

April 2021

VINNIES NEWSLETTER

WA Bushfire Recovery

Several weeks on from the devastating Woorooloo and Hills areas fires which saw 86 homes destroyed and a further 200 homes damaged, the situation continues to be very raw for many.

Vinnies WA has been working with local councils and other lead agencies as part of the Emergency Relief Planning Committee overseeing the recovery process. Through the combined efforts of the Vinnies Midland Conference members and Andrew York, Vinnies Executive Manager of Community Engagement Services, families whose homes were lost or damaged were able to receive immediate and direct support.

“Through the Midland’s Conference connection to the local community, we were able to deliver practical support such as fuel, grocery vouchers, and Vinnies clothing vouchers. Due to the timing of the bushfires, one of our priorities was getting kids impacted by their home loss ready for back to school. We were able to help a number of Primary and High school students with new backpacks and vouchers for school supplies so they could start their school year with comfort and confidence.” Andrew York said.

As the situation moves further into the recovery stage, people displaced by the tragedy face the slow road of returning to their everyday lives, but without the comfort and stability of their home. Community recovery and rebuilding can take anywhere from two to three months to years to complete. Andrew says that each person’s journey is different, and for some it’s simply too soon for them to address the enormity of the situation, and they will seek or accept assistance when they feel they are ready to do so.

“The practical support is important but being able to walk the journey over a longer period of time is what will help people heal. The support Vinnies can give and the way we deliver it can allow people to progress through their recovery, in their own time.”



The Vinnies WA Bushfire Recovery Appeal was launched in February, solely dedicated to assisting people in their long-term recovery journey, with 100% of funds raised going directly to the people affected by the bushfires. Andrew, who himself has experienced losing a home to fire, understands the impact and emotional distress the situation can cause.

“The sense of loss and the displacement you feel is devastating. Making a financial donation to the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal is the most effective contribution you can make so you can directly help families who may face homelessness, financial distress and even ongoing health issues as a result of the crisis. Donations can help us provide people with choice, flexibility and most importantly hope, as part of their long-term recovery.”

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Social Housing

Having a safe place to call home is much more than having roof over your head.



Long serving volunteers honoured

Vinnies WA recognises volunteers with over 25 years of service.

Do you need a Good Night In?

Vinnies WA is very excited to announce a new event designed to bring people and communities together while raising funds for thousands of Western Australians in need each year.

In recent times many of us have experienced disconnection and isolation. We know that maintaining close relationships, having support and staying connected to friends and family is vital, especially when times are tough. For over 65,000 Western Australians experiencing hardship each year, their only means of support is Vinnies WA.

The Vinnies Good night In on Friday 7 May, is simply about staying in for the night with friends, family, or work colleagues and donating what you would have spent on a night out. You can fundraise by hosting a night individually at home or perhaps as

a large group or organisation. There are endless ways to get creative and have fun such as games or movie night, dinner party or a sleep over, as well as connecting on the night through our live stream.

Louise Macfarlane, Vinnies WA Marketing Manager says, that this event really does have such broad appeal for people to get involved. "The Vinnies Good Night In is all about giving and connecting and by sharing your night with others, you not only raise much needed funds for Vinnies WA, you also raise hope, for the many Western Australians experiencing hardship."



For more information on registering or donating to the event please visit vinnies.org.au/goodnightin

ABC Vinnies Christmas Appeal

The Vinnies WA Christmas Appeal received a valuable boost in December with a partnership with ABC Radio Perth.

The ABC Vinnies Appeal was launched for the first time to raise awareness of our vital work to a wider audience of ABC radio listeners around the state.

The campaign on ABC Radio Perth, as well as ABC online and social media, raised significant funds for Vinnies programs and services. Last year had been extraordinary in terms of Western Australians experiencing hardship with many turning to Vinnies for the first time due to the impact of COVID-19. This valuable opportunity to increase awareness of our work to a wider audience meant we could support more vulnerable families facing an uncertain future at Christmas.

Over the course of the two weeks, a series of stories featured Vinnies WA staff and volunteers talking about the scope and impact of our work from our essential Emergency Assistance program to our specialist homelessness, housing, mental health, financial counselling and Youth services. ABC presenters also embarked on some fun Christmas Challenges including trying to find some spectacular Christmas outfits for under \$20.

The final online total of the Appeal raised an outstanding \$46,478, greatly assisting Vinnies to be there for the many Western Australians experiencing hardship at Christmas time.



Australia Day Honours

Congratulations go to long-time Vinnies volunteer members Trevor Knuckey and John Lazberger, who were both awarded Order of Australia Medals, as part of the 2021 Australia Day Honours list.

Trevor Knuckey has been volunteering for more than three decades and founded the Medjugorje Centre to improve the education, health and wellbeing of under-privileged students. He was awarded his medal for his charitable works beneficial to the community in Midland.

John Lazberger was awarded an OAM for his service to the community through social welfare organisations. This included the extraordinary work achieved over the 20 years spent serving on the St Vincent de Paul Operations Committee and Finance Committee, and chairing the Mental Health and Homelessness Advisory Committee for several years.



What is Social Housing?

Social housing is at crisis point here in WA. There are over 15,700 households on the social housing waitlist which equates to at least 30,000 people who are struggling to find somewhere affordable to live.

Social Housing is for people on very low incomes; who are at risk of or have recently experienced homelessness; are experiencing family violence; have a disability or have specific housing needs.

There has been a steady decline in the investment in social housing over many years and the WA State government has only planned to add an extra 260 social housing properties each year over the next ten years. Significantly more investment and policy reform is needed from the government if the housing crises is to be addressed. Something Vinnies Housing Plus Manager Paula O'Leary echoes.

"In the 2019-20 financial year, Vinnies Housing Plus Program received almost three referrals for every one property we manage. This demand will only continue to grow, with the current low vacancy rates in the private market and increasing rents, as housing becomes ever more out of reach for everyday West Australians."

Vinnies Housing Plus program falls under the social housing banner, as Vinnies WA is a Community housing provider. Vinnies manages multiple properties throughout the greater Perth and Mandurah areas with the aim of helping break the cycle of homelessness, reduce poverty related issues and provide a supportive pathway into long term secure and affordable housing. Rents are capped at a maximum 30% of a person's assessable income which allows people experiencing hardship a real opportunity to facilitate change.

"We have a flexible tenancy approach in our housing program that is person centred and strength based and by partnering with a number of other support agencies, we can better meet demand and match tenants to more suitable housing," Paula says.

There is strong evidence that providing a stable and secure base through social housing can

dramatically improve wellbeing, health, education and employment outcomes. People have the opportunity to contribute and participate in their community and embrace positive change when their housing needs are met.

Paula O'Leary says that the Vinnies Housing Plus Program recognises that by looking beyond the "bricks and mortar," immediate housing stress can be reduced, and people then have the opportunity to make a difference in their lives.

"Having a safe place to call home is so much more than having a roof over your head. Being able to provide secure housing allows people to focus on other aspects of their lives and work on their long-term goals and have those opportunities to rewrite their story."

Vinnies Housing Plus Program is a referral only service. For more information visit vinnieswa.org.au

A Stable Foundation: Sean's Story

Sean is a single father who had a history of alcohol and drug misuse. He did not have any stable accommodation for himself and his daughter who experiences Global Development Delay, and was living on a couch in a share house. Due to the living conditions, and Sean's inability to meet his daughter's needs, she was taken into care.

Losing his daughter was a turning point for Sean. It made him look at his lifestyle and the need to make significant changes if he wanted to get his daughter back. He moved out of the share house and was able to move in with his mother while he recovered from his alcohol and drug issues while looking for a place of his own.

Sean connected with a local support agency and it was during this time that he was able to apply

for accommodation with Vinnies Housing Plus program. It was here that he received the support he needed to navigate the requirements to regain custody of his daughter. Having stable accommodation was the final element required by Child Protective Services which Sean needed to achieve and he was thrilled when Vinnies was able to offer him a property whilst he worked towards stable long-term accommodation. Less than two weeks later, his daughter was placed back in his fulltime care.

Having secure accommodation for them both allowed Sean to immediately start looking into programs and services so his daughter could access the support she needed. Sean also prioritised his own health including managing his progressive lung disease, osteo-arthritis, and anxiety and depression. The Housing Plus



program also helped Sean be placed on the Housing Authority waitlist, and within five months of regaining custody of his daughter, Child Protective services closed the family's case, satisfied that Sean was providing the best possible care for his daughter.

Vinnies Housing Plus program was able to give Sean the foundation he needed to regain the future he wanted for himself and his daughter. It has also allowed him to focus on the continued improvement of his daughter's life, and to make sure she never has to worry about not having support or where she is going to live.

A New Youth Job Pathway

A new youth development program is being launched, allowing youth who have had a significant lack of education or employment history, the ability to improve their skills and pathways for an employable future.



Called Youth Skills and Pathways, the Vinnies WA program has been developed after identifying a cohort of young people impacted by issues such as underemployment, undereducation, mental health, poverty and homelessness.

The program offers a fully supportive environment as young people gain experience working in either a Vinnies retail store or our main Distribution Centre.

They can build skills in real work-place settings, develop personal skills such as confidence, problem solving and communication, and have access to further job assistance support such as resume writing and interview preparation. The person-centered approach means the program has flexibility around expectations, period of participation and level of achievement.

"We really want to try and eliminate some of the barriers that young people with complex needs have when seeking employment to give them the best opportunity for success in a safe and supportive

environment," says Colin Krause Vinnies WA Youth Services Coordinator.

"Young people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness don't often have the required skills or education they need to get a job. We want to empower and engage them through a fully supported program that is individually tailored to their specific needs. This means they can be given a pathway to opportunities for further workplace training, a TAFE course, or potentially straight into a job they otherwise would have struggled to obtain."

The current Youth Skill Pathways program is initially only available at Vinnies WA Canning Vale Depot and Retail Store. For more information visit vinnieswa.org.au

Vinnies Volunteers honoured

In December, Vinnies Ozanam House in Canning Vale hosted a morning tea and plaque presentation, honouring our Members and Volunteers who have served 25+ years.

The creation of a plaque wall was an idea first suggested by Vinnies Volunteer Manager May Bowden. She says that creating a physical and permanent reminder recognises the incredible value and importance we place on our Vinnies WA volunteers and members.

“Our new Honour Wall is a way to acknowledge the dedication, commitment and long service many volunteers and members have given for the benefit of helping others. It is wonderful to be able to highlight this milestone for volunteers and members who are a real inspiration.” May said.

St Vincent de Paul has been in Western Australia for over 150 years and an important reminder of the history was on display on the day. The collection included photos and memorabilia, including minutes from meetings held in 1925, demonstrating the decades of community service from Vinnies volunteers and members.

Plaque recipients on the day included retail volunteer Joan Gangemi, who has worked in the Vinnies Wembley shop for 36 years, Vinnies Narrogin Conference Member Ann Coll, and Fred Symons, who has been a volunteer member for the past 40 years, and continues to be active even at the age of 94.



Trash versus Treasure ... Knowing the difference!

While we experienced the recent lockdown in Western Australian, many of us saw this an opportunity to declutter once again and clear out our overflowing wardrobes. Sifting through the piles of ill-fitting, out of date and "what was I thinking" items, we are often left with the decision of what to do next?

Donating your purged items to Vinnies WA is not only a sustainable way to recycle, you are directly helping Western Australians experiencing hardship through the provision of items; or their sale, with funds going towards our community services. However, before delivering your treasured items, have you followed the clothing donation golden rule?

“ If you would
GIVE IT TO A FRIEND
then it's okay to
GIVE IT TO US! ”

It's just not possible to give or sell items to people that are torn, ripped, damaged or stained. So, determining if an something is to be someone's treasure, or thrown in your trash pile before it reaches our shops, can be an enormous help; so much more than you think.

Damaged or faulty items need to be transported and disposed into landfill and this causes considerable expense to Vinnies WA. Every single dollar spent on sending unusable items to landfill is money that could be spent on our services for youth and adult homelessness, emergency assistance such as food and help with bills, mental health and housing services.

Your generosity means so much to us, and by adopting some selective sorting during your clean out, your donations will get the second life as you intended - respecting the dignity of the people we help and helping the environment, all at the same time!

WE NEED YOU!

We are in **URGENT** need of volunteers at the following locations:

Eaton

Girrawheen

Nollamara

Kalgoorlie

Ellenbrook

Margaret River

South Hedland

Manjimup



**HAVE FUN AND MAKE AN IMPACT
VOLUNTEER WITH VINNIES!**



UPCOMING EVENTS

good night in 7 May 2021

Vinnies Good Night In is about bringing people and communities together and open to anyone who wants to connect in their homes, schools, offices and spaces to help make a lasting positive difference to Western Australians in need.

17 June 2021



At Optus Stadium for the first time, business and community leaders will sleep without shelter in the **Vinnies CEO Sleepout** to change the lives of Western Australians experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



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