

AUTUMN 2019

# THE SPIRIT NEWSLETTER



## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT



CHRISTMAS APPEAL



NEW HOME



VOLUNTEER PROFILE



BED CHALLENGE



# MESSAGE

## from the State President

### Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Spirit Newsletter.

Since taking up the role of State President six months ago I have had the opportunity first hand to learn more about what Vinnies does and to meet so many committed and wonderful people who are passionate about our organisation.

Our 2018 Christmas Appeal, "A Christmas without Joy", was a very busy time for us as we focused on the impact of poverty on families at Christmas time. Many families and people in our community face challenges, with one in eight Australians and one in five children, currently living below the poverty line. Volunteers and staff worked hard in the weeks leading up to Christmas to prepare and pack

the nearly 3000 Christmas hampers that were delivered to families and people.

The relocation and opening of our Perth Passages Youth Engagement Hub was a major milestone for us last year. Our long standing partnership with the Rotary Club of Perth has meant we can continue to commit to offering assistance to young people who are most at risk with our new purpose-designed centre allowing us to offer valuable access to an expanded service in a safe and welcoming environment.

This edition of our newsletter highlights some of the wonderful events, stories and dedicated work

that has occurred over the past few months and the impact it has had on the lives of vulnerable members of our community.

Vinnies offers vital support and guidance to over 40,000 people in need each year through our services and programs. As we look forward to another busy year for 2019, we thank you for your generosity and care in helping to support and change lives for Western Australians.



**Gladys Demissie**  
State President  
St Vincent de Paul Society (WA) Inc

## A HELPING HAND: Keith's Story

A series of events led to Keith's life spiraling out of control four years ago.



Keith is legally blind and also has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

With the death of his mother and long term relationship ending, he became homeless, living on the street with his guide dog.

Although he found temporary accommodation, due to his ongoing mental health issues, Keith struggled financially, and with daily activities such as shopping. After hearing about Vinnies services, Keith reached out to the Vinnies call centre, requesting emergency relief assistance so he could begin to better manage living on his own.

Vinnies Emergency Assistance program provides basic necessities

such as food, clothing, household items, utility bill and rental assistance together with offering referrals and advocacy through home visitations by volunteers or attendance at a Vinnies Support Centre.

Keith talks about the happiness he has, and the personalised support he receives, when Vinnies volunteers visit, regularly assisting him with food vouchers, clothing and financial counselling.

Having gained confidence to manage his situation and disabilities, Keith tries to donate where possible any extra money to Vinnies from his pension. He feels this is one small way he can give back to Vinnies that were, and continues to be, there when times are hard.

# CREATING A MEANINGFUL CHRISTMAS



**At Christmas time Vinnies, and the generosity of the Western Australian public, were able to help thousands of Western Australian families experiencing disadvantage.**

The 2018 Christmas Appeal saw volunteers contribute nearly 1000 hours over three weeks to produce nearly 3000 Christmas hampers for people and families impacted by poverty. Much of the food donations came from schools as well as companies and community groups undertaking their own collections for Vinnies and included such items as tinned and packet food, cereals, biscuits and condiments.

Vinnies Executive Manager of Member and Volunteer Services, Andrew York, says factors such as focusing on paying bills and rent, increases stress and leaves little hope at Christmas time. "With the generous support from Western Australians, we are able to take action when a family is in crisis. Christmas is a difficult time of year for people and families who are already under financial stress, and it can be a struggle to do something as simple as provide a meal, buy much needed clothes or put a present under the tree."

The bulk of the Christmas hampers were packed at the Vinnies Distribution Centre in Canning Vale by volunteers from corporate groups such as Bankwest, Woodside and Channel 10.

School and parish donations are often given straight to local Vinnies volunteers who pack their hampers ready for delivery in their local communities. In the Belmont area, volunteer member John Harbinson collected 13 hampers and packed another 13 from food donated by St Maria Goretti Primary School in Redcliffe and the local church. He says the participation of schools for the Vinnies Christmas Appeal was outstanding. "We are incredibly grateful for the effort families, children and schools go to collecting goods for hampers. It means so much to us and the people who receive them."

Along with Christmas hampers, some time was spent filling backpacks with 'back to school' items that were

distributed to families throughout January in time for the beginning of the school year.

We are very grateful for all the hard work of our staff, volunteers and donors whose efforts brought much joy to many people and families at Christmas.



**NEARLY 3000 HAMPERS  
WERE PACKED  
SUPPORTING 9000  
WESTERN AUSTRALIANS  
IN NEED**





# MORE SERVICES TO HELP MORE PEOPLE

**Vinnies financial counselling service will expand in 2019 after receiving a funding boost.**

One of Vinnies existing essential services is free financial counselling, offering independent financial support and advocacy for people struggling to meet their expenses. An expansion of this vital service is now possible, with Vinnies recently being awarded extra funding so it can further meet the needs of Western Australians in personal financial difficulty.

From April this year, Vinnies expanded service will include becoming part of the National Debt Hotline. Western Australians seeking emergency financial advice will be able to call a 1800 number and be put in direct contact with trained staff that can best assist with a person or a family situation. The sooner people make contact with financial counsellors and financial capability services the better outcome in terms of resolving debts, easing their financial problems and improving their overall wellbeing.

Andrew York, Vinnies Executive Manager of Member and Volunteer Services says putting people in touch with a financial counsellor quickly is key to preventing a crisis escalating. "Vinnies is already providing face to face counselling

but when people feel overwhelmed with their situation and call, Vinnies will be able to provide more immediate advice and options which can then include referring onto one of our counsellors for more complex issues."

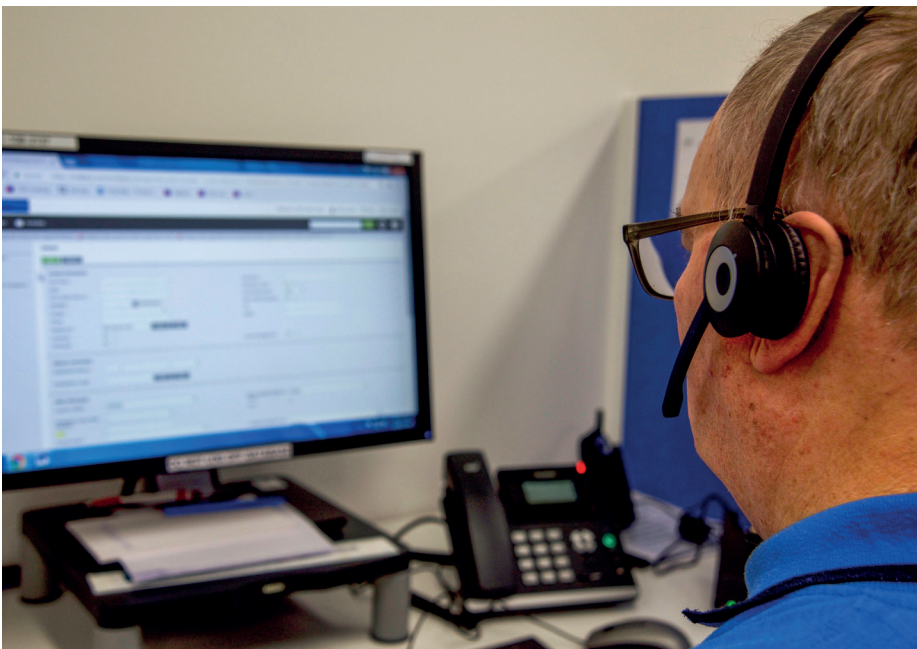
Currently, Vinnies has four government funded and one Vinnies funded financial counsellors in Perth CBD, Canning Vale, Rockingham, Mandurah and Bunbury offering one-on-one financial counselling. Last year, Vinnies counsellors provided nearly 8500 sessions to clients with nearly \$2 million dollars worth of debt waived.

Mr York says that it was a priority for Vinnies to look at ways to expand its financial counselling service as it is continuing to see an increase in the number of people asking for help in this area. "Providing stability for a person's housing situation and potentially avoiding legal action or debt collection is critical to helping to arm people with the tools to take control and manage their own finances. Extra funding will allow us to deliver a more extensive and comprehensive service to Western Australians facing financial stress."

The additional financial services, combined with Vinnies 'wrap around' approach means people can be supported on an individual basis from when they place a call to the Vinnies call centre, through to direct support with emergency assistance. And if they are experiencing complex issues such as homelessness or mental health issues, can be referred to any of the Vinnies specialist programs and services.

The need for financial counselling can arise from a diverse range of incidents and events in people's lives but research has shown that the benefit of providing this type of service far outweighs the cost of people in the community being in debt. Counsellors are able to help negotiate with creditors, advocate with organisations and companies, provide advice on debt recovery, bankruptcy and help with developing a budgeting plan.

The additional funding Vinnies will receive, will give the ability to extend its vital support services, building capacity to avert crisis and reduce stress, which will change the lives of thousands of Western Australians.



**"EXTRA FUNDING WILL ALLOW US TO DELIVER A MORE EXTENSIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIANS FACING FINANCIAL STRESS."**



# RECONNECTED: Audrey's Story

**After a request for emergency assistance was received through the Vinnies call centre, a visit from Vinnies volunteers found Audrey sitting in the dark with her power disconnected.**

Audrey is physically incapacitated, has ongoing health issues, and is home-bound as she cannot drive or take public transport. Vinnies volunteers provide practical assistance through home visitations and during their visit, she advised them that she relied regularly on the goodwill of neighbours for food as she had no power to run a fridge or charging her phone.

In the past when she found that her Centrelink payments did not provide enough income, she had taken in boarders who had left owing money for rent. Her power had been disconnected due to not being able to pay the Synergy bill, now totaling over \$3000, and said the high cost had been caused by the power usage from the boarders prior to leaving.

Vinnies financial counsellors provide free, independent financial support and advocacy for people struggling financially. Audrey was contacted by

a Vinnies financial counsellor and was able to do a phone interview as her disabilities prevented her from attending an appointment. The financial counsellor was able to work with Audrey over the phone to assess her situation and deal with the immediate crisis of getting her power reconnected.

Synergy was contacted by the Vinnies financial counsellor and to secure a plan that would be the best possible outcome for Audrey to manage. Synergy agreed to an immediate debt waiver of \$1000 towards the outstanding bill with Audrey given a repayment plan over a 12 month period. Synergy would also review the account after a year and if Audrey can continue to maintain her payments, any remaining debt will be waived.

Audrey was incredibly happy when her power was reconnected that same day through the intervention of a Vinnies financial counsellor.



She was immensely grateful of the outcome, expressing to Vinnies that words couldn't describe the joy and relief this makes to her managing her daily tasks. Now with her fridge and other appliances working again, Audrey was able to begin to store and cook food, a significant factor in restoring Audrey's independence and confidence to continue managing on her own.

## 2018 STREET APPEAL



**The Western Australian community gave generously to the 2018 annual Vinnies Street Appeal as Vinnies volunteers shook tins at different locations across Perth and the South West.**

The Vinnies call centre receives 200-250 calls daily and connects individuals and families seeking emergency assistance with Vinnies volunteers and the support they need. The Vinnies Street Appeal is one way of raising valuable funds for emergency assistance that helps local communities deliver support of basic necessities such as food, clothing, household items, help with utility bills and rental assistance.

Vinnies WA CEO Susan Rooney says that this important fundraising event is a way people can make a difference to help change someone's life.

"Our emergency assistance support provides advocacy, information and vital assistance to thousands of Western Australians through the extraordinary work of our 3500 volunteers and the Vinnies Street Appeal is a vital fundraising initiative for us to continue providing this support." Ms Rooney said.

**If you would like to find out more about the 2019 Street Appeal call 08 6323 7500 or email [events@svdpwa.org.au](mailto:events@svdpwa.org.au).**



# PASSAGES NEW HOME

**A new building in Edward Street Perth continues Vinnies WA and the Rotary Club of Perth's commitment to addressing youth homelessness in Western Australia.**

Due to the growing need for the service, Vinnies and the Rotary Club of Perth opened a new Passages Youth Engagement Hub in Perth, shifting from the old Northbridge location in November.

Passages works to build relationships with the most marginalised and at risk young people in our community by offering practical assistance and support, while identifying and managing longer term needs. After seeing an increase in clients presenting with more complex issues, it was identified that a larger place was required to ensure all young people could have access to the service and engage with staff in a safe and welcoming environment.

More than 70 people attended the official opening in November, marking the completion of the project and start of a new chapter for the service.

Although the new building has only been in operation a few months, reaction to the new location has been overwhelmingly positive. One of the first young clients to walk through the doors when Passages opened wiped away tears saying that she felt the space was very special.

Features of the new building include the newly designed and renovated open plan space that allows staff to employ safer practices, and more meeting rooms mean an increase of

visiting services at the Hub, giving more opportunities for young people to access the support and referrals to essential services they need.

Passages is grateful to have Lotterywest as a major supporter for the new centre, as well as acknowledging the many people, companies and supporters who have contributed their time and resources to make the project happen including architect and project manager Beatrice Cervi, BallPoint Construction Group, Graham Peden from Rotary, ABC Blinds and the City of Vincent.

**For further information visit [passages.org.au](https://passages.org.au)**





# A NIGHT TO CHANGE LIVES



**Rain couldn't dampen the spirits and enthusiasm of nearly 100 people in October attending the inaugural Vinnies Drive-In, Sleep-In.**

Perth's only remaining Drive-In in Kingsley was the perfect location for this new community event, focusing on what is an under-reported number of people who have no option than to sleep in their car. Families, friends, community and business organisations braved less than ideal weather conditions to give up their good night's sleep, and experience what it's like to sleep in their car, bringing attention to the complex issues that surround homelessness and social disadvantage.

Every night more than 9000 Western Australians experience homelessness; of these people 3656 are young people and children, and specifically 1493 are children under 12 years of age. People who experience any type of homelessness have to face loneliness, fear and hunger as well as barriers to medical care, employment and education.

Through condensation on car windows and early morning mist, this year's participants remarked that they had gained a new appreciation and glimpse into some of the challenges people face when they are forced to sleep in their car. This included for some the practical considerations of daily life such as taking the kids off to school,



preparing a meal, washing, and if unemployed, looking for work or attend an interview.

Tony Pickburn, one of this year's participants, said that he wanted to experience the night with his seven year old daughter for her to understand how fortunate they were to have a home as a family when many do not. "We are satisfied with what we set out to achieve, that in some small way we experienced what many less fortunate experience every night sleeping in their cars."

Valuable funds raised from this unique community event helps Vinnies provide immediate relief to vulnerable people. The Vinnies Drive-In, Sleep-In raises awareness about the challenges people experiencing poverty and homelessness face, and by participating, the time and money given can really change lives.

**For further information visit [driveinsleepin.org.au](http://driveinsleepin.org.au).**

## DRESSED BY VINNIES

**In October, Western Australians were encouraged to visit a Vinnies shop and purchase items to wear on national Dressed By Vinnies Day.**

This year's national campaign had the theme of "wear it then share it" so people could purchase items from any Vinnies shop, wear it on the day, and then share their new outfits on social media.

There are 52 Vinnies shops around Western Australia that generate income which helps Vinnies provide support for local communities and a range of specialised services and programs in the areas of homelessness; mental health and migrants and refugees.

Vinnies shops around the metropolitan area leading up to the national Dressed By Vinnies Day reported an increase in trade as people who love a fashionable bargain visited their local Vinnies shops. The day was an outstanding success with people embracing and supporting the day with the realisation that when you shop at Vinnies, lives can really be changed.

**For further information visit [dressedby.vinnies.org.au](http://dressedby.vinnies.org.au)**





# A SEVEN DAY JOURNEY: Ray's Story

Vinnies Tom Fisher House provides an intensive intervention service for long term homeless people and this is Ray's journey about the seven days he spent there.

**Day 1:** It's nearly 5.30pm and staff at Tom Fisher House are preparing to admit referred clients for the night. As part of the Vinnies homelessness service, Tom Fisher House (TFH) provides up to seven free nights accommodation and engagement for people experiencing long term homelessness with complex needs, collaborating with other specialist services to support them in their journey and offers a safe place for clients regardless of their presenting issues.

At the gate is Ray, a 60 year old man who has been experiencing homelessness for the past three years. Ray is taking a number of medications for his heart, kidney and liver, uses a walking frame, experiences substance dependency and mental health issues. Not having any stable accommodation means he sometimes forgets to take his medication or it is even stolen. Ray has also found it hard to maintain contact with case workers so has become frustrated at not being able to move forward with his situation.

Ray was referred to TFH but was very apprehensive about going. He reverted to his best way of coping, arriving at the gate on his first night under the influence of alcohol. At times Ray can be aggressive when he drinks, and when he pressed the bell for entry he was ready for a battle. Once identified, the gate opened and Ray stood there a moment, incredibly surprised at how the staff accepted him into the building without judgement about his condition. Ray was welcomed in and showed around, then sat down to chat with staff who made him feel comfortable by getting to know a little about him. They told him this was part of the intake process, where staff are able to engage and identify each person's needs so they can be supported. Feeling very tired and not wanting to eat or drink, he was showed to his room and went straight to bed.

**Day 2:** The next day after breakfast, Ray got ready to leave having to vacate by 8am each morning. He got through his day on the streets but couldn't wait to get back to TFH, and was at the gate ready to be let in as soon as they opened. This night, he had dinner with everyone and watched some TV. Ray was beginning to feel safe and comfortable in the environment and was happy to chat with staff, starting to open up about his struggles.

**Day 3:** After another good night's sleep, breakfast and a shower, Ray got ready to leave for the day. His mobility issues slow him down so on many days it is a struggle getting started. Staff had given Ray a voucher to get fresh clothes from a Vinnies shop so he set off, happy with the prospect of having a purpose for the day and receiving some new clothes. Ray was at the gate right on time again however, tonight was not a good night. He was experiencing a lot of suicidal thoughts and expressed this to TFH staff. He was amazed how the staff took the time to sit with him, listening as he expressed his feelings, making sure he was in a safe place before he went to bed. Staff said they would do welfare checks on him throughout the night and offered for him to link up with the Mobile Clinical Outreach Team in the morning. He did this, and was able to leave TFH the next day in a much better state of mind.

**Day 4:** Ray had a reasonable day but was eager to still get back to TFH that evening. He was relieved and happy to talk with staff again, but asked for welfare checks to be done again that night, still feeling a little unstable about his thoughts.

**Day 5:** Ray knew his seven day stay at TFH was coming to an end, and with nowhere to go and feeling that no one cared, he was getting anxious about his situation. When Ray began to show his frustrations, staff took the time to listen to him and how he was feeling, offering some suggestions on how he could be supported when he left TFH.

**Day 6:** On his second last day Ray was becoming more positive about his future because of his time spent at TFH. Staff had advocated on his behalf about a referral to transitional accommodation and supported him during a phone interview for an accommodation service. Without that guidance through the process, Ray felt his frustration and anger would have got the better of him during the interview, but he realised it had helped alleviate his anxiety. With staff support, Ray was able to have a plan so he could meet the requirements of the accommodation service and after a busy day, returned to TFH that night very proud of his achievements.

**Day 7:** Ray's last day at TFH was a happy one. He received the news that he was to be accepted into transitional accommodation, with TFH staff and his caseworker agreeing to give him extra support to ensure that his stay would be successful. Ray was granted an extension at TFH until a room was available and a few days later, staff accompanied Ray to the accommodation service to ensure he settled in.

Ray's journey continues, but due to his stay at TFH and the support and assistance received, he is on a path from homelessness to a home!



# SUMMER CAMPS



**Warm weather during January gave plenty of opportunity for kids to enjoy one of the Vinnies Youth Camps held at Ern Hill in Sorrento.**

The Vinnies Teen Camp was held over four days where 14 teenagers and 11 volunteers were able to enjoy various activities such as basketball, dodgeball, a disco night and many braving the adrenalin rushing flying fox.

Vinnies Youth Camps are tailored to the varied needs of young people, providing care and support with a focus on building life skills and self-improvement.

Three camps were run in January, a Teen Camp, Kids Camp for ages 7-11 and Youth pathway camps for years 9-11. Run during school holidays, the camps provide a safe and positive environment for children from families experiencing hardship and aim to support the emotional and mental health of children and help to develop their vision for the future.



## VINNIES GOT TALENT

**Residents from Vinnies Mental Health Services put their talents on show as part of Mental Health Week in October.**

Mental Health Week aims to increase awareness of mental health issues and reduce the stigma of seeking help. The week also encourages support for each other and looking out for one another in the community, as well as identifying a combination of factors that contributes to our overall sense of mental well-being.

Residents from the Vinnies Mental Health Village, an accommodation service involving onsite case management and assistance to residents living in self-contained units, came up with the idea of a talent show to celebrate the Week. Hazel Beirne, Vinnies Mental Health Manager at the Village, said that it was a great opportunity for residents to participate in a

recreational activity during Mental Health Week to improve their confidence and show how well their recovery is going. "Our residents got to enjoy the spotlight for a brief time and show that although they have many challenges with their mental health, they also have lots of talents and interests to express and share with the community," Hazel says.

Residents and staff showcased their singing, dancing and comedy and artistic skills in front of family and friends on the day which promoted the importance of positive well-being. The show concluded with some loud and enthusiastic applause from the supportive crowd, a well deserving finale to the successful show.





# Vinnies is powered statewide by people for people



17

Community & Mental Health  
Housing locations



52

Vinnies shop  
locations



74

Vinnies conference  
locations

Vinnies WA offers vital support and guidance to people in need, helping to change lives of thousands of Western Australians.



# VOLUNTEER PROFILE

**Since signing up to be a Vinnies volunteer in high school at the age of 13, Patrick Wallis already has a long history of assisting young people experiencing disadvantage ... and he is only 22.**

As a member of the Vinnies State Council, Youth Advisory Committee and National Youth Team, Patrick is an outstanding advocate for Vinnies Youth Programs having pioneered a group of young volunteers to engage schools, running advocacy workshops and school sleepouts to increase the awareness of poverty in Western Australia.

Also part of Patrick's volunteer work is his commitment to improving the lives of young people through his role on Vinnies Youth Camps as a camp coordinator. Vinnies camp programs are for children with backgrounds from low socio-economic families, domestic violence, poverty and abuse.

As a Vinnies camp coordinator, Patrick chairs committee meetings, organises the camp's itinerary and provides support to camp facilitators, volunteers and kids, with this year's summer camp in January being the 19th one Patrick has volunteered on.

"I help organise youth camps for children who come from families that Vinnies is working to assist and support." Patrick says.

Patrick finds working on the camps an incredibly rewarding experience and mentions how proud he was, when on a camp last year he saw first-hand the positive impact he had made on one young person.

"I have worked on many camps with a lot of kids and it does come full circle. Someone came on a camp as a youth leader last year that was actually one of the kids from my very first camp."

The encouragement and enthusiasm Patrick has for volunteering has inspired many other young people to join Vinnies on a volunteering basis, creating further opportunities for young adults to give back to the community. Learning new skills and making friends are some of the



reasons Patrick continues to be a Vinnies volunteer. He says however, that it is the powerful difference through volunteering that can be made to the people that Vinnies supports, which makes the biggest impact.

**"BY BEING THERE AS  
A VOLUNTEER FOR  
THE PERSON ...  
REALLY EMPOWERS  
THEM TO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE TO THEIR  
OWN LIVES ..."**

"Being there for someone and actually seeing them improve their situation with a bit of support from Vinnies is one of the best feelings I have ever had. By being there as a volunteer for the person, rather than just giving them a handout, really empowers them to make a difference to their own lives, and we are supporting them to make change. I am giving back and can directly see the difference I am making."

Patrick is one of the 3500 Vinnies volunteers that generously give their time, passion and experiences to the wide variety of programs and services that Vinnies provides vulnerable Western Australians. He is happy to share with anyone, the impact a volunteer can have through the support and care they give, means lives can be changed.

**To find out more about becoming a volunteer call 08 6323 7500 or email [volunteer@svdpwa.org.au](mailto:volunteer@svdpwa.org.au)**



# CORPORATE CHALLENGE

**In September, Vinnies put the call out to corporate groups and companies to participate in a challenge building beds for people in need.**

Part of the core work that Vinnies does is providing emergency assistance with food, help with utility bills, advocacy issues and material aid such as household goods and furniture.

Beds are a vital resource that Vinnies can provide however, demand mostly outstrips the number of donations received, so single and double beds need to be purchased which arrive flat packed and require assembling. This task usually fell to Vinnies drivers which impacted on their delivery time when beds were required.

The Vinnies Bed Challenge was a way that volunteers could be encouraged to donate their time to build beds and provide the valuable benefit of freeing up drivers to spend more time on the road, making more vital emergency assistance deliveries.

Staff from Network 10, Channel 9, Carat, Media Tonic, Southern Cross Austereo, Australian Radio Network and Nova Entertainment took part, flexing their muscles making beds for people in need across Western Australia.

Each team from the different organisations challenged themselves to beat the others on the total number of beds that could be made, with the Australian Radio Network taking top spot on the tally board having completed a grand total of 96 beds in their four hour session.

Over the four week challenge, the high levels of enthusiasm and bed building skills meant a total of 308 beds were constructed.

**To find out more about our corporate partnerships call 08 6323 7500 or email [partnerships@svdpwa.org.au](mailto:partnerships@svdpwa.org.au)**



## UPCOMING DATES

### NEW SHOPS

Look out for new Vinnies shop locations in 2019

- Kalamunda
- Mosman Park

### PASSAGES RACE DAY 4 MAY 2019

Join us for this annual event to raise funds for our specialist Youth Engagement Hubs.

For further information contact us on 08 6323 7543 or [events@svdpwa.org.au](mailto:events@svdpwa.org.au)



**10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY 27 JUNE 2019**

On our 10th Anniversary, business and community leaders will sleep without shelter to change the lives of Western Australians experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

[ceosleepout.org.au](http://ceosleepout.org.au)



[vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au)

9 Brewer Road Canning Vale WA 6155  
PO Box 1450 Canning Vale DC WA 6970  
P: (08) 6323 7500  
[info@svdpwa.org.au](mailto:info@svdpwa.org.au)