



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

Impact

The difference
you make

AUTUMN 2019
ISSUE 06



**“IT’S SCARY WHEN YOU FEEL
LIKE YOU’VE GOT NO ONE”**

FEATURES **REACHING OUT TO FARMERS • VINNIES
BESPOKE TOTES • FINDING FRIENDSHIP • KATIE’S STORY**

**VINNIES
RENEWS
REBUILDS
RESTORES**



Dear friends

The last quarter and beyond has seen some particularly devastating hardships inflicted on our drought-affected, hard-working farmers and their families. The impacts on rural and remote properties where the daily struggle to feed livestock has been horrific and very, very debilitating.

Assisting those in such heartbreaking situations has been front of mind for Vinnies over the past 12 months and we have rallied to provide counselling, support and financial assistance to feed affected families as well as their livestock.

For many of us looking on at the devastating images of properties completely bereft of any pasture and animals starving while their keepers, the farmers, openly wept on national television, this prompted humanitarian action by way of donations or through volunteering.

We are proud that hundreds of Vinnies volunteers have assisted drought-affected farmers and we were directly able to help.

This issue will introduce you to some of the incredible work our volunteers and you, our donors, have been able to achieve in our efforts to help our farmers.

A drought of this magnitude has broad reaching tentacles that affect all Australians in a number of ways and to see how everyone has pulled together to assist has been simply marvellous.

Denis Walsh
President
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW



Welcome

It's a new year, and a great time for reflecting on all you have learned in the last year, and all you strive toward in this new one.

While Christmas may now seem a faint memory, the joy felt by those assisted by Vinnies will be remembered, as for many the fear and anxiety of this time was replaced by faith and hope. We thank you for your generous donations over this period, which allowed us to make a difference to the lives of those struggling to make ends meet for Christmas.

The assurance Vinnies gives struggling families continues all year round, and already this year we have opened two Community Hubs allowing for greater access to assistance, services and a helping hand in tough times.

Through this issue of Impact, you'll hear the stories of the people your generosity has afforded the courage to persevere. Such as, the confidence grown

through our Bright Sparks program from both children and parents alike, and Katie's progress in achieving her goals through the Reconnect program and the help of her case worker Jemmah.

The Vinnies community of hard working members, volunteers and staff continue to endeavour to provide the best support, assistance and understanding to those who seek our help. We could not run these vital services and programs without the generosity of your donations, we hope this edition of Impact will inspire you as these stories inspire us to continue our good works with commitment and compassion.

Beverley Kerr
President
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Support Services

Thank you for your support

Thanks to your support, we are able to help rebuild the lives of many Australians doing it tough. Your generosity has made sure families receive the basic essentials. Without you, they would have gone without. Every dollar donated makes a difference.

IN THE PAST YEAR, VINNIES HAS:



HELPED MORE THAN
125,000
PEOPLE

SERVED MORE THAN

400,000
MEALS



MADE MORE THAN
166,000
HOME
VISITS

73% of those we helped achieved more than half, or all of their goals to rebuild their lives

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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 communications@vinnies.org.au.

Follow us on:   

Messages of hope

THANKS FOR SENDING US YOUR INSPIRING MESSAGES OF HOPE. YOUR WORDS CONTINUE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING DISADVANTAGE.

○ If you're doing it tough please know that help is at hand and you're not alone.

○ Smiles and hope can make a difference. May we all send some out to the world.

○ Take heart. You are not forgotten. You are loved. You are all treasured.

○ Never lose faith. Especially in yourself, you are stronger than you imagine.

○ Life can be tough sometimes but don't give up. Lots of people do care and want to help you.

○ Hoping you feel assured that others care and want to help you in your time of need.

Help for farmers doing it tough

MANY HARD-WORKING FARMERS ACROSS NSW HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES UNABLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET AS A RESULT OF ONE OF THE MOST SEVERE DRY SPELLS IN LIVING MEMORY, AND VINNIES IS DOING WHAT IT HAS ALWAYS DONE – REACHING OUT TO OFFER A HELPING HAND.

Vinnies teams across NSW are attending community events and responding to hundreds of requests for assistance. These outreach events have helped encourage those in need of assistance to come forward, talk to someone who understands, and take up the help available to them.

Vinnies is supporting communities directly via funds raised by our generous donors and is also one of three charities delivering the Federal Government's Drought Community Support Initiative (DCSI) to communities in NSW, ACT, Queensland and South Australia.

In the country town of Gilgandra, one struggling farmer finally reached out to Vinnies after the overdue bills continued to pile up. With our help, he has been

able to clear these bills and alleviate some of his stress and has now connected with others to help plan his farming future.

"The people of NSW have shown that they feel deeply for what our farmers are going through as a result of this unprecedented drought and have generously rallied behind them to offer support through donations to the Vinnies Drought Appeal," Vinnies NSW CEO Jack de Groot said.

"Many people facing loss of income due to the drought have needed help with paying for groceries, household utility bills, water cartage, vehicle registrations and school costs.

"The money we have raised has allowed us to give these necessities to those suffering from the drought, to relieve the financial burden that has caused stress and grief to so many families," Jack said.

One young farmer, Ben, in Far Northern NSW, reached out to Vinnies after rupturing one of his eyes, which placed the task of all his usual farm work on his wife.

Vinnies helped Ben with the costs of a major medical bill for eye surgery in Sydney.

"A little bit of help goes a long way and makes you realise someone cares," Ben said.

"We're not ones to ask for help but it's gotten to a point where we decided we needed to accept some assistance from Vinnies, who kindly offered to pay for my medical bills.

"This was an added expense we simply couldn't afford on top of running the farm and providing for our two children," Ben said.

Since September 2018, Vinnies NSW has provided \$3.5 million in drought assistance to more than 1,700 people in NSW.

You can support the St Vincent de Paul Society Drought Appeal by donating online at www.vinnies.org.au/donate or in person at any local Vinnies shop.

**VINNIES
REBUILDS**



Vinnies on the road

THERE IS SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL ABOUT THE WAY VINNIES AND COMMUNITIES COME TOGETHER IN TOUGH TIMES.

Hosting a community information session about drought relief in Coonamble, Vinnies volunteers were astounded by the response.

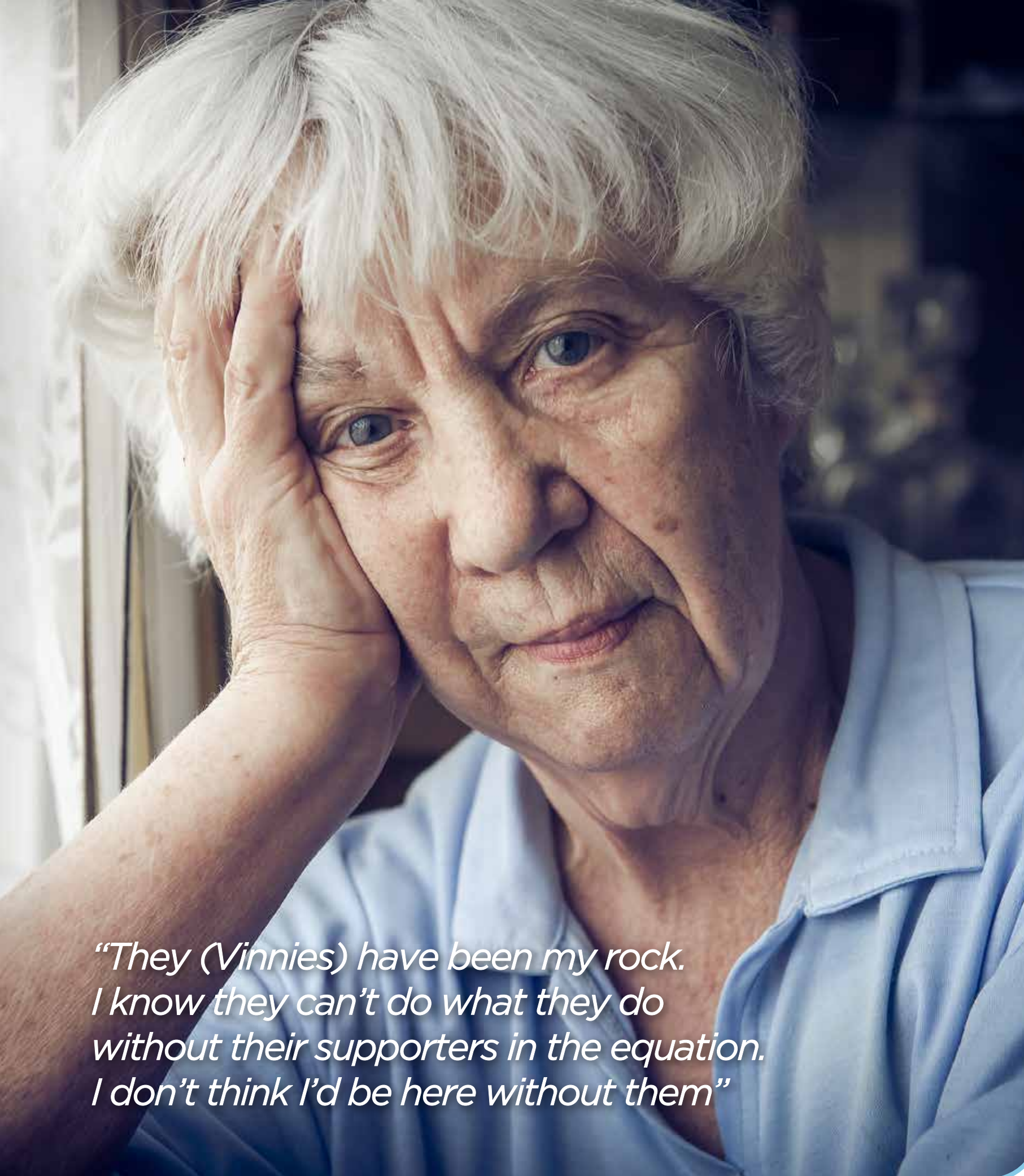
With no contract farm work available, no work for shearers due to stock reduction and a lack of income to support local business, the community was in distress.

The event was due to start at 10am, but families were there as early as 8.30am, and the session lasted until 7.30pm to ensure all those who needed assistance were helped and heard. Almost 200 families came to reach out for help on this day alone, many travelling over 100km to be there.

Vinnies volunteers also hosted events at Gilgandra, Mendooran and Dunedoo. Families in Mendooran were overwhelmed by the support and information the Vinnies team provided.

Grateful for both the financial and moral support of the team, one young farming mum went home and rang as many friends as she could to get them to come in while help was at hand.





“They (Vinnies) have been my rock. I know they can’t do what they do without their supporters in the equation. I don’t think I’d be here without them”

Margaret’s Story

MARGARET’S STORY OF SURVIVAL IS AS REMARKABLE AS IT IS PAINFUL. A TALENTED LITTLE GIRL WHO EXCELLED AT DANCING, ART AND WOODWORK, MARGARET’S CHILDHOOD WAS MARRED BY HORRENDOUS PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE FROM THE AGE OF FIVE.

By sixteen she was living in a tent after her step father decided there was no room for her at home. Soon after, she turned to sex work to make ends meet. A violent marriage left her with ongoing injuries.

When Margaret first reached out to Vinnies three years ago, she was living alone, in and out of hospital with major medical problems, and was suicidal.

She continues to grieve the loss of her first child at 9 weeks of age from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), but is grateful to have her daughter and two grandsons living nearby.

When Vinnies first visited, volunteer Geoff couldn’t believe his eyes.

“When you went through the front door, you felt like you were entering a cave,” Geoff said.

“You wondered how a person could survive living here. It was cold, extremely damp with mould on every wall.

“But even with these surroundings, you were always greeted with a smile and a warm welcome.”

Vinnies continued to visit Margaret regularly over the years, making sure she was OK, providing companionship, and helping with food and essential household items like a bed and mattress.

“I’m so grateful to St Vincent de Paul Society, to the deepest core of my heart,” Margaret told us.

“They [would ring] just to make sure that I was alright, just to say hi.

“They’d say ‘we’re just coming to see you’ and

they dropped food vouchers into me and to make sure that I was alright.”

After years on the waiting list, Margaret was finally offered public housing. She was overwhelmed with the news but her joy quickly turned to anxiety, worry and distress as the task of cleaning, packing and moving, plus the added expense of removalists, was just too much.

Again, Vinnies sprang into action. As moving day approached, our volunteers organised and helped Margaret sort and pack, removed old furniture and overgrown rubbish from the property, organised and paid for removalists, and sourced replacement furniture for her new unit from the local Vinnies shop.

“It’s scary when you feel like you’ve got no one. [Vinnies told me] ‘we don’t judge - we’ve got your back Margaret - we’re here for you’. That is just so nice to know,” Margaret says.

“They help in more ways than you can imagine and the support is unbelievable.”

“I really hope that people can hear of this and know that it does go to help other people. The support is unbelievable.”

“They (Vinnies) have been my rock. I know they can’t do what they do without their supporters in the equation. I don’t think I’d be here without them,” Margaret said.

Who knows what direction Margaret’s life may have taken had her childhood and early adult life been free of trauma and abuse.

Vinnies volunteer Geoff says that Margaret’s spirituality has been integral to her resilience in the face of great suffering.

“Margaret always had great faith in Christianity and a true belief that God would always take care of her,” Geoff says.

Margaret loves her new home. Her health issues are ongoing, but with the support and compassionate care that Vinnies volunteers will continue to provide, the future looks bright.

**VINNIES
RESTORES**



Finding friendship together

SUZANNE, IN HER LATE SIXTIES, HAS EXPERIENCED DEPRESSION THROUGHOUT HER LIFE, AND SINCE THE PASSING OF HER HUSBAND THREE YEARS AGO, HAS DESCRIBED HERSELF AS “DESPERATELY LONELY” AND “IN CONSTANT GRIEF”.

Then she discovered Compeer. Vinnies explained that Compeer is simply about catching up with someone of a similar age on a weekly or fortnightly basis for a chat over a coffee or a walk. Suzanne was receptive to the idea, although didn't have any great expectations.

Our Compeer Area Coordinator arranged for Suzanne to meet Fiona, also in her sixties, in a local coffee shop. Suzanne felt very anxious about this meeting. “About half a dozen times I was going to call and cancel” she said, as the date of the meeting got closer.

However, the day and time of the meeting came round and all were present. Suzanne was very nervous and quiet when she first met Fiona but was drawn to her warm, relaxed personality. They decided to meet at the same coffee shop a week later.

This time, they talked for over two hours! “I felt so comfortable with her...like a sister I never had!” says

Suzanne. Fiona said “I was blown away by some pictures she showed me on her phone of her art. What a talented lady!” says Fiona.

It was settled...next week they would meet at a local art exhibition. Suzanne hadn't been anywhere near an art gallery for years...nor had she done much walking. This was an opportunity to do both! They had a fantastic time walking, talking and sharing lunch.

Since this time they have been travelling far and wide to art exhibitions and going on walks in picturesque locations. They have also joined a local art group which they love. They have found so many things they have in common, and, like most friendships, things that they also disagree on.

Fiona says “Suzanne has enriched my life so much. She is kind and caring and I don't think I would have had the confidence to join an art group on my own, but together, we've done it and are really enjoying it and the other people we've met.” Suzanne says “I feel like I'm doing so much better now that I've met Fiona. She has inspired me to do more art and now I really feel part of something.”

**VINNIES
RENEWS**



Katie's Story

KATIE WAS FIRST INTRODUCED TO VINNIES' RECONNECT SERVICE IN DENILQUIN IN 2011 WHEN SHE WAS STILL IN PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Her traumatic childhood made it hard for her to trust people, but over the years she has slowly built up a genuine confidence with Vinnies caseworkers.

Over the past year, Katie has made great progress in achieving her goals. Caseworker Jemmah Conallin, who works on-on-one with Katie, told us that Katie is improving her health and fitness and her financial security, has created a family tree to strengthen her family connections, and has completed an anger management program. She has stayed on track with her goals despite dealing with mental health issues and trauma, and attending court as a witness in a case relating to her own abuse.

“The progress that Katie has made in this past year that has made me the proudest is the increase in self-esteem, self-worth, confidence, posture and willingness to engage in life,” said caseworker Jemmah.

Vinnies Reconnect offers opportunities, choices and support for young people and their families in the south west Riverina region.

**VINNIES
RESTORES**

More support available in Wagga Wagga

PEOPLE DOING IT TOUGH IN WAGGA WAGGA AND SURROUNDING AREAS NOW HAVE ACCESS TO MORE SUPPORT THROUGH THE NEWLY OPENED MICAH HUB.

Micah Hub is a one-stop-shop for people needing help with bills, food, housing or social support. It is a purpose-built facility reflecting Vinnies longstanding commitment to the Wagga Wagga community to alleviate disadvantage and help families in need.

Jenni Duff, Wagga Wagga Central Council President said what makes Micah Hub special is the care and compassion we provide to people who seek our support.

“The Society places places the Wagga Wagga community and its people at the centre of what we do, we are here for those who have fallen on tough times.” Jenni said.

In the last financial year the Society in the Wagga Wagga region helped 1,798 people. The main expenditure has been on providing \$38,000 of



assistance with energy and water payments, over \$120,000 on providing food, over \$60,000 on support with accommodation and rent.

We cannot undertake this valuable and life-changing work without the generosity of local people. Anyone wanting to make a donation or provide support can do so by visiting our website www.vinnies.org.au

**VINNIES
REBUILDS**

Vinnies 4 Life

VINNIES 4 LIFE BESPOKE TOTES ARE ONE OF A KIND BAGS, HAND CRAFTED BY SUPPORTED EMPLOYEES AT CASTLEREAGH INDUSTRIES.

Donations of clothes and material that would otherwise be unusable in store are unloaded and sorted at Coonamble, then cut and pieced together to create unique, eye-catching bags.

By re-purposing and recycling textiles, Vinnies is contributing to the preservation of our environment, and reducing waste and landfill while maximising the use of thoughtful donations.

Each sustainably created bag has a swing tag with a screen-printed image and a short story of the Supported Employee behind it.

"It's joyful to have a tag with our name on it, and the company's name, to show what we can do," explained supported employee Cheryl.

"I love sewing and it makes me feel more relaxed and happy."

The Vinnies 4 Life Bespoke Tote project aims to maximise recycling and keep materials out of landfill, while giving our supported employees valuable work experience.

The project offers accredited training, mentoring and leadership for supported employees, providing



greater choice for their career aspirations.

"What's important to me is the high quality, the variety of colours, and it's a different project to give everyone, it's a handmade project," said supported employee Peter.

This project has been a great opportunity for expanding the skillset of Castlereagh Industry staff, who take great pride in their new assignment.

As Sonia said, "I actually made one and bought it, and put it on Facebook so my friends can see it. I was so proud of myself."

These totes can now be found in store in Coonamble, Springwood, Rouse Hill, Cronulla, Glebe, Newtown, Brookvale, Bathurst, Baulkham Hills, Nelson Bay, Kiama, Wagga Wagga, Windsor, Byron Bay and Armidale.

VINNIES
RENEWES



Support for seniors in Dubbo

TWENTY FIVE DUBBO SENIORS NOW HAVE SAFE AND SECURE ACCOMMODATION WITH THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER ST FAITH'S HOSTEL FOR GIRLS INTO AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Officially opening the new 21-villa development, St Vincent de Paul Housing CEO Brian Murnane said the villas represent Vinnies NSW commitment to being

of service to the people of Dubbo.

"Today's opening is the culmination of a three-year journey since the old site was demolished in 2016," Mr Murnane said.

"The St Faith's villas are for people over-55 who might otherwise struggle to find quality affordable housing.

"This is the first of twelve projects being

undertaken by Vinnies Housing across NSW that will create 500 new affordable homes for people in need for the NSW Government's Social and Affordable Housing Fund.

"As well as a place to call home, Vinnies is also providing tailored support so that our tenants can connect to the services they need," Mr Murnane said.

VINNIES
RESTORES



A Freeman House success story

STEPHEN HAD BEEN AT FREEMAN HOUSE FOR LITTLE OVER A WEEK WHEN HE WENT MISSING.

He had arrived under difficult circumstances - he was estranged from his children and his family, had been travelling town to town and he had attempted suicide. On arrival at Freeman House, Stephen stayed in his room in a depressed state.

One day, support workers found his room empty and Stephen nowhere to be found. Concerned for his wellbeing, staff alerted the police. Two days later he returned, oblivious to what had been going on and the concern of the staff.

Stephen had reconnected with his brother who lived in the area, and had stayed with him for a couple of days, not realising that he would be missed back at Freeman House.

Stephen's mental health improved dramatically after this incident, not only through reconnecting with his brother, but also knowing that he was truly cared about by the staff at Freeman House.

After continued counselling and assistance with rental applications, Stephen moved into his own flat. He was very grateful for the help and support he received at Freeman House and continues to reach out for support when he feels he needs it.

VINNIES
REBUILDS



Betty Greenfield (1926 - 2016)

BETTY GREENFIELD HAD BEEN A VALUED SUPPORTER OF THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY FOR OVER 25 YEARS. WHEN BETTY PASSED AWAY, AGED 90, SHE INCLUDED A BEQUEST TO VINNIES IN HER WILL.

Betty's niece Sue-Anne and her husband Michael met with us and we were able to learn a little more about Betty's life.

Betty's two loves were music and children. Though she did not have children of her own, she trained as a nursery schoolteacher and relished the chance to nurture and develop the many children in her care as long-term Director of the Sydney Day Nursery at Surry Hills.

In her early years, Betty was a member of the Sutherland Williamson International Grand Opera Company, performing and travelling extensively.

Within her extended family, Betty was a constant giver of love and encouragement to seventeen children over three generations.

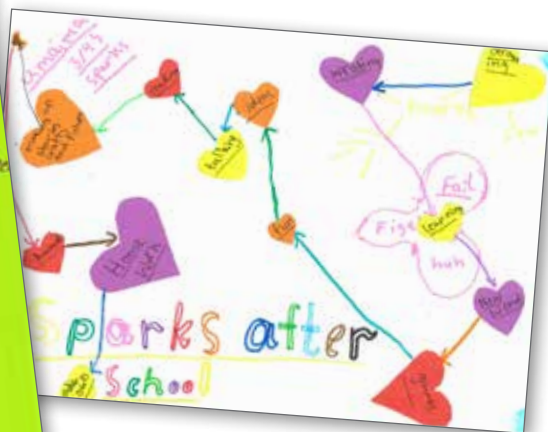
Through Betty's kind bequest we will continue to assist children and their families who are disadvantaged.

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



their English language, literacy and numeracy skills; and an overall love of learning.

One participant in Bright Sparks summed up how the program helps: "I think that Bright Sparks is a really good program, this program helps me read, write and learn more. Bright Sparks is a great, fantastic and excellent...the volunteers are very nice and caring. I really like drawing, reading and writing thanks a lot to Sparks. Thank you for

helping me at the Sparks program. I like my pencil case and I hope you come back."

For the parents of newly-arrived children, initiatives include parenting programs 123 Magic and Tuning into Teens in the Arabic language.

One of our staff described the challenges newly arrived families can face, describing one mother's experience: "She spoke about the difficulties of raising a child here in Australia without the support of the social networks she had back home. Her husband was constantly working just to cover their basic needs, and he was unable to help with parenting, and certainly not able to respond to any difficult behaviour. She was struggling, and wanting to do the best thing for her kids.

"Talking with other parents at the workshop and realising that she was not alone in dealing with these issues helped her, and she was using strategies like counting to ensure she herself had better control of her emotions when her son was angry and upset."

SPARKS is supported by an incredible team of enthusiastic, positive and energetic volunteers.

VINNIES
RESTORES

Inspiring Inclusivity

FAIRFIELD LGA IN WESTERN SYDNEY HAS A LONG HISTORY OF WELCOMING MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES, BUT SINCE 2016 THE CITY HAS SEEN A FIVE-FOLD INCREASE IN NEW ARRIVALS – MORE THAN HALF THE ENTIRE REFUGEE INTAKE FOR NSW.

Supporting children and families to settle into the community is vital. One such program is SPARK, which works with children under 12 and their families in South West Sydney during their early settlement period and builds bridges with schools, local volunteers and community organisations.

At Bright Sparks Learning Club, children receive tailored social, emotional and physical support from trained bilingual staff and volunteers. It helps them to develop trusting friendships; build a sense of belonging at school; develop self-confidence and resilience; develop

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
DEDUCTABLE**

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. ☐

SVA19/MTA19



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 OVER 300,000
PEOPLE WHO WERE ASSISTED
BY VINNIES LAST YEAR...
THANK YOU.**



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works