

July 2021

VINNIES NEWSLETTER

Cyclone Seroja Support



Nearly three months on after Cyclone Seroja, residents in affected areas are still counting the cost of the devastation to local communities. As people experience financial stress from losing their homes and businesses, they now face delays in rebuilding through labour and material shortages.

In the towns of Kalbarri and Northampton, up to 70% of buildings were destroyed or damaged when Cyclone Seroja crossed the coast in April. Vinnies WA Financial Counsellors Suzanne Long and Liza Chatterton were part of a team of professionals, who travelled to cyclone affected areas to provide support and advice on how people can alleviate financial stress and meet their ongoing expenses.

Appearing on ABC Radio Wheatbelt and the Midwest breakfast program during the trip, Suzanne was able to talk about the types of support available for people through Vinnies WA Financial Counselling and the National Debt Helpline.

“We had several people contact us after the ABC interview and make appointments to speak with us when we were in their town. At Vinnies, we have the choice of face-to-face counselling or we can offer a first point of contact for people through the National Debt Helpline. Both services are free and confidential for people experiencing financial difficulty,” said Suzanne.

“Being available for people on the ground after the cyclone meant we were able to provide some immediate assistance with bills, rent arrears and even advance rent payments to people experiencing income and job loss. We found there were a lot of people that didn’t have insurance, were underinsured or even thought they were insured for something they were in fact not, so we provided information on how to access grants and other services in the area.”

“One couple we met advised us that they had lost their family resort and restaurant business. There was significant damage to their property, along with their family home, car and personal belongings. Rebuilding will take around 18 months, leaving them with no income from the business during this time. We were able to advise them on what to do until they could find some employment and the best options for their mortgage and other debts. They were incredibly grateful knowing the next steps they could take to relieve their financial stress.”

For more information on Vinnies WA financial counselling and the National Debt helpline visit vinnieswa.org.au

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Vinnies CEO Sleepout

Over 105 CEO's camped out in chilly conditions at Optus Stadium for the 2021 Vinnies CEO Sleepout in June.



Soul'd Out

Passages Peel is finding it's groove as the highly successful music program makes it's way down to the Mandurah Hub.

Have you met Darren and Olivia?



Olivia and her father Darren are the face of this year's Vinnies Winter Appeal.

When Darren lost his job, he also lost his home. He was forced to move constantly between friends and family members. He called on everyone he could to make sure Olivia wasn't sleeping on the street. They spent months moving from couch to floor, uncle to aunty, looking for somewhere safe to stay. When he could scrape together the money, they stayed in motels.

"Olivia became very dependent on me. She wouldn't let go of my hand, she wouldn't go to sleep until I went to sleep. It was a heartbreaking experience," Darren remembers.

Poverty is the greatest driver of homelessness and right now, amid the WA housing crisis, poverty is on the rise.

Olivia asks, "Will you help me find somewhere safe to sleep tonight?" Donations to the Vinnies Winter Appeal helps families and children like Olivia get the financial, practical and emotional support they need to find a path out of homelessness.

Visit vinnieswa.org.au for more information.

Joondalup Support Centre Opens

Vinnies WA has opened a new community Support Centre in Perth's northern suburbs, providing services for people experiencing hardship all in one place.

The Joondalup Support Centre is a safe and welcoming space, offering emergency assistance with food, utility bills, household furniture and bedding, free financial counselling, advocacy, emotional support and referrals to other agencies. It has meeting areas for people to be able to have confidential conversations about their situation and houses a well-stocked food pantry, allowing people visiting the support centre access to immediate food relief.

The idea of opening a Vinnies Support Centre in the northern suburbs was raised during 2020 at the height of COVID-19 restrictions. Prior to this, Joondalup and Wanneroo had been identified as two high need areas for food insecurity and has escalated since. Joondalup/Wanneroo Regional Council President Allan Rose says that this is one way the centre can provide comprehensive support and provide a pathway to other services.

"We want to help people with their immediate needs and for more complex needs, provide access to specialist financial, social and emotional support services to improve client wellbeing and life outcomes."

New Vinnies Ellenbrook Shop

Vinnies opened a new store in Ellenbrook at the end of May. The spacious new shop has had great support from the local community who have been excited at having another shopping experience in the area.

There are volunteering opportunities available, so if you can commit to as little as four hours a week then please consider signing up as a Vinnies Volunteer.

Come and visit us at 180 The Promenade, Ellenbrook, Monday to Saturday 9am – 5pm.



Additionally, the Support Centres offers another way the community can be supported, other than through our home visitation program. Some clients may not have a home and others may be more comfortable seeing our volunteers here rather than in their home."

The centre offers services to the suburbs of Wanneroo, Woodvale, Ocean Reef, Whitfords, Greenwood and Clarkson. It is located at 82 Reid Promenade, Joondalup and is open Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am-1pm. To make an appointment or to enquire about the service call **1300 794 054**.



2021 Vinnies CEO Sleepout

The 12th Vinnies CEO Sleepout was held for the first time at Optus Stadium on Thursday 24 June 2021, with the venue and Matagarup bridge awash with blue to acknowledge the event. Hosted by Mark Gibson, CEO participants were reminded that they would be sleeping out on one of the longest nights of the year with an expected overnight forecast of 3 degrees, but also how their efforts in giving up one night of their comforts, can actually help change the lives of others.

With a focus on social housing, a panel discussion which included Susan Rooney, Vinnies WA CEO, Gladys Demissie, Vinnies WA State President, Andrew Roberts, CEO of ABN Group and Mike Rowe, Director General, Department of Communities, saw panellists and CEO participants conclude that sharing the vision collectively for zero homelessness in Western Australia was the way forward.

Putting forward the State Government's position on addressing homelessness and social housing stock levels during the discussion, Mike Rowe reiterated the twin objectives from Housing Minister John Carey to make it his priority to build more homes and reduce the 17,000 people currently on the waitlist for social housing. But it was ABN Group's Andrew Roberts who led the call for commitment for change, not only from the State Government, but from everyone, including the private and public sectors as well.

"The State Government has got to have a goal, it's got to pull everyone together, all the Government departments, it's got to involve land, it's got to involve finance, it's got to involve construction.

It's got to have a vision that in 7 or 10 or 15 years time, whatever that time is, we've got a goal of zero homelessness." Mr Roberts said.

"We are voted the tenth best city in the world. Is it okay that we have 9,000 people being homeless? We don't go out and promote we are the best city in the world when we have 9,000 homeless people. So the question is what do we do? Part of that is being here tonight, but we all have to choose to do something."

The combined effort of Vinnies CEO Sleepout participants has so far reached the fundraising target of over \$800,000. Funds raised from this special event each year go towards Vinnies homelessness services such as Passages Youth Engagement Hubs, Vinnies Tom Fisher House, our Housing Plus program, and the work done through the Vinnies Emergency Assistance Program which last financial year prevented over 65,000 people from their hardship escalating into homelessness.

The 2021 Vinnies CEO Sleepout was an indication of the powerful wave of support and incredible generosity from WA business calling an end to homelessness.



Passages Peel gets some Soul

The highly successful Passages Perth music program has finally made its way to the Peel Hub. Using Hip Hop, Rap and singing, the program has the ability to transform lives of young people visiting the service.

Each week, one of the consulting rooms at Passages Peel is transformed into a mini recording studio where Passages Youth worker Aaron D'Vaz collaborates with young people to create a variety of music. Connecting with young people who visit Passages Youth Engagement Hubs is essential to being able to provide them with the types of support and referrals they need in a safe, friendly and positive environment. Aaron says the music program is a way of helping to build relationships with young people so they can express themselves, build up their confidence and self-esteem, and is a distraction from their current situation.

“Even though we have only been running the program at Passages Peel for a few weeks, the young people are already writing music tracks with each other and coming to show me what have written, which is awesome. It means that they are making a lot more positive relationships through the music.”

“As the facilitator of the program, the most obvious observation I have made so far is the confidence it instils in young people. Initially all participants are very nervous and by the end of the session they are on a high and bounce out of the studio. It's such a great feeling to see how they light up with a new-found belief in themselves.”

In the music sessions at the Hubs each week, young people have the freedom to write and record any style or music genre they want, but the most popular choice is Hip Hop. Aaron is a successful Hip Hop artist and performer in his own



Aaron and a young person recording music in a Soul'd Out session at Passages Peel

right, so understands why it can be such a comfortable form of music for the young people to work with.

“Hip Hop is accessible and so effective in giving young people a voice to talk about feelings and emotions they otherwise couldn't or don't want to. You can create or recite lyrics about anything and don't have to be a singer to do it. But the appeal of Hip Hop is it's not just music, it's a culture built on peace, respect, self-worth and coming together. I see the positive feelings and emotions it provides young people when they create their own tracks which can enable them to have the confidence to make changes in the life they want, so they can move forward.”

“I was working with one young person over a few sessions in the Perth music program. He was really struggling mentally and battling alcohol and drug issues. In one session, we just finished recording this track when he broke down as the song had allowed him to verbalise his feelings and reflect on changes he wanted to make in his life. It was at that point he reached out for help and Passages was there to support him. We got him into a rehabilitation program and since finishing he has totally turned his life around.”

“Young people who visit Passages come from such complex and traumatic backgrounds but they are such an inspiration, and it's a privilege to be able to share my skills with them.”

Passages Youth Engagement Hubs in Perth and Peel provide a safe and supportive environment to address needs of young people experiencing a range of complex issues which can range from homelessness, mental illness and poverty. Passages Youth Engagement Hubs are a joint venture between Rotary Club of Perth and Vinnies WA and relies on the generosity of donations to fund the service. Soul'd Out Music Program in Peel was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Matana Foundation For Young People and the City of Mandurah.

Driving for Opportunity

Getting your driver's licence is a significant milestone for young people. But for many who visit Passages Peel, the ability to gain one is sometimes completely out of their reach.

Late last year, Passages Peel became a Regional Youth Driver Education (RYDE) provider. Developed by the Town of Bassendean in 2012, the program enables learner drivers to be connected with volunteer mentor drivers and a vehicle, so they can complete the 50 hours of supervised driving required for a Western Australian Driver's licence.

These hours are often difficult to complete, due to issues with accessing a vehicle or a qualified person to assist in the passenger seat or not having enough money to meet the costs. This can create further marginalisation of young people as it impacts opportunities for employment and greater independence. It can also lead to an increase in unqualified, under skilled or illegal driving activity.

Five people have already been referred and have successfully completed the driver assessment, and are on track to completing their 50 hours of driving experience. One young person was amazed at how much opportunity having a licence is going to mean.

"I was telling the Youth Workers that I was finding it really difficult to find stable employment without a licence. You literally need a car for everything these days. Passages registered me for the program and even paid for my assessment and first few lessons. After that I wasn't sure if I was ready and I started to get nervous, but Passages really encouraged me to have the confidence to just go for it."



A Recovery Journey: Gareth's Story

Gareth had just completed rehabilitation for methamphetamine addiction and been accepted into a local crisis accommodation service when he began accessing Passages Peel almost a year ago. He was finding the accommodation service a really positive influence, but was struggling to stay sober as he started his transition back into society.

Passages Hubs in Perth and Peel have a number of in-reach services that hold regular sessions in the service each week, so Passages staff suggested to Gareth that he talk with the community drug and alcohol service so he could receive ongoing support during his recovery journey.

At Passages every week, Gareth would meet with a drug and alcohol youth counsellor and started making great progress, when the counsellor suggested he consider changing to less regular sessions, but at a location away from Passages. Gareth was very apprehensive about the prospect of attending sessions elsewhere.

Passages staff were able to help with the transition, by accompanying him to the new location before his first official visit, making him feel comfortable so he could maintain his sessions.

During the process, he disclosed to Passages Youth Workers that he was also working with Child Protection and Family Support and the Family Court to have visitation rights to his two young children. Navigating this process had been very difficult so Passages advocated to the agencies for Gareth citing the positive changes he was making.



Despite this, he found his current crisis accommodation was not suitable for them to visit. After three months in the accommodation service, Gareth was encouraged to look for more suitable long-term housing to allow him to see his children more frequently. He felt very unsure he was ready to live independently and turned to Passages staff who supported him through the process and he was accepted into one of the transitional properties at the accommodation service.

Engaging in education, training or employment was a requirement of Gareth's transitional tenancy. He secured work three days a week volunteering at a local Op Shop and reported to Passages staff that it was helping with his social anxiety and how he was enjoying the feeling of being able to give back to the community. This then led to him enrolling in a TAFE course and start working towards completing an Engineering certificate in the hope of gaining a career.

These positive outcomes for Gareth would not have been possible without the individualised support he experienced through Passages Youth Engagement Hub. This specialised service enabled Gareth to make the positive changes he needed at his own pace, so he could continue his recovery journey and rebuild his life.

Meet Lionel

Vinnies Belmont Shop Volunteer

Q: How long have you been volunteering for Vinnies?

I first volunteered for Vinnies in 2018 and then came back last year and have been here ever since, so nearly two years.

Q: Why did you choose Vinnies?

I suffered an injury on my previous job and as part of rehabilitation wanted to get back into the workforce. Volunteering for Vinnies has really helped with that and finding something new to do and gain some new skills.

Q: Tell us a bit about your day in the shop?

My day covers helping out by greeting customers, sorting racks of clothes, being on the till and styling windows.

Q: What do you enjoy most about volunteering for Vinnies?

Nothing specifically as I just really enjoy being a volunteer in the shop. It's a lot of fun working with other volunteers and seeing our regular customers when they come in as I get to have a laugh. What I get to do everyday is different.

Q: What would you say to someone interested in volunteering?

I would say go for it! It's definitely a lot of fun and you get to make someone's life happy whether it's a customer or the people we help. I do get a lot out of it!



Apply to be a Vinnies Shop volunteer and make a difference in your community. You can put your skills to good use, meet fantastic people and gain valuable experience in customer service and retail.

Visit vinnieswa.org.au/volunteer/ to apply now

The Retail Wrap!

Applecross Refurbishment

Vinnies Applecross has been closed for much of June but the good news is has now re-opened. The shop has been undergoing a refurbishment in the past few weeks to give our customers a new and improved shopping experience. Making better use of the space with new shelving and displays is part of the new look and customers can browse for their treasured bargains in a fresh and updated shop.

Sunday Trading

Did you know that our Morley store is now open on Sundays? Located just across from Morley Galleria, you can now get an extra day in the week to go thrift shopping for your sustainable gems.

Visit vinnieswa.org.au for all Vinnies shop locations and opening times.



DONATE YOUR WINTER WOOLIES

Keep families safe and warm this season by donating your Winter woolies to Vinnies.

Visit vinnieswa.org.au to visit your nearest shop



vinnieswa.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

To respect the privacy of the people we assist, some of the names and images may have been changed.