

SCHOOL INFORMATION PACK



DEAR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS,

We are pleased to provide this 2021 Schools Winter Appeal Kit to assist you and your school in participating in this year's appeal.

Firstly, thank you for taking the time to promote the appeal to your school community! It will help fund the critical work we do.

In this year's appeal, we are focusing on the issue of child homelessness. In this pack, read about the current state of this issue, ways to give, and activities to engage your students with the issues. We've also included speaking notes and local statistics showing where the money goes and how many people we've helped because of your support.

On behalf of all at Vinnies, thank you for being a part of the 2021 Winter Appeal!

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If you or someone you know needs support, please call our helpline on 13 18 12.

THE STATE OF CHILD HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTRALIA

Every night in Australia, a child asks, "Where are we going to sleep tonight?" and mum and dad don't have an answer.

Before COVID-19 hit, more than 25,000 Australian children under the age of 18 were facing homelessness each night¹. Today, that number will be much higher.

In 2020, an unexpected surprise was that we saw for the first time what it might be like for families to receive an adequate amount of government financial support. The government put in place the COVID-19 Supplement in response to the pandemic, and for the first time, many parents were able to provide for their and their children's needs.

Unfortunately, the government has not listened to the social service sector and kept up this needed level of support, so the income of many Australian's has fallen back to well below the poverty line, and they are again looking at a harsh winter ahead.

Child homelessness is the most painful reminder of the importance of 'the hand up' offered by the St Vincent de Paul Society. When hardship affects families, whether it be through unemployment, chronic illness or an impossible housing market, they can always turn to Vinnies for help. As one of the most vulnerable groups in our society, children are the first to feel the pains of hunger, isolation and homelessness. So, as well as delivering support for children's physical, mental and social wellbeing, we're also strongly advocating for essential change at the government level.

Vinnies is committed to a more just and compassionate Australia where no child should have to wonder where they will sleep each night.

We're so glad for the support of school's like yours in helping us achieve this goal.

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of Population and Housing, 2016

OLIVIA AND DARREN'S STORY

For single dad Darren, a few years ago the costs of rent, utilities, food and healthcare became impossible to keep up with. He and his daughter Olivia became one of the 116,000¹ Australians without a permanent, safe place to sleep. Darren had no steady work and no previous rental references. The real estate agents wouldn't take him on as a tenant, and he felt hopeless.

Father and daughter spent many months moving from couch to floor, uncle to aunty, looking for somewhere safe to stay. Olivia would cling tightly to her dad as he called on every favour and begged every friend for help.

"I JUST KEPT DOING WHAT I HAD TO DO EVERY DAY FOR HER" SAID DARREN.

"My little girl was worried every day. She used to ask me where we were going, what we were going to eat, where would we stay." Darren explained.

For close to a year, they moved around, staying wherever they could. Some nights that would mean sleeping on a friend's couch or finding a bed

at a cheap motel. The routine tasks parents take for granted, like cooking dinner or running a bath, became a daily challenge or a luxury.

Finally, he turned to Vinnies for help. With the assistance of Danielle, a homelessness support worker, Darren was able to access financial counselling, parenting support, and most importantly, a home. He told us about the moment he and Olivia walked in the door...

"When we got the place, the look on Olivia's face was just priceless. She couldn't stop smiling. She just ran around the house, jumping up and down saying, 'This is ours; this is ours!'"

Vinnies members, staff and volunteers like Danielle are working with families every day in need of permanent safe housing, or at risk of losing their current home.

Vinnies also provides emergency food, toiletries, furniture, and clothes. We run fun days out for kids who are going through hardship, and cover bills to keep families in homes wherever possible.

Your school's involvement in our Winter Appeal goes directly to helping families just like Olivia and Darren.



[1] ABS, "Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016"

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

SCHOOL SLEEPOUTS

Running a school sleepout is an interactive way to experience the impacts associated with homelessness in a safe environment, as well as raise funds and prompt action in your community. Schools can run sleepouts

in a variety of ways. You choose which grades participate and whether the sleepout will be at school or 'at home'. Vinnies staff can support with activities, reflections and resources for the night, or you can create your own.

School sleepouts must be registered with Vinnies.

For sleepouts hosted at the school register here:

<http://bit.ly/createyourschoolsleepout>

If you'd like to join others around NSW doing the 2021 Family Sleepout@Home on 30th July, register here: <http://bit.ly/Sleepoutathome2021>



MATERIAL DONATIONS

During winter especially, material donations such as food, warm clothing and blankets are needed.

To give material donations, **please get in touch with your local Vinnies Conference** or your staff contact to find out the specific needs in your local area and to arrange delivery. (Contact details can be found on page 5.) Some areas, like those affected by March flooding, may not be able to accept physical donations right now, so it's best to check first.

A few things to keep in mind:

- Please place food donations into reusable sturdy shopping bags (e.g. canvas), as these are most manageable for our members and volunteers, are better for the environment and are also useful to the recipients.
- To uphold the dignity of those receiving goods, please ensure that all food items are not due to expire for at least the next 6 months. All items must be non-perishable and undamaged.
- Similarly, please ensure blankets and warm clothes are in good clean condition by asking yourself 'would I give this to a friend?'
- Look out for packaged food with a Health Star Rating of 3.5 or above. The more stars, the better!

FINANCIAL DONATIONS

Financial donations allow us flexibility to direct funds wherever they are needed most and can give those we assist the sense of dignity and joy of choosing their own items that many of us may take for granted. You can nominate a financial gift toward your local area or a particular Vinnies service if you wish.



To donate financially, you can either;

1) Create your own personalised online school fundraising page at:

<https://fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au/fundraise-your-way>

or

2) Raise funds (offline), and then donate at:

www.vinnies.org.au/donate

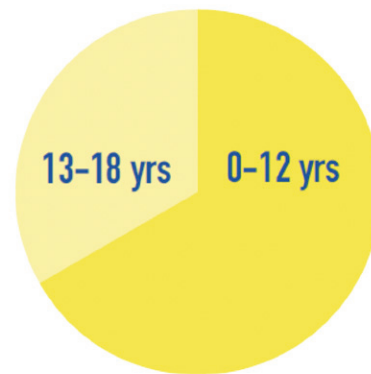


SPEAKING NOTES

Here are some suggested speaking notes you can adapt to your audience, to encourage giving to your Winter Appeal campaign.

- Each of us has the power to make a positive difference to the world we live in and the lives of others. In your neighbourhood and community there are many reasons to help. Through partnering with the St Vincent de Paul Society for this year's Winter Appeal you will enable Vinnies to continue providing vital services to those we assist and supporting people just like us to have a brighter future.
- Did you know that more than 25,000 children are without a home in Australia today? It's expected that this number has grown since the beginning of the pandemic last year. Two-thirds of these children are under 12 years of age.

- Your support of the Vinnies Winter Appeal this year means we can help find children a safe and permanent home and experience a bit of joy, dignity, and hope.
- Just \$22 is the cost of somewhere safe to sleep for one night.
- Your donation will also assist Vinnies to continue to provide food and other grocery items to families in need, reducing the impacts of hunger and removing a major stress for families living from pay check to pay check, as well as essentials for winter to maintain dignity and provide comfort during times of need.



Around two thirds of those children are under the age of 12.



45%
of homelessness is avoidable with early intervention.

1 in 3
people at risk of homelessness are children.

\$22
is the nightly cost of somewhere safe to sleep.

YOUR IMPACT

In last years' Winter Appeal, you helped us raise over **\$1,860,000 in assistance!** This includes food, blankets, and financial support directed to our Conferences, which helped with the costs of rent and utility bills. Here's the breakdown from around the state:

Central Council	Total assistance
Armidale	\$29,846
Bathurst	\$87,545
Broken Bay	\$195,494
Lismore	\$219,270
Maitland Newcastle	\$346,845
Parramatta	\$197,569
Sydney	\$565,093
Wagga Wagga	\$49,960
Wilcannia Forbes	\$86,914
Wollongong	\$88,321
TOTAL	\$1,866,857

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

We're passionate about raising up the next generation to have a deep understanding of the issues of poverty and injustice, so that our young people are empowered to change the world. To this end, we've created some classroom activities to help your students learn more this Winter Appeal.

Students will meet Bernadette, Marissa, Michael, and Claire to reflect on the work of the Society and the issues that will make this winter a challenge for many Australians. (Activities are at the end of the kit!)

These activities aim to show students more than they have previously seen of what goes on behind the scenes at Vinnies, because they really are a part of this good work that we do.

Activities will need to be adapted for age groups, and the length of time available.

GET IN TOUCH

NORTH-EAST REGION

Lismore and Surrounds

02 6621 5835

lismoreyouth@vinnies.org.au

Maitland/Newcastle and Surrounds

02 4032 3560

mnyouth@vinnies.org.au

NORTH-WEST REGION

Armidale and Surrounds

02 5776 0200

armidaleyouth@vinnies.org.au

Bathurst and Surrounds

02 6362 2565

bathdio@vinnies.org.au

METRO REGION

Broken Bay and Surrounds

metroyouth@vinnies.org.au

Parramatta and Surrounds

metroyouth@vinnies.org.au

Sydney and Surrounds

metroyouth@vinnies.org.au

SOUTH REGION

Wollongong and Surrounds

02 9820 8223

wollongongyouth@vinnies.org.au

Wagga Wagga and Surrounds

02 6923 1909

svdpwagga@vinnies.org.au

WEST REGION

Wilcannia Forbes and Surrounds

02 6862 5758

wcfsvdp@vinnies.org.au

NSW OFFICE

State Youth Team

02 9568 0262

youthnsw@vinnies.org.au

MEET BERNADETTE

Bernadette is only 10 years old, but already she is experiencing things most children her age will never experience.

Two weeks ago, Bernadette and her family had to leave their home when they were evicted due to the rent being very overdue. Ever since, Bernadette, her mother and 7 year old brother have been living in their family car. She hasn't been to school for a week and misses her friends. When they left the house, her mother said they could only pack one bag, so she had to leave behind a lot of her favourite things – books, toys, and little trinkets she'd collected over the years.

Living in their car is very hard. Bernadette struggles to sleep each night and sometimes it's very cold. Her mum usually finds somewhere for them to shower and wash their clothes every couple of days. Bernadette doesn't know when they'll find somewhere else to live – but she hopes it happens soon.

How would you feel if you were Bernadette?

Write a brief diary entry from Bernadette's perspective, describing a day in her life. Think about what she might see, hear, and feel throughout her day and night.

Class discussion: Where do you think Bernadette's mother could go to find help?



MEET MARISSA

Marissa is from Sydney, where she has volunteered with Vinnies since she was in high school. She loves her job as a Teacher's Aid, and is involved in several Vinnies initiatives, which has earned her the position of Sydney Vinnies Youth Representative!

READ

Read Marissa's blog post below and then answer the questions in your workbook.

Hi, I'm Marissa! Before my Vinnies volunteering, I would see people experiencing homelessness and not

know what to do. I didn't know what to say and I was worried I'd offend someone. So, I joined Vinnies and underwent training for Night Patrols and Brekky Vans.

Vinnies taught me about how isolated people experiencing homelessness feel and how the scariest thing about being on the street is being alone.

After training I met a gentleman who was experiencing homelessness. He was kneeling with a cup outstretched and head down. Everyone waiting for the pedestrian light to change kept their eyes averted. But for the first time I wasn't afraid of not knowing what to say. I approached the gentleman and remembered how at training they spoke about how exhausting it is to live with your hand out and the indignity people feel when they're without a place of their own. So I told him I didn't want to put the money in his cup, I wanted to hand it to him.

The thing that I am passionate about and why I continue volunteering with Vinnies is this gentleman's words. He said, "thank you darling, you're the first person to look at me today". It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

I am passionate about ending the stigma people experiencing homelessness endure. Vinnies provides volunteers with training but most importantly these services provide the opportunity to serve those in need and slowly chip away at that stigma. Through my volunteering with Vinnies I have come to know many of the people we serve very well, and I feel very honoured and privileged that I am able to serve them and call them my friends.

RESPOND

1. Think about what part of Marissa's reflection you relate to. You might like to re-read the text and highlight one or two lines that stood out to you.
2. Write about your own experience of seeing someone in need. How did it make you feel? What did you think at the time? You might include whether or not you wanted to help, and what you had the power to do or not do. What would your response be now?



Marissa and her fellow volunteers at Brekky Van in the Sydney CBD.

MEET MICHAEL

Edel Quinn is a Vinnies Wagga Wagga crisis accommodation centre which has been helping locals since 1966. The service provides beds, food, access to permanent housing and several other supports.

READ

Read about Michael's experience at Edel Quinn, and how this service has supported him with a 'hand up' approach.

<http://bit.ly/MichaelandEdelQuinn>

REFLECT:

THINK

Think about what this quote means to you; "Vinnies believes that empowering people, not blaming them, is the answer to combatting poverty."

Jot down some thoughts about the following two questions:

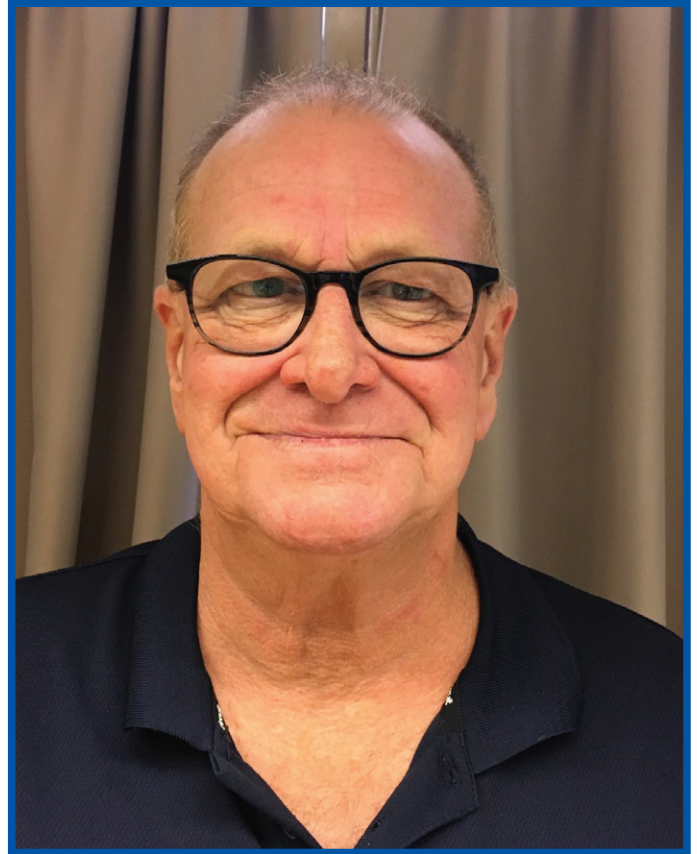
1. Why do you think people who experience poverty are blamed by some for the situation they may find themselves in?
2. How can we empower those who are experiencing poverty?

PAIR

Pair up with another student and discuss your responses. Try and find some responses you may have in common.

SHARE

Share your responses with your classmates and identify common and differing ideas. Are there any opposing ideas? What are some actions you might like to take beyond this reflection to make a difference in big and small ways?



MEET CLAIRE

Claire Victory is the National President of St Vincent de Paul Society Australia. She is the youngest, and the first female to hold this position. It's Claire's job as President to share with the public and the government what Vinnies is seeing on the ground, and to give advice about what's needed.

A crucial issue for the government as we come into Winter, is what they will do about the rate of social security payments. Claire has called on the Federal government to increase the JobSeeker payment by \$25 per day, instead of what they have promised in March 2021 of less than \$4 a day.



TASK

1. Read what Claire has to say in our media release on the issue here: <http://bit.ly/jobseekermediarelease>
2. Vinnies supports the 'Raise the Rate' campaign. Explore the 'Raise the Rate' website here: www.raisetherate.org.au. Write down some key pieces of information that you learn as you explore. Write at least 2 facts or figures.
3. In groups of 3 or 4, come up with a campaign poster for your school to help students, parents and teachers understand what this issue is about.

Extension: Some students may wish to write to their MP to advocate on this issue. You could write an email or letter as a class. (There are guides at the Raise the Rate website.)

The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the unjust structures that cause it.

The Rule (2012, p. 26: 7.1)