of our customers, volunteers and staff a number of social distancing measures have been implemented such as reduced operating hours, limiting the number of customers allowed at a time, restricting access to change rooms and quarantining all donations for 48 hours.

We rely on the sale of goods from Vinnies Shops to fund our work assisting people experiencing hardship and disadvantage. By safely reopening our shops, we will be able to continue supporting people in their time of need.

Shoppers can also take advantage of our latest retail innovations – the re/CYCLE range of homewares made from 100% recycled goods and the Vinnies Shop on eBay providing people with the second-hand experience they know and love from the safety of their own home.

As part of our commitment in moving towards a circular economy and reducing the amount of textile waste ending up in landfill by 20% by 2022, the re/CYCLE range repurposes recycled textiles – including donations unable to be sold in Vinnies Shops – into environmentally sustainable homewares such as blankets, throws, rugs and cushions.

Currently available in select locations we plan to roll out the re/CYCLE range across the state to give customers the opportunity to style their homes, while helping to reduce the amount of waste ending up in landfill.

Over the past three years the second-hand market has grown 21-times faster than the traditional retail market, while online shopping has increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic. To give our customers the best of both worlds, the Vinnies Shop on eBay allows people to browse through a curated range of affordably-priced designer clothing, accessories and collectibles at the click of a button.

To visit the Vinnies Shop on eBay, head to www.ebay.com.au/usr/vinniesshop.

For all the latest on Vinnies Shops, visit www.vinnies.org.au/shops to find out more on the latest reopenings, where to donate and new products.

**VINNIES
RENEWS**

“I refuse to let it break me”

DARREN SAGE SAYS HE'D ALREADY BEEN “BLED DRY” BY THE DROUGHT BEFORE A BUSHFIRE DESTROYED HIS HOME AND CATTLE FARM IN BELLANGRY, ON THE NSW MID NORTH COAST.

While summer was a gruelling time for those impacted by the fires, it came on top of a relentless few years for Darren and his fellow farmers.

“The drought just bleeds you of every cent that you’ve got,” Darren said. “You’ve got no other income, no other money to do anything, because the drought just takes everything. You’re just continuously hoping for rain, continuously pouring money back into the farm to try to keep everything alive for when it does rain.”

Devastatingly, more than 30 head of cattle perished in the November 2019 bushfire. In the days after they lost their home, Darren and his wife Julie were out scouring the burnt fields for the remainder of their herd. Fences had been destroyed and the animals had strayed in all directions.

It’s just one way that losing an entire farm is different to losing a house.

“We got wiped out completely, we lost everything,” Darren said. “House: 100%. Sheds: 100%. All our farming things. All our infrastructure, all gone. We basically left with half a suitcase of clothes each, and that was it.”

Making matters even worse, Darren had been released from hospital the very same day the bushfire hit, after undergoing major surgery. Julie had



driven him back from Sydney and they’d been home for just a few hours when they had to evacuate.

“I couldn’t drive a car, I could barely walk,” Darren said. “If Julie wasn’t with me, I’d be dead – that’s just plain and simple. If I was by myself, I would have been in bed asleep, you know, with painkillers and so forth. I wouldn’t have known what was going on.”

Currently living in temporary accommodation provided by their insurer, the support of Vinnies with food, fuel vouchers and an emergency cash transfer has buoyed the couple’s spirits as they look to rebuild – a process Darren has already begun with his own two hands.

“I refuse to let it break me,” Darren said. “I’m always positive, so the drought or the fire’s not going to take that away from me.”

**VINNIES
REBUILDS**





A gift to live on

BY LEAVING A GIFT IN YOUR WILL, YOU CAN MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE WELL BEYOND YOUR LIFETIME.

At Vinnies we are committed to alleviating disadvantage and poverty in all its forms. A gift in your Will can help support families facing homelessness, provide refuge for women and children experiencing domestic violence, and assist communities over the long-term as they recover from natural disasters.

There are various gifts you can leave in your Will:

A SHARE OF YOUR ESTATE: Once you have taken care of your loved ones, you can leave a share of, or the remainder of your estate to us. This is called a residuary gift.

A SPECIFIC GIFT IN YOUR WILL: You can choose to leave us a specific item, such as jewellery, shares or even a property when making a Will. This is called a specific gift.

A GIFT OF MONEY IN YOUR WILL: You can choose to leave us a specific amount of money in your Will. This is called a pecuniary gift.

If you would like to include a gift to Vinnies in your estate, one of our Honorary Solicitors can prepare your Will free of charge.

By leaving a gift in your Will you are leaving behind a legacy of love and compassion that will enable us to continue transforming the lives of Australian children, families and communities now, and into the future.

VINNIES
RENEWS

LEAVE A GIFT TO VINNIES

PLEASE CONTACT

Cherie McKenna, Gifts in Wills & Estates Manager, if you would like information about including a gift to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW in your Will.

Call: (02) 8622 0387

Email: cherie.mckenna@vinnies.org.au



How do you
want to be
remembered?

Make a lasting
legacy part of
your life story.



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW

Local hero gives back to Vinnies

THROUGHOUT NSW THERE ARE MORE THAN 4,500 VINNIES MEMBERS HELPING OUT IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

From conducting home visits, volunteering in our shops and providing assistance through our network of Conferences, Vinnies members are the lifeblood of the Society.

One of our members who regularly goes above and beyond is Tony Cranney. Serving as the Oyster Bay Conference President, Sutherland Regional President and Sydney Archdiocese Central Council President, Tony was recently named a 'Have a Go Hero' winner by The Today Show for his work assisting bushfire-affected communities and donating a kidney to his mate.

Upon receiving a \$10,000 cheque as recognition, Tony immediately donated the funds back to Vinnies.

"There's that many people at the moment requesting help...

We do our normal stuff which is keeping food on the table and the lights on, but there's so many more requests now and they're much larger requests," said Tony.

Members like Tony are able to support people experiencing hardship and disadvantage thanks to the on-going support of our donors. By donating to the Vinnies Spring Appeal you too can make a difference.

**VINNIES
RESTORES**



WITH YOUR HELP WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Supporter No. _____

Title _____ First Name _____ Surname _____

Address _____

Suburb/Town _____ State _____ Postcode _____

Tel _____ M _____ Email _____

☐ I would like to make a regular donation of \$ _____ per month

OR ☐ I would like to increase my regular donation by \$ _____

OR ☐ I would like to make a single gift of \$ _____

**DONATIONS
OVER \$2
ARE TAX
DEDUCTIBLE**

Please debit the amount indicated to my credit card: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Amex ☐ Diners

Card Number _____

Card Holder's Name _____ Expiry Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

OR ☐ Please find enclosed my Cheque/Money Order made payable to 'St Vincent de Paul Society NSW'

☐ Please tick here if you would like information about remembering the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW in your Will

☐ I have already left a gift to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW in my Will

All communications are treated in the strictest confidence. The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW follows the Australian Privacy Principles. If you do not wish your details to be used for future fundraising activities please tick this box. ☐

SVS20/MTS20



To make a regular or single donation, simply complete your details and post to:

St Vincent de Paul Society
PO Box 19
Petersham NSW 2049
(02) 9568 0262
vinnies@vinnies.org.au
vinnies.org.au
Donation hotline: 13 18 12
ABN: 91 161 127 340

**ON BEHALF OF ALL THE
PEOPLE WHO WERE ASSISTED
BY VINNIES LAST YEAR...
THANK YOU.**



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works