

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **‘A home is a right, not a privilege’**

### **Vinnies launches 2018 CEO Sleepout with call for affordable housing action**

**18 April 2018**

The St Vincent de Paul Society’s Wollongong Diocesan Central Council is inviting business leaders from across the region – which stretches from Macarthur to Shoalhaven, and west to the Southern Highlands – to spend a winter night outdoors to help raise more than \$100,000 to fund Vinnies’ local frontline homelessness services.

CEOs and Executives will come together at St Mary Star of the Sea College for the annual Wollongong Vinnies CEO Sleepout on Thursday 21 June, taking a stand against homelessness across the region by forgoing one night of comfort to help make a real difference to our community.

As well as raising money for crucial St Vincent de Paul Society services and programs providing food, accommodation and support to people experiencing homelessness, the initiative is a chance for CEOs across all industries to gain a better understanding of the issue. Before their night in the cold, they will hear first-hand from people who’ve experienced real disadvantage and learn more about the valuable grassroots assistance Vinnies offers.

Vinnies’ Wollongong Diocesan Central Council Executive Officer, Peter Quarmby, believes that corporate Australia can play an important role in supporting services and programs and lending their influence to the discussion around addressing homelessness.

“Housing costs constantly lead the Australian media headlines, and unfortunately, most of the focus is on home ownership rather than renting. From the work we do at Vinnies, we know that people trying to get into the rental market or who can’t afford to stay in their rental properties are the ones most at risk of homelessness,” he said.

“This year, we are putting the spotlight back on those who are locked out of the rental market, and focusing on educating and supporting business leaders so they can best assist those experiencing disadvantage and homelessness. After all, a home is a right not a privilege.”

Ambassador and long-time supporter of the Wollongong CEO Sleepout, Aster Group CEO Danny Munk, has already raised almost \$2,500 for this year’s event, and sees his participation as a way to help raise awareness of the impact of homelessness.

“Being part of this event has helped myself, along with those that support my participation through sponsorship, understand the shocking reality faced by more than 100,000 people every night who have nowhere to call home. As an organisation, Aster Group is committed to reaching and supporting projects that benefit our surrounding community. I’m proud to be part of an initiative that provides tangible on-ground support to those who need it most, and to join the thousands of CEOs around the country who have to-date raised around \$40 million in support of the practical work that Vinnies does,” he said.

Business leaders from across Macarthur, the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and the Southern Highlands are encouraged to register for the Wollongong event or donate to the Wollongong Vinnies CEO Sleepout by visiting [www.ceosleepout.org.au](http://www.ceosleepout.org.au)

**-ENDS-**

## About Vinnies NSW

Every day in NSW the St Vincent de Paul Society, better known as 'Vinnies', helps thousands of people through home, hospital and prison visitation, homeless services for men, women and families, migrant and refugee assistance, support for those living with a mental illness, supported employment services for people with intellectual and other disabilities, Vinnies Shops, overseas relief, budget counselling, youth programs and more. Visit <https://www.vinnies.org.au/> to learn more about the 'good works' of Vinnies. For information on how Vinnies is advocating for change to address Australia's housing crisis, visit [https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Our\\_Impact/homelessness-in-Australia/](https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Our_Impact/homelessness-in-Australia/)

## About the Vinnies CEO Sleepout

Since its inception in 2006, the Vinnies CEO Sleepout has raised almost \$36.5 million to fund Vinnies homeless services across Australia. This unique event enables business leaders to actively combat the issue of homelessness by experiencing a little of what it is like to sleep out themselves.

The advocacy and fundraising efforts of participating CEOs, their businesses and the support of partners is crucial to the success of the event. In 2017, over 1,200 business leaders raised \$5.6 million nationally. This money has funded new projects, assisted with the provision of existing homeless services, and allows Vinnies to expand programs for people experiencing homelessness.

## Why support the Wollongong CEO Sleepout?

On any given night, there are more than 1000 homeless people needing support across the Macarthur, Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands.

Last year's Wollongong CEO Sleepout event saw 38 CEOs raise more than \$110,000 with the support of their organisations, friends and families. These funds were used to help provide vital local services, including the operation of our Vinnies Van, which travels to five destinations in Wollongong, Warrawong and Nowra, providing meals, personal hygiene packs, toiletries, food packs, blankets and swags for up to 50 people on any one night. In 2017, the Vinnies Van provided more than 17,000 meals to people in need on 260 nights of the year, assisted by the selfless dedication of volunteers, providing more than 2,500 hours of their time. The generosity of supporters also helped ensure that the St Vincent de Paul Society's Nagle Centre in Campbelltown could continue to offer its community dining room and crisis support to those experiencing disadvantage. In the 2016-2017 financial year, the centre served 14,781 meals, provided crisis support to more than 660 clients with no fixed address (which includes those in crisis accommodation or sleeping rough), offered 240 warm showers, and distributed 1,037 food vouchers.

Participation in or support of the CEO Sleepout event will provide much-needed funds to ensure that these and other services can continue to support those in need within our community.