

# MEDIA RELEASE

## 'Everyone has the right to a home' Vinnies launches 2019 Wollongong CEO Sleepout



**Wollongong, Thursday 4 April 2019**

The St Vincent de Paul Society's Wollongong Central Council is calling on business and community leaders from across the region to commit to spending a winter night outdoors – putting a spotlight on the changing face of homelessness and raising funds in support of Vinnies' frontline services.

Dozens of local leaders will come together on Thursday 20 June at the University of Wollongong's Innovation Campus for the eighth annual Wollongong Vinnies CEO Sleepout, forgoing one night of comfort to help make a tangible difference to the lives of those less fortunate.

As well as raising money for crucial Vinnies services and programs providing food, accommodation and support to people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage, the initiative is a chance for business and community leaders to gain a better understanding of the issue and how they can continue to make an impact through their own work. As part of their night in the cold, they'll hear first-hand from people with lived experience of homelessness and housing stress, and learn more about the valuable grassroots assistance Vinnies provides.

The 2016 Census figures showed that, on any given night, more than 116,000 people nationwide were thought to have no permanent home. In NSW, the number of people experiencing homelessness increased by 37% between 2011 and 2016 to more than 37,700. Homelessness in women aged over 55 is on the rise, and NSW has seen a 36% increase in the number of 12-24 year olds without stable, secure and appropriate housing, with family violence being a key driver of this alarming statistic.

Vinnies Wollongong Central Council Executive Officer, Peter Quarmby, believes that corporate Australia can make a positive impact in the lives of people experiencing homelessness.

"Beyond helping to raise money, business and community leaders can play an important role in the development of innovative ideas and lend their influence to finding the solutions to ending homelessness," he said.

"From the work we do at Vinnies, we know that people trying to get into the rental market or who can't afford to stay in their rental properties as a result of a variety of factors are the ones most at risk of homelessness.

"We hope to foster awareness of the reality of the issue – young people, women and families resorting to couch surfing, overcrowded accommodation, living out of cars or sleeping rough – and focus on educating and supporting business leaders so they can best assist those experiencing disadvantage and homelessness. Everyone has the right to a home," he added.

UOW Innovation Campus Commercial Development Unit Director, Mr Chuck Stone, welcomed the opportunity to help highlight the issue of homelessness across the region by hosting the Wollongong CEO Sleepout event for the first time.

"The Innovation Campus has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to supporting initiatives that benefit our community, and we're proud to play host to an event that results in tangible on-ground support to those who need it most. We look forward to welcoming dozens of CEOs to our campus to brave a night in the cold in support of the practical work that Vinnies does," he said.

Business leaders from across the Macarthur, Illawarra, Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven are encouraged to register for the Wollongong event during April. Members of the public can also support the initiative by sponsoring a participant or making a donation to the Wollongong CEO Sleepout event at [www.ceosleepout.org.au/event/wollongong](http://www.ceosleepout.org.au/event/wollongong)

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St Vincent de Paul Society  
NSW  
*good works*

## About Vinnies NSW

Every day in NSW the St Vincent de Paul Society, better known as 'Vinnies', helps thousands of people through home, hospital and prison visitation, homeless services for men, women and families, migrant and refugee assistance, support for those living with a mental illness, supported employment services for people with intellectual and other disabilities, Vinnies shops, overseas relief, budget counselling, youth programs and more. Visit <https://www.vinnies.org.au/> to learn more about the 'good works' of Vinnies.

## About the Vinnies CEO Sleepout

Since its inception in 2006, the Vinnies CEO Sleepout has raised more than \$47 million to fund Vinnies homeless services across Australia. This unique event enables business leaders to actively combat the issue of homelessness by experiencing a little of what it is like to sleep out themselves.

The advocacy and fundraising efforts of participating CEOs, their businesses and the support of partners is crucial to the success of the event. In 2018, over 1,300 business leaders raised more than \$6.1 million nationally. This money has funded new projects, assisted with the provision of existing homeless services, and allowed Vinnies to expand programs for people experiencing homelessness.

## About the Vinnies Wollongong CEO Sleepout

Our \$200,000 fundraising goal for the 2019 event will help support the continuation of existing homelessness and mental health services across the Macarthur, Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands, including:

- Vinnies Van – providing more than 16,500 meals and a range of essential items to support those in need across the Illawarra and Shoalhaven each year, and helping to foster connections between clients and other support services
- Nagle Centre family care and support service – assisting people and families experiencing crisis and disadvantage in the Macarthur region by providing almost 7,000 meals per year, as well as counselling and social activities, including trauma-informed yoga classes
- Jim da Silva Farm – promoting personal growth and living skills while providing medium-long term accommodation for men experiencing homelessness who are dealing with ongoing mental illness, drug and alcohol issues or emotional disturbance
- Conference assistance to individuals and families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness by helping to reduce severe financial stress, providing vouchers and food hampers, supplying clothing and household items via Vinnies shops, and connecting them with housing options.

