

AUTUMN 2022 ISSUE 12

SAFETY AND SUPPORT AFTER YEARS OF ABUSE

FEATURES A CHRISTMAS REFUGE • MAURICE'S MEMBERSHIP MILESTONE • RYAN REACHES OUT VINNIES RENEWS REBUILDS RESTORES



Dear friends

Every day, Vinnies members, volunteers and staff aspire to transform Australia into a society grounded in compassion and built on justice.

At the core of this vision is an innate belief in ensuring the dignity of all people. This vision is not a utopian ideal divorced from the realities of the world, rather it is based in an understanding of people's fundamental needs in order to help them avoid or escape the crushing weight of poverty.

In communities across the state, we work to alleviate hardship and disadvantage, so that the people we assist are empowered to lead lives that are filled with meaning and purpose. The scope of our work is varied, as you will see through these pages. Yet at the core of every interaction is a commitment to treating people with love, respect, justice, hope and joy. Vinnies is about collective action to ensure that everyone is able to live with dignity. We are able to make such a significant impact thanks to the generosity of donors such as yourself.

As a donor you play a vital role by making a financial contribution in support of our work. These donations enable services and programs which help to transform the lives of the people we assist.

As we enter a third consecutive year of uncertainty brought on by the pandemic, the increased demand for our services, sadly, remains a constant. Thanks to your support, we will be ready to meet those calls for assistance.

Jack de Groot

Jack de Groot CEO St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

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Impact is produced by Fundraising and Communications, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW. ABN: 91 161 127 340 Copyright 2022 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



St Vincent de Paul Society

Vinnies renews, rebuilds, restores

Messages of thanks

VINNIES PROVIDES A HAND UP TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HARDSHIP AND DISADVANTAGE EVERY DAY. HERE ARE SOME OF THE WORDS OF GRATITUDE FROM **PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN ASSISTED THANKS** TO THE GENEROSITY OF DONORS LIKE YOU.

"Vinnies helped with finding a place I can finally call my home. They assisted me with furniture, household goods, a fridge, blankets, food vouchers and advice with finances." - Christine

"I needed somewhere to go, feel safe and be protected; I'm in a place now much stronger than before." - Kara

"Vinnies helped me get back on my feet - I've got permanent housing now." - Samantha

🔍 "Vinnies have been a part of my life for as far back as I can remember. They made sure that every year we had a good Christmas." - Tom

"Your compassion [and] understanding far exceeds what I perceive most people think of the service you provide... Thank you for caring, thank you for making a difference." - Brendan

Vinnies makes a difference

IN THE FACE OF IMMENSE CHALLENGES OVER THE PAST YEAR, **OUR VINNIES TEAM HAVE SUPPORTED** THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE DURING TIMES OF NEED.

Here are some of the ways our members, volunteers and staff have been able to make a difference during that time.



5,100 people assisted through our specialised homelessness services providing accommodation, case management and other assistance



3,595 people supported by our disability and community inclusion programs.



2,700 people assisted to maintain their tenancies

2,400 women

experiencing domestic and family violence supported through crisis accommodation and case management



1,200 people assisted to secure permanent accommodation

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR IMPACT BY READING THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY NSW ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21 ONLINE AT: NSW202021.VINNIES.ORG.AU

From nowhere to go, to free and independent

WHEN THE DAY FINALLY ARRIVED FOR ANNE TO MOVE INTO A HOME OF HER OWN, A WAVE OF FEELINGS HIT.

"Free was the main one," she recalls.

"I didn't have my own house key when I was with him. Something as simple as that was major for me; that meant that I could come and go as I pleased."

Having spent years in a relationship that descended from toxicity into emotional and physical abuse, the opportunity to start anew and re-establish relationships with family was an opportunity she feared would never come due to her circumstances.

"You might ask why I stayed. The answer is simple – I didn't have anywhere to go. I had no money and he was threatening me with calling Centrelink and [the Department of] Housing. I also didn't want to let my family know what was going on."

To better understand Anne's situation requires a look into her past.

As a wife and mother of two boys, Anne based her identity in her family.

However, when her marriage of seven years broke down abruptly, she was left devastated by the sudden upheaval of the life she had always wanted.

Presenting a front of normality to the world to hide the trauma she was experiencing, a breaking point saw her spiral off the rails.

Becoming increasingly withdrawn to the point her sons went to live with their father, illicit drug use followed before rock bottom hit in the form of homelessness.

Her fortunes appeared to change for the better while living in temporary housing where she met a man.

"I wasn't looking for a relationship, but it just happened."

Moving quickly in the relationship from living together to being listed on the lease of his property, the initial bliss of being with another person evolved into a nightmare for Anne as the years passed by.

"Not only was he violent but the emotional abuse and control was unbearable, along with the jealousy and him distancing me from my family."

Unable to call upon a support system to escape, Anne lived with her abusive partner for five years before a mixture of fear and courage saw her break free.

Leaving in her pyjamas with little more than her mobile phone in hand, Anne sought refuge at a nearby women's shelter where a fresh set of challenges awaited.

Feeling unwelcome in her surroundings and racing against a ticking clock to find longterm accommodation, Anne sought help from a nearby Vinnies Support Centre, having had dealings with the Society in the past.

Sharing her story with Jessica, a Vinnies case worker, and Nina, a volunteer, Anne was provided with clothing, toiletries and local knowledge on where to find dinners in accordance with her budget.

"They also helped me with medication, but most importantly they were there for me. They listened, they never judged. They were priceless during that awful time."

Spending the next few months hoping for a home to become available after a short-lived return to her partner resulted in another stay at the women's shelter, the breakthrough Anne had yearned for came through a connection of Jessica's at another local charitable organisation.

Having spent years losing her sense of self, the offer of a fully furnished apartment, rent-free for 12 months, along with continued assistance from the local Vinnies Conference, transformed Anne into a new person.

"I've dealt with Vinnies for a long time, the work they do is priceless. I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for them."

TO BRASI

"My life has totally turned around. I've got friends, I spend time with my parents who have been there to support me. I am proud to say that I am now nine years clean.

"I've dealt with Vinnies for a long time, the work they do is priceless. I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for them.

"They worked really hard for me behind the scenes and they got for me the greatest wish one could possibly receive: my apartment."

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has been alleviating the hardship and disadvantage of

thousands of people every year for more than 140 years.

We are able to support people such as Anne with housing, food, healthcare, educational programs and much more thanks to the generosity of donors like you.

If you haven't already donated to our Autumn Appeal, please make a gift now to support people like Anne in their time of need. Donate online at vinnies.org.au, using the form on the back of this magazine or call 13 18 12.

VINNIES REBUILDS



Art for All goes up on the wall

THE FIRST PHASE OF A MURAL PROJECT KNOWN AS "ART FOR ALL – COMMUNITY STORIES ON BROUGHAM LANE" WAS LAUNCHED IN LATE NOVEMBER AT THE SOCIETY'S OZANAM LEARNING CENTRE (OLC) IN WOOLLOOMOOLOO.

OLC is a Vinnies community centre in Woolloomooloo where folk can connect, learn, participate in activities, and access support. The OLC is a safe and supportive space for people over the age of 18 years, and everyone is welcome.

"Our work is aimed at providing opportunities for inclusion and support for those who need it," said Jennifer Carew, Acting Manager, Inclusion Woolloomooloo.

"If our friendly staff, partner organisations and volunteers aren't able to help, we'll do our best to assist with referrals — to make sure people get the support they need and help them reach their personal goals."

The recently formed Brougham Lane Street Art Gallery is a Community Development project developed by OLC in partnership with Art Space. Emerging artists and community members submitted their mural concepts to be considered for selection. The brief was to incorporate local Woolloomooloo stories into their prospective creations.

Brougham Lane is one of a series of murals being installed across Woolloomooloo, reflecting local stories as told by local Indigenous elders and community members. The submissions went before a judging panel comprised of OLC and Art Space staff and a local resident. They were reportedly 'blown away' by the quality of the work. Scoring was made in accordance with artistic merit, the artist's relationship to Woolloomooloo and the representation of local stories.

Once the pieces were chosen, Lily Keenan, an emerging artist who has volunteered her time with OLC, was contracted to assist with the painting. Lily helped to support and guide our community members, many of whom were painting an outdoor mural for the first time.

The first instalment was the "Warm Welcome" mural, painted around the OLC entrance by emerging artist Nastia Gladuschenko whose work draws inspiration from local flora and fauna.

"Nastia's mural really brightens up the building's frontage, giving everyone a warm welcome as they step through the entry," Ms Carew said.

Two more murals will be completed this year – a NAIDOC mural coming to Wallamulla Place on the side of the OLC building, and another mural on the wall of a local café

The OLC team thanks Taubmans for donating the paint for the project.

"We are so grateful to all the locals and emerging artists who gave their time and talents to turn a simple lane into a beautiful and accessible space for anyone to immerse themselves in art," Ms Carew said.



Christmas for the kids at Marian Centre

THE STAFF AT ELSIE'S AND MARIAN CENTRE ARE ALWAYS WORKING TO HELP WOMEN AND CHILDREN ESCAPE DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE.

Part of this is making sure the children have a place to live where they have safe, secure accommodation but also an environment that is happy and engaging for them.

In 2021, the enthusiastic staff found some fantastic ways to create some Christmas magic for the kids and their mums.

"I go overboard at Christmas because I just love Christmas and the concept of it.

"The families — spoiling them — you should see the sacks full of stuff that we have for them for Christmas morning," said Marie Crotty, Accommodation Team Leader at the two centres.

There was no doubting Marie when she said this for two reasons: the obvious excitement in her voice and her brightly painted, alternating red and green nails, done for the previous day's Marian Centre Christmas party.

Throughout December last year, the staff at the Centre were running daily hunts by the children for their elf on a shelf.

After being introduced to the children, spending a day in isolation in a bain marie in a mask and gloves, staff then began hiding him in different locations in the building each night.

"Tonight, he's going to be up to more mischief in the kitchen.

"He's going to be baking or cooking and he's going to make a mess all over the kitchen counter and there'll be little angel wings drawn like the way you draw angel wings in the snow," Marie said.

"The kids, in the morning, as soon as they come downstairs to go to school or whatever, they come down first thing in the morning they are running around like lunatics to see who can find the elf first.

"So, it's great fun.

"It's something fun and it's something they're enjoying and mums are getting into it as well.

"It just takes their mind off their problems for a little while," Marie said.



At the Christmas party on the 16th of December, a St Vincent de Paul Society NSW staff member, dressed as Santa, distributed presents to children at the Marian Centre.

"When they come downstairs on the 25th, we have the Christmas tree in the foyer and all the Christmas bags, like big Santa sacks, are at the bottom of the tree with their names on it.

"From the end of September, early October, our staff are reaching out to different companies for gifts and ordering our food hampers and all different things.

"But this is the highlight of the year for me, personally, and for most of the staff, this is what makes it.

"Just yesterday, seeing the kids, the joy on their faces and they don't realise they're going to get more," Marie said a few days before Christmas.

Christmas may be a special time of year but Marian Centre staff run activities for the children year-round.

"We have weekly activities with the kids, whether it be arts and crafts or games — like yesterday one of the staff dressed up as a clown.

"She was Calamity the Clown.

"She did loads of magic, she was absolutely brilliant and the kids loved her.

"It was just priceless.

"She made animal balloons for them as well.

"For the preschool kids we would have activities two mornings a week.

"And for the kids at school, we have after school activities two afternoon a week as well.

"So, yes, there's always something," Marie said.



"My life could be a whole lot different if I didn't have the opportunity to come here"

RYAN HAS HAD TIME TO DWELL ON THE PAST.

Right now, he is choosing to look ahead. Going down a self-described downward spiral that culminated in a prison sentence, the prospect of re-entering society without support or a place to live loomed as a grim possibility.

"I saw ads on TV where people are on the street and thought to myself 'is that going to be me in a couple of weeks?" - it was hard and very confronting to realise the position that I was in."

With no family or personal ties in New South Wales and few housing alternatives to draw upon, a call to Vinnies at the urging of his parole officer began the process of starting over.

Undertaking an initial phone assessment with the staff at Edel Quinn, a Vinnies service for men at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the Riverina, Ryan received a muchneeded sense of certainty with an offer to stay at Edel Quinn upon his release from custody.

"The first phone interview I did was very emotional for me; I'm 36-years-old having to reach out to somebody and ask for help, I've never had to do that before."

Remaining in regular contact with staff during the final five months of his sentence, the assistance Ryan has received from Edel Quinn extends far beyond a place to sleep.

Working with the case management team to access educational and employment opportunities, Ryan views the stability of the service as an invaluable stepping stone towards getting his own place.

"The support that I've received here and knowing that I have a roof over my head, it's enabled me to go and seek employment, it's enabled me to go and seek other rental properties for myself.

"Before I came here, I had a drug addiction. I worked on it in prison and, since being released, I've sought a drug course through Edel Quinn; I don't have to do it because parole wants me to, I



do it because I want to - they showed me how to access that support.

"My life could be a whole lot different if I didn't have the opportunity to come here."

Gaining a new sense of perspective on life with the support of Vinnies, Ryan is looking forward to finding work and having a home of his own, as well as opening himself up to accepting help from others.

"I was never one for reaching out, I've always done things off my own back with work, housing.

"Everyone needs help at some point in their life - all you need to do is ask.

"My life was at its lowest point, I didn't see many ups to it, I didn't see much going on - Vinnies and Edel Quinn were there for me. They showed me that there is light at the end of the tunnel."



A lifetime of good works

MAURICE O'DONOGHUE SPEAKS WITH MORE THAN A HINT OF HUMILITY WHEN REFLECTING UPON HIS YEARS OF SERVICE AS A MEMBER OF THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY.

"I have just hung around a little longer."

Honoured with Life Membership at St Mary's Church, Corowa last December in recognition of his 60 years of service, the 83-year-old Wahgunyah farmer has performed a variety of roles over that time, most notably acting as secretary of the local Corowa Conference for the past 25 years.

Developing a unique ability to succinctly reproduce handwritten and typed meeting minutes twice a month in his role as secretary, the self-described 'run-of-the-mill' member has seldom missed a meeting since joining the Society on 11 December 1961.

Born on 10 January 1939, Maurice has lived on the border of the Murray River for most of his days while spending his young working life carrying out jobs on the railways and shearing sheep for 30 years.

Following the passing of his father in 1990, Maurice returned to his family farm where he continues to tend the land to this day.

Through all that Maurice has seen over the years, attending Conference meetings and carrying out jobs as a Vinnies member has been a constant.

First attracting the attention of the Corowa Conference president through his involvement with the local church and Young Christian Workers organisation, Maurice was invited to join Vinnies as a 22-year-old.

"My first job was periodically mowing an old lady's lawn."

"I never thought at the time whether she donated any money for this duty. When you're young you're idealistic and it gave one pleasure to be helping people."

Other tasks he has performed during his six decades of service include visiting people in need in their homes, hospitals and aged care; cutting and delivering firewood; helping with the production of Christmas hampers annually; clearing out donation bins; fundraising; and much more.

In reflecting on the impact Vinnies is able to make in communities every day, Maurice views individuals coming together for collective good as a key factor.

"The saying is that one person alone can only do so much, but a group is able to achieve a lot more.

"Experience is a great teacher, and a group of people are most likely to have much more than an individual. Also, one does more collectively because one doesn't want to let the team down."

While his role within the Society is less consistent than earlier days, Maurice can still be found each Sunday helping to put away donated goods and fulfilling his duties as Conference secretary.

"Now, my main thought is to allow those at the 'coalface' to tackle the main work and I will be a back-up man when required."

Beloved by his fellow Conference members for all that he has done over the course of 60 years, Maurice remains humble as ever in the recognition of serving those in need within the community and supporting fellow members.

"I cannot say that there's been any overwhelming moments, but naturally one gets a certain satisfaction when one has arranged something that makes the recipient better off."

"Of course, working with generous people is itself a great reward.

"I've heard it said that we need the Society as much as it needs us, and I agree wholeheartedly."





We have the technology

THE VINNIES BUSHFIRE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IS HELPING PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE BLACK SUMMER FIRES BUILD UP RESILIENCE, IN THE EVENT OF ANOTHER DISASTER.

One of the ways the \$2.2 million scheme is doing this is by training people in better use of everyday technology to help them be aware of fires and other dangers through the use of their smartphones.

The initial training consists of two linked portions:

- 1. Two days of digital skills training, fully funded by the Bushfire Community Development program
- 2. Digital mentors training, funded partially by the Federal Government's Be Connected program and supported by The Good Things Foundation

The training was delivered by the team at The Tec Exec and Vinnies organised so that they could run these two separate topics as a package.

"It's about connecting people who have a little bit of knowledge about technology, so phones, iPads, and it can go into computers as well – breaks it right down.

"It teaches people about technology but it teaches people who know technology how to teach someone to use it," Tracey Doherty, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Coordinator of Bushfire Recovery and Community Development, said.

"We're going to have our first catch up with the mentors that went through the training in three weeks – just to go 'How are going, have you put any of these skills that you learnt into play in your communities, how else can we support you?'

"So, we're going to make sure that we're actually fostering that knowledge building for them," Ms Doherty said.

The training was developed in order to be

understandable by people who are beginners when it comes to technology.

"It's an opportunity to be able to expand and share that knowledge of how to use digital technology but also introducing then the benefits of being able to use a smartphone when it comes to disaster preparation and preparedness and the recovery component.

"It's about staying safe and introducing things like the apps like fires near me and traffic NSW and how to pull out the information to make you more resilient in the lead-up to, during, and in the recovery from a disaster," Ms Doherty said.

"I watched people in that course flourish.

"If you fully understand the capacity and capability that your device has, then finding assistance, being able to keep you and your family safe – that sense of accomplishment because you've been able to go and find something that you've been looking for," Ms Doherty said.

"My hope is that they will then continue in the communities long after the Bushfire Community Development Program is gone.

"It's about setting these communities up for success and leaving some really useful, on the ground skills that don't require someone to be there constantly to run them.

"So, having people in the communities who can go, 'Yes, I can show you how to do this on your phone.'

"And the importance of getting them to actually do it rather than going, 'Oh here give me your phone and I'll do it for you.""



St Vincent de Paul Society good works



Powered by bimplyenergy SVinnies

Simply Vinnies makes a difference

VINNIES IS DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE A NEW INITIATIVE IN NSW, THAT COULD POTENTIALLY SAVE YOU MONEY ON YOUR ENERGY BILLS, WHILE ALSO RAISING FUNDS FOR OUR GOOD WORKS.

Simply Vinnies is in partnership with Simply Energy who are offering discounted rates on 100% carbon neutral gas and electricity. Simply has pledged to give Vinnies an ongoing contribution each month for every live account.

If you sign on to Simply Vinnies, you could help, too.

You can double your support by signing-up to both gas and electricity. The longer you stay on the plan the more you could save and help Vinnies support people in need of a hand up with food, clothing, accommodation and more. It's very easy to make the switch, head to the website, check your postcode and fill in your details, then Simply will handle everything else.

At the time of writing, Simply Vinnies offers a discount of 20% below the electricity reference price in NSW and 18% off gas usage and supply charges, with no extra cost to provide carbon neutral energy.

The best way to see if you can save on your energy, while also supporting us is to compare the percentage off on your current plan. Using bill comparators on individual suppliers' websites does not always compare like for like, as each

can set different estimated usage per person. So, it really is best to compare the percentage discount which is regulated and has to be quoted against the official NSW reference price.



To learn more about Simply Vinnies and to see if you could start saving today, head to: www.simplyenergy.com.au/simply-vinnies

Plan beyond your future with Safewill

VINNIES DONORS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY AND SAVE 50% WITH A WILL THOUGH SAFEWILL.

The team at Safewill are passionate about combining comprehensive legal knowledge, with modern technology to change the way that all Australians think about will writing. The digital will writing platform guides people through a step-by-step process. It's a progressive way to prepare a will, which means that you can start and complete your will anywhere, at any time. Plus, all wills are reviewed by legal advisors to ensure the will is legally binding.

Safewill's mission is to make wills affordable to ensure you include people and causes that mean the most to you. Safewill has assisted thousands of Australians to prepare their will online and is recommended by 99% of its customers.

Your will reflects what is important to you and is the only way to ensure your personal wishes will be met. Leaving just 1% of your estate to the Society will make a difference to the most vulnerable in our community.

Get started today at www.safewill. com/vinniesnsw and enter the code VINNIES50 before 31 May to claim your discount.



Start your legacy and get 50% of the cost of creating your Wit with Australias trusted online Withing hattoms, Starell and adagauary your lifes work today. Enter code VINNESSD to claim your discourt. This ofter will expert a 1 May so act now.

TO LEARN MORE, INCLUDING HOW TO 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

Social Housing Success Story

Supporter No.

FOR TOM LYONS, ONE OF THE TENANTS SUPPORTED AS PART OF THE NSW GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUND (SAHF), THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY OFFERED AT VINNIES BURRANEER SOCIAL HOUSING COMPLEX IS SECOND TO NONE.

"I feel so lucky, it's as if I've died and gone to Heaven."

Located in Sydney's Sutherland Shire, the 36-unit site has been warmly received since tenants first moved in last July.

Holding its official opening late in 2021, following several delays brought on by COVID-19, the bayside suburb of Burraneer is one of 12 complexes operated by Vinnies throughout the state providing a place to call home.

"As part of the SAHF model, we use a housing first approach which provides people with housing that is located close to local services and transport, as well as connecting them with wraparound support from staff so that they can achieve their individual goals," said Jack de Groot, Vinnies NSW CEO.

Vinnies supported 745 people through the SAHF program over the past year, yet sadly many more remain in need of housing throughout the state. Across NSW, almost 50,000 applicants are currently waitlisted for social housing with



parts of the state boasting wait times in excess of ten years.

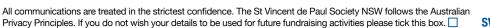
While the number of general applicants has fallen from 12 months earlier, the demand for priority housing has continued to increase up to 5,801.

"Vinnies is incredibly proud of its involvement with the SAHF, we would love the opportunity to expand the project in order to provide more people with housing," said Mr de Groot.



WITH YOUR HELP WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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I would like to make a <u>regular</u> donation of	f\$per month DONATIONS
OR I would like to increase my regular donation	on by \$ 0VER \$2 ARE TAX
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OR Please find enclosed my Cheque/Money C	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

SVS21/MTS21



donation, simply complete your details and post to: St Vincent de Paul Society PO Box 19 Petersham NSW 2049

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