



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

Impact

The difference
you make

SPRING 2017
ISSUE 03

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**“I AM A DIFFERENT
PERSON NOW.”**

**VINNIES
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Dear friends

This winter has been a long and cold one. But I think we will remember it as the winter when electricity prices sky-rocketed. Newspapers, television and radio have been

running regular stories since the prices were set to increase after 1 July.

Bills are expected to go up by around 20 per cent and we are already seeing the effects of the energy price rises in the communities we serve. More people are turning to our services for help with bills, electricity and food.

No-one should ever have their power cut – it is a basic human right. But we are seeing it happen more and more and there were predictions that up to 60,000 homes could be disconnected before the end of winter.

I'm hearing from our volunteers and employees about older women forced to go to bed soon after sunset because they can't afford to pay for heating. And of patients with chest infections home alone in the cold unable to fight off their illness.

Your donations are used directly to assist these people, to help them with their bills and to provide services to help them face the mounting adversity in their lives, when problems become insurmountable.

It doesn't take much. A large energy bill, some outstanding debts, ill health and fewer work shifts. And then the rent is impossible to pay and you find yourself out on the street. At the mercy of the weather and the kindness of passers-by.

Vinnies has a network of Vinnies Vans and Night Patrols operating around NSW. They served 115,000 meals in 2015-16. It's not only the meal or hot drink that patrons appreciate, it's the friendly welcome and the chance to chat with a volunteer after a day of isolation and loneliness.

As Pam Whitehead, the facilitator of the Orange Night Patrol, says on p. 11, "All our volunteers are caring and compassionate. Just knowing our visitors can go to sleep not feeling hungry is an immense reward for their hours of effort."

Pam's volunteers would not be able to do their good works without your generosity.

So, on behalf of them all, thank you.

Best wishes,

Denis Walsh
President
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

Thank you for your support

Thanks to your support we are able to 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.

LAST YEAR ALONE YOUR SUPPORT WENT TOWARDS A NUMBER OF PROGRAMS INCLUDING:

VINCENTIAN
HOUSE HELPING
NEARLY

**90 ADULTS
AND CHILDREN**

TRANSITION INTO STABLE
ACCOMMODATION



31,822

**BED
NIGHTS**



55,500

MEALS

AT THE MATTHEW TALBOT HOSTEL

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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 publications@vinnies.org.au.

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us on:





Welcome

Welcome to our Spring issue of Impact.

We can never express to you just how much we value your donations.

So we leave it to the people who

pass through our doors, broken on entering and resilient and healthier on leaving. The stories they tell in this issue are filled with gratitude for your generosity.

Julian, whose story is on p.8, articulates how support from the Matthew Talbot Hostel helped him find his way. "If you saw me three years ago, most people would have written me off, said no way this guy can be helped. And now I'm just an arm's length away from getting a full-time job and I've got my unit and I'm self-sufficient."

It is gratifying to read his words. He spent more than two years sleeping rough. We helped him fight his demons, beat his alcohol addiction and poor health and provided him with a way forward.

Our emergency accommodation for women over 55 who are escaping domestic violence is the only service of its kind in NSW. Every dollar spent in running Our Lady of the Way comes from you, our donors.

The facility provides accommodation for 20 women each year. That is only one third of the number of women who seek our help. With your financial support we find them more permanent accommodation, legal assistance where necessary and arrange medical and dental appointments for them.

Because of your support, more men, women and children, are able to change their lives for the better.

Thank you

Beverley Kerr

President

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Support Services

Messages of thanks

SOMETIMES THE PEOPLE YOU ASSIST LET US KNOW JUST HOW VALUABLE YOUR DONATION HAS BEEN.

Rachel was supported by Hastings Accommodation Services and Adam stayed at the Matthew Talbot Hostel. Louis was assisted by a metropolitan Central Council and Matt first connected with Vinnies through a youth service. Scott was helped by Illawarra Homelessness Coordination Services.

“I'm very grateful and very thankful to you all. I know how badly it could have ended if we didn't get involved in Vinnies. I tell everyone to donate to Vinnies.” Rachel

“I just wanted to thank you guys at Vinnies for helping me turn my life around and in doing this I have been able to help make a difference to so many other people who have or are experiencing what I had! May God bless you all at Vinnies 'Good Works'!” Adam

“Donors are the ones directly affecting Australian families and giving us a much better quality of life than we would have, so thank you very much.” Louis

“The work that Vinnies does is truly remarkable. What an opportunity for all of us to never walk past another homeless person or any broken human being and assume there is no hope. Because thanks to organisations like Vinnies THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE.” Matt

“Vinnies is a lifesaver, especially during winter time. Our first night in transitional housing, I had nothing... We were shivering to the bone, and they brought us linen.” Scott



Taking flight to a safe haven

IT'S HARD FOR LILA TO TELL HER STORY. SHE'S A PROUD WOMAN WHO FINDS IT HARD TO SEEK HELP.

She and her husband moved to Australia to live with his family but her life quickly fell into a devastating pattern of abuse and neglect. In despair she finally reached out to Vinnies for help to leave it all behind and start again.

The only person Lila knew when she arrived in Australia was her husband. The family she was hoping would welcome and support her instead turned on her. They treated her like a slave not a daughter and subjected Lila to years of physical and mental abuse while she lived with them and gave birth to two children.

"It became worse and worse over time," says Lila. Her 'punishments' were always for irrational reasons.

"Once I was five minutes late after dropping the children at school. They forced me to sit outside burning in the hot sun for hours."

The family used various methods of control to ensure Lila couldn't leave. She was forbidden to learn English, wasn't allowed to use the phone in case she tried to call her family and she was rarely allowed outside.

A kind shopkeeper noticed Lila's bruises and every time she saw her, she would encourage Lila to seek help and call 000. Lila's family had threatened her that she would never see her children again if she tried to leave so she knew what awaited her if she failed.

But they went too far. Lila was beaten so badly she could barely move, so she gathered all her courage and called emergency services. They stepped in and she and her children were relocated to a women's refuge.

It was at the refuge that Lila's caseworker introduced her to two Vinnies volunteers — Lesley and Bella. "They knocked on my door and it was like angels had knocked on my door. I talked to Lesley and slowly opened up. That's what I needed back then — that it's okay to talk.

"I used to see my husband's face in every man. I was scared a lot so Lesley used to hold my hand and walk with me and say 'don't worry I'm with you'. It was so good, she was like my second parent. She took me to the bank and showed me how to open an account and how to use the ATM. She taught me lots."

Lesley continues to play a crucial role in Lila's life, going above and beyond to assist her and her children. From helping Lila transition from the refuge to her own apartment and understanding how to manage household finances, to assisting her with food and even enrolling her children into cricket and karate.

"Lesley had contacts in a cricket team in the area and now my kids are in the team ... I can see development with their confidence," mentioned Lila.

Lila has a thirst for learning, never having been given the opportunity to educate herself while she lived with her husband's family, and Vinnies has been supporting her through her studies.

"My caseworker introduced me to TAFE and Lesley helped me get a laptop so I could do a business administration course.

"Through the courses at TAFE I'm a lot better than before, I'm getting a lot of confidence."

Lila has gone on to study a number of courses to help her to move on from her traumatic past and create a meaningful future for her and her children. With the help of Lesley and Vinnies she is now looking for part-time work. She wants to support her family, and also show to herself and the world how far she has come and how much she is capable of.

Lila and her children are very grateful for your ongoing support to Vinnies. She explains:

"Some people like me might have lost everything and are starting life from scratch. And we may not be comfortable asking for help. I was impressed with the way Vinnies deals with this. I am a different person now."

**VINNIES
REBUILDS**



For credit card donations visit vinnies.org.au or phone 13 18 12

First Community Hub opens in Blacktown

THE BLACKTOWN COMMUNITY HUB RECENTLY OPENED ITS DOORS AT A NEW, PURPOSE-DESIGNED SPACE AT THE BLACKTOWN VINNIES SHOP.

The first of several hubs planned for Western Sydney, the Blacktown Hub is a person-centred support and referral service operated by Vinnies.

"People come here seeking emergency relief to pay for food and bills, as well as for assessments, advocacy and referral support; this is in addition to the home visitations our members provide," said Anne Stanfield, Parramatta Central Council President, at the opening.

"Volunteers and staff have undergone training so they are all well equipped to meet the complex needs of the people who seek our assistance, focussing on their individual requirements.

"Through an initial in-depth assessment and ongoing evaluation process we enable them to achieve wellbeing in all aspects of their lives.

"With a 'no wrong door approach' people coming to us now have more options about how to access support from the Society as well as finding out about other local services."

The Hub has a self-help area where visitors can use a

phone and a computer to connect with family, friends and services.

Mayor of Blacktown City, Councillor Stephen Bali, said his Council recognises and supports the important work the Society does in the community.

"We thank all Vinnies workers, donors and volunteers for their tireless efforts to help families and individuals who are struggling with various issues," he said. "Without their generosity and dedication, many people would not get the help they need."

VINNIES
RESTORES

SINCE THE HUB OPENED FOUR MONTHS AGO



550 clients have been assisted

Over 40% were referred from another service



40 people are over 65

480 required assistance with food



190 were referred to other services





THE HUB - A TURNING POINT FOR EVELYN

One of the first people to walk through the Blacktown Hub's door was Evelyn, a single mother of four living in Castle Hill. She came back to speak at the official opening.

Falling behind on her rent, an incredibly high bill from a faulty hot water system, and reduced hours at her work, Evelyn was desperate and just hours away from a Court hearing for eviction when she stumbled across the Vinnies assistance number.

"I ended up on the phone with a lady from Vinnies and she said to me, 'There's a place that you can go to in Blacktown called the Hub, it's just opened now but you can walk in and they should be able to help you'."

That fateful day Evelyn visited the Hub and met manager Kate who helped her get her life on track.

"I remember Kate was out the front with the receptionist and I explained the situation and Kate said 'Come in, we can help you with that'. She helped me with the water bill to prevent me from being evicted and it was all done within an hour of that Court case. She paid the water bill and then got in touch with the real estate agent."

With all the stress of being unable to pay bills and struggling to look after her children, Evelyn sought counselling from her doctor. His advice was to find a better job first so that she could afford his sessions. Fortunately for Evelyn, Vinnies was able to step in and set up free counselling sessions.

"Kate told me I could see a counsellor and then she called a counsellor and got me an appointment. I've had a few sessions since and that was a turning point for me. As a result of the counselling I re-found myself."

"Kate is an amazing woman. I cannot express my gratitude to her. She was amazing with the help that she gave me but she also listened to see where I was at emotionally."

Evelyn has a message she wants to pass on to Vinnies donors and supporters.

"You are in a position where you can help to turn other people's lives around. No-one is immune to certain situations happening in life, whether it's an illness or losing employment or separation. Sometimes people are forced into a situation where it's hard to see a way out of it. But with organisations like Vinnies and their supporters helping out, there is hope."

"Thank you."



The Blacktown Hub was officially opened in August.



The hard climb from rock bottom

SOMETIMES ALL IT TAKES IS ONE DRAMATIC LIFE EVENT TO SEND SOMEONE SPIRALLING INTO A DARK PLACE THEY NEVER THOUGHT THEY WOULD FIND THEMSELVES IN.

For Julian the loss of his mother saw him turn to alcohol for release from his pain.

“My mother died in 2009 and I lost the plot for a bit and went on the drink. I had a good job, four and a half years with a major appliance company and I just walked away from it. I was getting too dangerous for myself and the other people I was working with,” Julian recounted.

Alcohol and other substances are often used by people going through trauma or extreme stress as a means

to cope with their emotions but also to escape their trauma. Unfortunately, it doesn’t take long before these substances are not just offering them an escape, but are actually damaging their mind, body and spirit.

With no job, unable to pay his rent, Julian soon found himself homeless — a terrifying prospect for anyone.

“I couldn’t afford the rent anymore and I ended up on the streets.”

Julian spent two years living rough and in that time he moved around 15 times. When not sleeping on the streets he would turn to friends for support.

“I used to bunk in mates’ garages and one time even a driveway — wherever I could get shelter. I went from



hostel to hostel, then eventually I came to St Vincent de Paul here at the Talbot.”

The St Vincent de Paul Society is there for people like Julian who have fallen on hard times and lost their way in life. The Matthew Talbot Hostel is our city-based centre of support for men experiencing homelessness.

“I walked in and within a week I was appointed a case worker, which was Felicia, and from there it just progressed,” said Julian.

Julian was given a place to stay and food to eat but so much more than that. Felicia organised his appointments for medical services and enrolled him in an Alcoholics Anonymous course run at the Society’s Ozanam Learning Centre next door to the Hostel. Julian was able to access a range of training courses from budgeting to cooking and he was even helped to sign up for his forklift driver’s licence.

Determined to get back on his feet and get a job, Julian welcomed these

learning opportunities with open arms.

“They don’t just help with housing, it’s about helping others to help themselves. They give courses ... getting people onto their own two feet. The St Vincent de Paul Society has pretty much set the foundation for me to work.”

The Society understands the complexities of homelessness, that there is never just one fix that will work for everyone. There needs to be a holistic approach that takes individual physical and mental health into consideration. This was something that Julian appreciated and benefitted from greatly.

“St Vincent de Paul was different. They stick with you.

Even now that I’ve got accommodation, Felicia rings me every now and again to see how I am. The support is ongoing. To me they are like family.”

When Julian first came to the Hostel, Felicia was quick to encourage him to seek medical help for his painful joint.

“I was virtually crippled and I was in so much pain. When they did the x-rays the surgeon looked at it and said it’s just bone on bone.”

After surgery and the recovery period, Julian is now able to walk without pain and his confidence has soared.

Felicia also set up appointments for him. He had his teeth professionally cleaned for the first time in years and now also sports some new glasses helping him see everything a lot clearer.

Getting this type of important medical treatment can be very difficult for many people experiencing homelessness as they often don’t know where to turn to access the free public health system and can’t afford any medical bills. Once the Hostel has provided a man with medical treatment and the safety and support that comes from having his own bed, many of his mental health issues will also start to improve, especially with the onsite counselling sessions offered.

Sadly, Julian’s story is not unique. There are many more men like him who are forced to sleep rough year after year. That’s where the Society makes a difference, stepping in to offer complete wrap-around support for those in need.

“I haven’t felt this good about myself in a long time, for the first time in a long time I’m proud of myself. I can only see my way going up from here.

“If you saw me three years ago, most people would have written me off, said no way this guy can be helped. And now I’m just an arm’s length away from getting a full-time job and I’ve got my unit and I’m self-sufficient.”

Julian’s amazing success story at the Matthew Talbot Hostel was only possible because of the generous donations and support from donors like you. We can’t run our services without you.

VINNIES
RESTORES

Because of you,
Vinnies provided
36,000 occasions
of service at
Matthew Talbot
Health Clinic



Reclaiming the night

IN THE COLD DARKNESS OF THE NIGHT VINNIES VAN TEAMS ARE OUT IN THE STREETS CREATING A GENUINE COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS.

With a smile and a chat they serve meals and warm drinks, and offer blankets and toiletries to people sleeping rough or living with the shadow of homelessness looming large. They help break through the barriers of loneliness and isolation people experiencing homelessness face on the streets or in overcrowded or insecure accommodation in Sydney, Parramatta, Liverpool, Wollongong and Orange.

Our highly regarded Sydney Night Patrol vans visit Martin Place, Haymarket and Surry Hills every night. On Sunday mornings the Brekky Van turns up to Prince Alfred Park where volunteers serve up a cooked breakfast, cereal and hot drinks.

Sydney Vinnies Van Services also runs the Liverpool Night Patrol five nights per week.

There is a Vinnies Van team visiting North Wollongong, Warrawong and Nowra. Gay Mason, President of Wollongong Central Council, said they wouldn't be able to serve the local community without the support of their passionate volunteers.

"Based at the Charles Gordon O'Neill House in Coniston, volunteers prepare nourishing food in a new industrial quality kitchen," says Gay.

"Danny Munk, CEO of Wests Wollongong, and Roy Rogers, CEO of the Flagstaff Group, a local supported employment enterprise, are long-standing volunteers and supporters."

In the words of Frank, one of our volunteers: "We try to provide companionship; if you don't have that support it is very hard to survive."

In the Mount Druitt and Parramatta areas, 364 nights of the year the local Vinnies Van offers friendship, compassion and dignity to those experiencing homelessness and social isolation, along with food and referrals to services.

VINNIES
REBUILDS

SLEEPING BAG APPEAL

Having a warm, comfortable bed to lie on at night is something we take for granted but is beyond the reach of people experiencing homelessness. To make the nights a bit more bearable, volunteers who help with our Sydney Night Patrol regularly hand out brand new sleeping bags and blankets.

"While a sleeping bag is a long way from a bed in a warm, safe room, it can make a huge difference for people sleeping rough on cold winter nights," says Gemma Cameron, Sydney Vinnies Van Coordinator.

"Year on year there has been an increase in the numbers we see each night, and in the cold of winter, the demand for blankets and sleeping bags is very high.

"We are so grateful for the donations we receive. We strive to provide dignity and comfort to those doing it tough, and offering a sleeping bag goes a long way to helping us achieve this goal."



Last financial year
Vinnies Vans in
Wollongong,
Orange, Sydney &
Parramatta served
115,000 meals



Combatting the cold winters of Orange

NEXT YEAR THE ORANGE VINNIES VAN AND CAFÉ CELEBRATES ITS TENTH BIRTHDAY. THE WINTERS IN ORANGE ARE SEVERE AND THE SIMPLE FOOD, HOT DRINK AND THE WARM WELCOME PROVIDED BY THE FRIENDLY VOLUNTEERS MAKE SURVIVING THE FREEZING NIGHTS A BIT MORE TOLERABLE.



The Vinnies Van was the idea of Rosie Frecklington. Her energy and drive were rooted in her deep compassion for those less fortunate. After Rosie retired in 2015, a small committee has taken over coordination and Pam Whitehead is the present facilitator.

"In the early evenings during off-pension weeks the Van visits several locations around Orange. Nobody is turned away," says Pam.

On off-pension week Friday volunteers prepare and deliver a delicious home-cooked hot lunch to the Café Drop-In in the town centre. The Café is operated by Vinnies volunteers and caters for people from diverse backgrounds and ages.

"Many elderly people drop in, but we also serve young people and families who are facing difficulty. Our gentle presence is a reminder of their dignity and worth."

Maurie Ryan, President Bathurst Central Council, said: "The Vinnies Café has a special place in the hearts of the Orange community for its warm and welcoming atmosphere, community spirit and delicious food.

"We are very fortunate to have the support of generous sponsors and donors, including IGA and Bakers Delight."

Around 65 volunteers work hard to support all aspects of the Van, from shopping and keeping the pantry stocked, to preparing food and cleaning up. There are eight Night Patrol crews and a further 25 volunteers who work in the Café.

"All our volunteers are caring and compassionate. Just knowing our visitors can go to sleep not feeling hungry is an immense reward for their hours of effort," says Pam.

**VINNIES
RENEWS**

Outside Pantry offers the basics



THE OUTSIDE PANTRY IS A NEW 24/7 INITIATIVE AT EDEL QUINN WAGGA WAGGA PROVIDING NON-PERISHABLE TINNED AND PACKET FOOD, SMALL PERSONAL ITEMS AND FRESH PRODUCE.

It is a discreet way to help local people who are experiencing disadvantage and struggle to afford the basics.

Outside Pantry has been active for several months and feedback has been great.

As well as providing some basic items, there is also a feedback form for pantry users to say what they would like to have next time. Several heart-warming comments have been left by appreciative Pantry users.

Simple innovations make a huge difference and we rely on donors like you to ensure we can keep them running.

**VINNIES
RESTORES**

Brighter Bathrooms building project

TAKING A SHOWER IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT THAT MOST OF US TAKE FOR GRANTED.

Easy access to a hot shower in a well-equipped bathroom restores dignity and improves health. It should not be a luxury but an essential.

The facilities at the Matthew Talbot Hostel are in urgent need of an upgrade – they are old, inadequate, in very poor condition and hard to maintain.

Poor hygiene underpins many of the health issues experienced by the men accessing the services of the hostel, as residents or just dropping in.

Offering showers allows our case workers to connect with men, to offer case management and assistance with other issues.

Without access to a shower these men face the daily humiliation of being unwelcome in shops and public spaces.

Finding a job becomes impossible and they are essentially locked out of society. Invisible.

Cherie McKenna, Manager Bequests and Major Gifts, approached her philanthropic supporters to find a solution.

“We had a wonderful response. The extraordinary generosity of a number of donors is going to improve the lives of so many men,” says Cherie.



“Our major funder is The Fussell Family Foundation. Through their support the work can be completed before Christmas. They have also generously funded a special needs bathroom.

“We would also like to thank the Maple-Brown Family Foundation who ignited this fundraising effort with the first large gift. They didn't hesitate to lend their support to assist the men at the Talbot. Our gratitude goes to our loyal trusts and families who have generously supported this much-needed renovation.

“Good personal hygiene – a hot shower – can be the first step in addressing many of the issues facing these men and finding a long-term pathway out of homelessness.

“With the refurbished bathrooms we can restore the dignity and open new doors.”

**VINNIES
RESTORES**

The bathroom facilities are used up to 300 times per day

620 meals are prepared every day

80 men are treated by the medical clinic each day

On average 2 men are placed in housing per week

Over 200 people volunteer at the hostel each week

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 \$ _____ per month

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 ☐ I would prefer to donate by **Direct Debit**, please send me the Direct Debit Form.

If you wish to pay by **cheque** (marked 'non-negotiable') or **money order**, please make payable to 'St Vincent de Paul Society'

☐ 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. ☐

SVS17



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