



# MEDIA RELEASE

1 May 2020

## Vinnies CEO Sleepout goes online to combat homelessness during COVID-19

For the first time, business and community leaders across Australia will unite for a national online sleepout on 18 June to raise essential funds for Vinnies' homelessness services.

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout will take place in cars, backyards and on couches across the country as participants join an interactive, live-streamed broadcast through their phones, tablets or computers.

The online event will be hosted by television personality **Dr Andrew Rochford**.

'I've seen the difference that Vinnies' homelessness services make first-hand, and the Vinnies CEO Sleepout is such an important fundraiser to make sure they can continue helping thousands of people every year,' Dr Rochford said.

The 2019 Vinnies CEO Sleepout raised \$7.9 million for Vinnies' homelessness services across Australia, which include accommodation; domestic violence refuges; food, clothing, blankets and sleeping bags; counselling and healthcare; and individualised support to address barriers such as debt and unemployment, with the ultimate goal of finding a permanent and safe home.

'It's great to see Vinnies, and the business and community leaders who participate in the sleepout, adapt to ensure this year's event can go ahead in the midst of coronavirus. The onset of a global health crisis means people facing homelessness need that support more than ever,' Dr Rochford said.

In past years the Vinnies CEO Sleepout has comprised several events in major cities across Australia, but in 2020, all participants will join one online event. They are invited to nominate their own sleeping location, such as their car, couch, or outdoors in their backyard.

Each of these locations reflect the reality for many of the 116,000 people experiencing homelessness across the country. Of these, around one in 14 people are 'sleeping rough', but many more are hidden from sight behind closed doors and nonetheless unable to find a suitable and safe place to sleep.

This year, participants can also involve their partner and children, helping the whole family to learn more about the growing issue of homelessness, which affects upwards of 116,000 people in Australia.

St Vincent de Paul Society National Council CEO, **Toby oConnor**, welcomed the evolution of the Vinnies CEO Sleepout to an online event, coinciding with the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the very first sleepout in Sydney.



'Funds raised by participants for the Vinnies CEO Sleepout ensure we can run services and programs all around the country that support people experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

'From soup vans offering refreshments and warm clothes to those sleeping rough, to emergency accommodation for people escaping domestic violence, and everyday assistance with food and energy bills to people all over Australia trying to maintain their residency and avoid homelessness, Vinnies is there to provide a hand up to anyone in need.

'We look forward to working with CEOs, executives, entrepreneurs and leaders from all sectors and walks of life to raise money for homelessness services at a time when it's desperately needed.

'I'll be pitching my tent in the backyard. Look forward to seeing you all online,' Mr oConnor said.

Please register online at [www.ceosleepout.org.au](http://www.ceosleepout.org.au).

*The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 conferences located in individual parishes across the country.*

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**MEDIA CONTACT: Judith Tokley 0408 824 306 / 0400 845 492 or [media@svdp.org.au](mailto:media@svdp.org.au)**