

If you've ever felt lonely,

you know the
pain of Ruby's
poverty.

YOU CAN HELP

This winter, thousands of Australians like Ruby will struggle to make ends meet. After paying for food, Ruby cannot even afford to leave the house and faces days of complete isolation. Your donation will help provide food, housing and support to people in need.



**Donate to the Vinnies Winter Appeal today.
HELP END THE PAIN OF POVERTY.**

Please give through your parish, call 13 18 12 or visit vinnies.org.au



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Images and names have been changed to protect the privacy of the people in need.

WINTER APPEAL 2019

SCHOOL INFORMATION KIT



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CASE STUDY — RUBY'S STORY

ENDING THE PAIN OF POVERTY

Nothing prepared Ruby for the changes that she would go through later in life. Losing a husband and going on the pension didn't just mean she had limited means ... it left her with no social connections.

If you're too broke to go out, or you've felt isolated from people, then you've felt the pain of poverty.

In the years following her husband's death Ruby has struggled. When she lost her husband she lost her financial security too. "I had to move to a little apartment, a long way away. It's all I can afford," she shared.

She struggles to get by, saying "I just eat soup from a can, or simple food." Ruby's poverty came to define every aspect of her life. Not having money for basic essentials has compounded the difficulties she faces.

But that wasn't the worst thing. When she moved to a smaller apartment she also moved away from her remaining friends, including her children and grand-children.

Poverty often leads to social isolation and a sense of being disconnected or forgotten. No-one warns you about it and nothing can prepare you for it. It had a big impact on Ruby.

Her daily life has become so lonely, saying "I can't afford to buy anything at the shops, I just go there to be near people." She would dearly love to be around people but her lack of funding has put a stop to that. "There is bingo night on Sunday, but I don't have the money for that," she said.



Not only are there lasting emotional consequences of poverty; the pain of isolation, the fear of not being able to afford basic necessities, the unrelenting sadness of feeling forgotten or unwanted. But long-term isolation is also dangerous, with increased instances of mental illness, diabetes, heart disease and stroke.*

Fortunately, Ruby reached out to Vinnies. Thanks to the generosity of Vinnies supporters, she has made a step toward ending her pain of poverty.

When Ruby reached out to Vinnies, one of our volunteers, Leena, visited her at home. She immediately saw that Ruby not only needed some food and help to make ends meet, but also someone to connect with and become a friend. Leena visits Ruby regularly, and it has become a highlight for both of them. "I appreciate the food and the help, but I love having someone visit me for a chat," Ruby enthused. "That makes my day."

*Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review. Brigham Young University.)

THE PAIN OF POVERTY

The theme of this year's Winter Appeal is 'The Pain of Poverty', with a focus on the impact of poverty on older Australians. Poverty often comes with the added burden of loneliness and social isolation when you can't afford to go out. This is particularly so for older people, like Ruby, as their mobility becomes limited and their social network decreases.

Social isolation can have health impacts. The Winter Appeal will highlight the support that Vinnies provides, especially during these colder months, and how the work conducted by our dedicated volunteers and members is vital in assisting those people who turn to us for help in times of desperate need.

If you haven't already received them, your Winter Appeal resources, including a poster, should arrive shortly.

Please contact your local Vinnies Conference or team member (contact details on the last page) to help you get started and for information about the delivery or processing of donations.

TIPS WHEN YOU MAKE YOUR APPEAL IN SCHOOL:

- **Begin the appeal by introducing yourself and your connection with the Society.**
- **Introduce the Winter Appeal, and share some of Ruby's story or some relevant facts (included in this kit) to help paint a picture of why this is an important cause.**
- **If you feel comfortable, share a personal story about why this appeal is important to you.**
- **Conclude by thanking everyone for the opportunity to speak with them and for their anticipated generous response**
- **Give clear instructions of how to donate.**

ADVICE ON HOW TO DONATE

- **Whether you are making a financial or material donation, it is best to ask your local Vinnies member how best to pass on these donations.**
- **Alternatively, return your donation by post.**
- **You can donate online at www.vinnies.org.au or by phone at 13 18 12.**
- **Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

SEE

Ask the group what they would do in a normal day (from morning to bedtime) and write these up on the left half of a whiteboard or butcher's paper. The list could include activities they would do from when they wake up in the morning to when they go to bed at night.

Discuss the resources you need for each of these activities (e.g. running water to take a shower; laptop to do homework) and write these next to the list of activities.

THINK

Ask the group to consider the different types of homelessness people may experience. Though the media often depicts people experiencing homelessness sleeping on the street or in tents, this only accounts for 6% of people experiencing homelessness. The majority are staying:

- In overcrowded dwellings - 39%
- In supported accommodation for the homeless - 20%
- With other households - 17%
- With boarding houses 17%

With one of these types of homelessness in mind, go through the list of daily activities with the group and discuss whether they would still be able to do those activities in the same way, and what resources might no longer be available to them. Discuss how losing these choices would make them feel?

You can ask students the following questions to generate discussion:

- Have you ever thought about these little choices you make every day?
- How would it feel to lose these choices?
- How would it feel to be living like this for a week?
- How would it feel to be living like this for nearly a year?

DO

Think about what actions your school can take to help people in need this winter, and then get planning. Check out the good ideas on the next few pages.

YOUR SCHOOL CAN HELP

WHAT CAN YOUR SCHOOL DO

There are many ways your school can get involved and help to raise funds, material goods, or increase awareness in your school community. Your school can choose to support the Vinnies Winter Appeal in a way that works for you, depending on the time available, the amount of students interest, and the support from your community.

When deciding how your school is able to contribute, just remember to keep in mind the needs of your local community, to make sure your contribution can have the biggest impact. If you need tips on what help is most needed in your community, get in touch with your local Vinnies contact.

IDEAS TO GET YOUR SCHOOL INVOLVED

- Run a blanket or clothing drive, or collect items for food hampers or toiletries packs for a local shelter.
- Place Winter Appeal posters around your school.
- Host a Vinnies School Sleepout which allows students and school communities to get a glimpse of the realities of homelessness on a personal level by 'sleeping rough' for one night. The Sleepout encourages students and teachers to gain a deeper understanding of homelessness, raise awareness of the realities faced by people experiencing homelessness and raise funds to support Vinnies homelessness services and early intervention in the local community. [Download this step-by-step kit from vinnies.org.au.](https://vinnies.org.au)
- Set up pop-up op shops during winter to raise much needed funds for people experiencing homelessness.
- Run a hot chocolate stall to raise funds.
- Knit a blanket as a team, that can be auctioned or donated.
- Have a student present to the school assembly about the additional needs of people experiencing homelessness during the cold winter months.
- Write an article for a local newspaper about the efforts your school is making in support of the Vinnies Winter Appeal



BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Your local Conference members are helping people every week, so they know what the needs of your local community are. They also help distribute the donations from your school, so it's important to check in with them to see how you can best help this winter. If you don't have a point of contact for your local Conference, get in touch with your local Vinnies team member (contact details on the back page of this kit).

FINANCIAL DONATIONS

One of the most valuable ways to show your support and contribute towards real and positive change is by fundraising for Vinnies. For us, it's a simple equation. More than 5,000 people turn to Vinnies for help every single day, the more funds raised on our behalf means the more people we can help.

- \$50 will buy blankets for warmth.
- \$80 will buy food for a week.
- \$200 will help pay a utility bill.

THE FACTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Housing affordability is one of the biggest drivers of poverty and disadvantage in NSW. Only 2% of homes in NSW are affordable for those on very low incomes to buy.¹ Accessing social housing is next to impossible in some areas, with waiting periods exceeding 10 years in major cities.²

With fewer affordable alternatives, low-income families and individuals often end up living in housing of 'last resort' which does not meet peoples' accessibility needs, has poor physical security and is located long distances from services, schools and jobs. 'Hidden homelessness' is increasing with many people 'couch surfing' and living in a state of uncertainty as they rely on the goodwill of others for a roof over their head. Between 2013 and 2017, there was an 83% increase of older women couch-surfing.

Housing instability can quickly escalate into homelessness. Due to a chronic lack of affordable rental housing options and insufficient funding, homelessness services in NSW are struggling to cope. Two in five people seeking shelter in NSW are turned away by homelessness services each day as they are completely full.³ **18,600 senior citizens are sleeping rough each night in Australia.**⁴

ENERGY AFFORDABILITY AND COST OF LIVING PRESSURES

Did you know 1 in 8 people in Australia live in poverty?⁵ Many families and individuals are struggling with the rising cost of living. Our services are in increasingly high demand as the costs of many essential goods and services, including health, education and utilities, are increasing faster than wages for many low-income earners. **These high costs of living are impacting the people that Vinnies serve – low-income families and individuals – the hardest. Single elderly woman (80 years and over) are Australia's lowest income earners.**

From May 2018 to August 2018, Vinnies members provided over \$8 million worth of assistance, in the form of food and Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) vouchers to people in need. Food costs are simply the tip of the iceberg, as many families and individuals face an impossible choice of buying food or paying rent, energy and other bills.

Since 2008, average residential electricity bills in NSW have increased by 45%.⁶ Even the cheapest electricity offers available on the market are

unaffordable for many people on low incomes. Unmanageable bills and the threat of disconnections cause profound distress. The people Vinnies serve routinely report feeling that they have failed, ashamed and embarrassed, having to seek help from charities.

From May 2018 to August 2018, Vinnies distributed nearly \$2 million in Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) vouchers in NSW, increasing by \$486,128 in just one year.

THE MOST VULNERABLE

Individuals and families dependant on Federal Government income support payments, particularly single parents on the Parenting Payment, experience the highest rates of poverty and disadvantage in Australia.⁷

Older women are at risk of homelessness. For many women who have raised children and not been in secure paid employment they are left with minimal or no superannuation in later years. This leaves them with reduced capacity to support themselves, particularly if they have fled family violence.⁸

People seeking asylum are especially vulnerable as they are at the mercy of an unfair Federal Government policy, lacking the privilege of choice altogether. Government policy has led to indefinitely detaining people seeking asylum and refugees in breach of their fundamental rights and international law. Families and individuals seeking asylum in our community also face many challenges and hurdles to becoming officially recognised as refugees.

VINNIES RESPONSE

Vinnies is committed to giving people choices that provide the sanctuary, security and safety each person deserves, and helps end the pain of poverty. We work to alleviate immediate need, to empower those people we serve to regain control of their lives and to challenge the structures and public policies that create or exacerbate inequalities. We advocate for change at a structural level with the aim of eliminating the root causes of impossible choices.

1 Shelter NSW 2016, *NSW housing: a factsheet*, November.

2 Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), 'Housing Pathways: Expected waiting times by geographic region'. Available: <http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/how-to-apply/expected-waiting-times>

3 AIHW 2017, *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2016-17*.

4 ABS, 2012, *Census Data: Quick Stats*

5 ACOSS 2019, *Report on Poverty in Australia*.

6 ACCC 2017, *Retail Electricity Pricing Inquiry Preliminary Report*, September. Available: <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/ACCC%20Retail%20Electricity%20Pricing%20Inquiry%20-%20Preliminary%20Report%20-%202022%20September%202017.pdf>

7 ACOSS 2016, *Report on poverty in Australia*.

8 Somes, T. 2017, 'More and more older Australians will be homeless unless we act now', *The Conversation*. Available: <https://theconversation.com/more-and-more-older-australians-will-be-homeless-unless-we-act-now-87685>

STATISTICS for your Central Council

For the winter period between June to August 2018.

ARMIDALE CENTRAL COUNCIL provided over **\$172,805** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$82,306 in energy and Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) vouchers.

BATHURST CENTRAL COUNCIL provided almost **\$398,755** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$157,281 in energy and EAPA vouchers.

BROKEN BAY CENTRAL COUNCIL provided over **\$390,622** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$130,120 worth of assistance for food.

LISMORE CENTRAL COUNCIL provided over **\$592,818** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$198,808 in energy and EAPA vouchers.

MAITLAND/NEWCASTLE CENTRAL COUNCIL provided over **\$599,499** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$178,589 in energy and EAPA vouchers.

PARRAMATTA CENTRAL COUNCIL provided over **\$486,368** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$238,013 in energy and EAPA vouchers.

SYDNEY ARCHDIOCESE CENTRAL COUNCIL provided over **\$959,096** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$255,262 in energy and EAPA vouchers.

WAGGA WAGGA CENTRAL COUNCIL provided over **\$302,430** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$169,870 in energy and EAPA vouchers.

WILCANNIA/FORBES CENTRAL COUNCIL provided over **\$356,192** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$170,868 energy and EAPA vouchers.

WOLLONGONG CENTRAL COUNCIL provided over **\$397,935** worth of assistance to people experiencing disadvantage, including over \$196,050 in energy and EAPA vouchers.

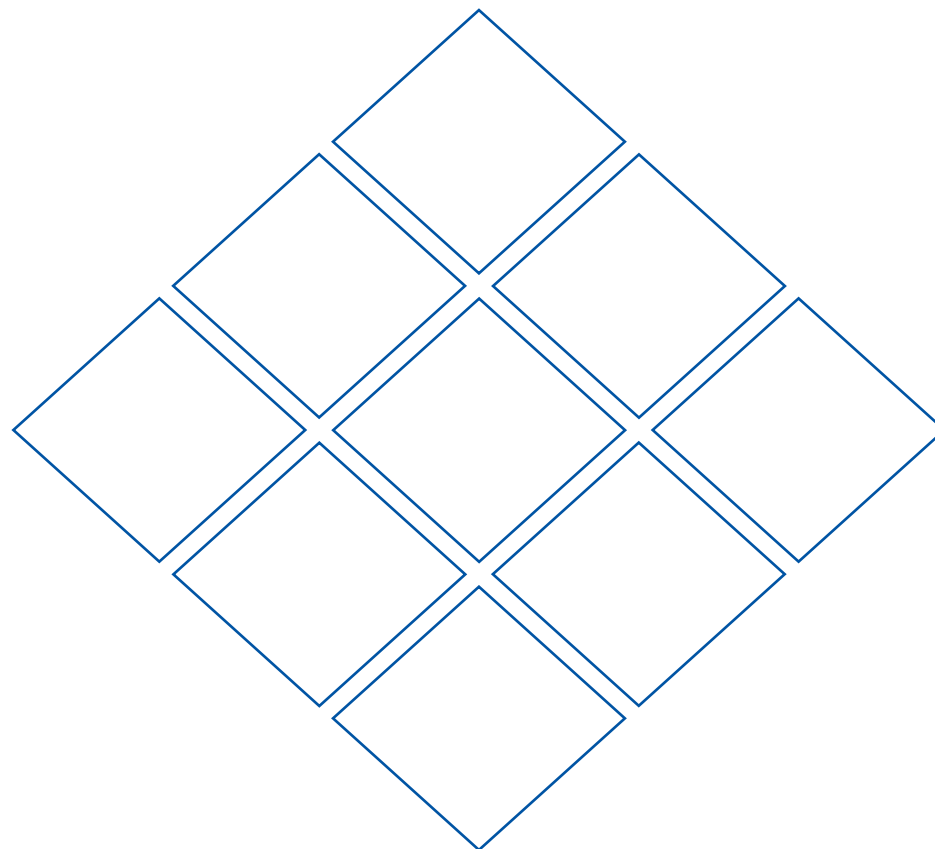
ACTIVITY SHEET

DIFFICULT CHOICES

This activity helps to identify and reflect on the difficult choices people experiencing homelessness are faced with on a daily basis.

Consider the needs of someone experiencing homelessness: shelter, safety, food, warmth, friendship, etc. Arrange these needs in order from the most important (in the top diamond) to least important (in the bottom box).

During this activity, you will realise how difficult it is to put one need ahead of another, which are the sorts of difficult decisions people experiencing homelessness are forced to face in real life.

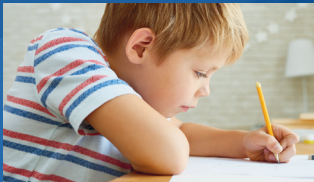


If you've ever wanted to make someone smile, this is your chance.



JOIN OUR WINTER APPEAL LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN

Thousands of Australians face poverty and isolation every day. Send a handwritten letter to someone in need this winter to let them know they're not alone.



THIS WINTER, OUR SCHOOL IS HELPING THE VINNIES WINTER APPEAL BY...

YOU CAN PUT A SMILE ON SOMEONE'S FACE.

For more information ask your teacher, or visit vinnies.org.au/getinvolved



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:



**For enquiries about the Winter Appeal please
contact your local Vinnies team**

Armidale I 0433 810 423

Bathurst I 02 6362 2565

Broken Bay I 02 9495 8306

Lismore I 02 5612 1365

Maitland Newcastle I 02 4032 3560

Parramatta I 02 8861 9741

Sydney I 0408 622 294

Wagga Wagga I 02 6923 1909

Wilcannia Forbes I 02 6862 5758

Wollongong I 02 4627 9013



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