



1 June 2018

## OUT IN THE COLD: VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT

On the first day of winter for 2018, the St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria (Vinnies) is calling for business, community and political leaders to register now for the 2018 Vinnies CEO Sleepout events in Melbourne on 21 June and Geelong on 28 June, to help raise vital funds for the 725,000+ Victorians living below the poverty line.

Proceeds from these events will be providing an essential financial boost for Vinnies' home visitation service in Victoria. Home visitation is a core work of the charity, which has been helping Australians experiencing poverty and hardship for well over 160 years.

"During a home visit, Vinnies volunteers give people a gentle hand up, face to face, and provide the basics to empower them to get back on their feet. It is a localised and personalised service – a legacy of the 'love thy neighbour' sentiment, which is essential for building compassionate communities," said St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria CEO, Sue Cattermole.

Last financial year Vinnies volunteers visited more than 318,000 Victorians in their homes and provided almost \$15 million dollars in direct material aid to people who are unable to afford the basics.

"Demand for home visits has risen by an average of 40 per cent in Victoria over the past three years and up to 68 per cent in the greater Geelong region. What this tells us, is that unless we act now to support the growing number of people surviving in a state of poverty, more people will be at risk of homelessness – a crisis that we simply can't ignore."

The latest statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) report that homelessness has risen by 11 percent in Victoria in the past five years. Vinnies Victoria is now urging the states leaders in Melbourne and Geelong to register now for the Vinnies CEO Sleepout, to help people at risk.

"Nearly three million Australians are living in poverty. Many of these people do, in fact, have a roof over their heads – even a job, kids in school, a car – but maintaining these basics is a constant struggle. Others encounter extra curve balls too, such as mental illness, disability, insecure housing and prolonged unemployment. What they all have in common is a feeling of treading water; of just scraping by," said Ms Cattermole.

"We are calling on leaders to learn more about the harsh realities of living in poverty, to become agents of change, and to lead collaborative action to improve their circumstances. This starts with peer-to-peer fundraising, but at the event, participants will gain a deeper understanding about the realities of poverty on the frontline too – out in the cold."

Participants will be taken outside their comfort zone for one night – sleeping on a piece of cardboard, with soup for dinner from the Vinnies Soup Vans – to gain a glimpse of life without their creature comforts. The Melbourne event will be hosted at The University of Melbourne's Parkville campus and the Geelong event will be hosted at the GMHBA Stadium thanks to Kardinia Park Stadium Trust.

"We are so appreciative of the support we've been given from our 2018 venue sponsors, but in the spirit of our event, they've promised to make it as cold, gritty and uncomfortable for our visitors as possible. And of course, the weather is always a variable," said Ms Cattermole.

Senior Climatologist and Head of Long-Range Forecasts for the Bureau of Meteorology, Dr Andrew Watkins, said the "The Bureau has certainly not cancelled winter" – but June is likely to be a little warmer and dryer than previous years.

"The average minimum overnight temperature on 21 June in Melbourne is just 6.9°C and the warmest night was 12.7°C back in 1957. In Geelong, the average minimum overnight temperature is a little cooler at 5.1°C and the warmest night was 10.7°C in 2007. And historically, I'm afraid to say, it's rained on just over half those days in both cities too," he said.

"With cooler temperatures and a chance of showers too, I'd say to Vinnies CEO Sleepout participants to rug up, and remember to pack a beanie, broly and boots!"

Poverty: Home Truths



# MEDIA RELEASE



**Business, community and political leaders are invited to register now for the 2018 Vinnies CEO Sleepout on 21 June 2018 in Melbourne or 28 June 2018 in Geelong, either individually or as part of a senior management team. Visit [www.ceosleepout.org.au](http://www.ceosleepout.org.au) to register now.**

**- ENDS -**

**MEDIA:** For further information or resources to assist with your story, please contact:

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## **ABOUT THE VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT:**

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout was initiated in 2006 by a St Vincent de Paul Society volunteer in Sydney and has now grown into a successful national event, hosted annually during winter in every state and territory around Australia.

It collectively raises around \$6.5m across the country every year, which is used to support vital services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty, including crisis accommodation, food vouchers, soup vans, rent assistance, referral services and more.

The event is experiential, allowing participants to reflect on the experiences of people living below the poverty line or without secure accommodation, by sleeping outside for one night on a piece of cardboard. To find out more visit [ceosleepout.org.au](http://ceosleepout.org.au).

## **ABOUT THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY VICTORIA:**

The St Vincent de Paul Society and its wide network of members and volunteers provide practical frontline support, advocacy and friendship for the most vulnerable members of our community.

Key services include home visitation; Vinnies Shops; youth programs; soup vans; assistance for asylum seekers and refugees; compeer programs for people experiencing mental illness; education and tutoring; and professional accommodation and health services through VincentCare.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia has more than 60,000 members and volunteers. Internationally, the Society operates in 149 countries and has over 950,000 members. To find out more visit [vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au).