



# MEDIA RELEASE

17 June 2021

## 2021 Vinnies CEO Sleepout raises a record \$971,641 for people experiencing homelessness in the region

164 local business, community and government leaders together raised over \$970,000 for Vinnies' homelessness and social impact services by sleeping out at the National Arboretum Canberra last night. Many also slept in their cars, couches, backyards, or in carparks across the region.

ACT participants braved the coldest night time temperatures of any state or territory, battling to keep warm in 5°C. Despite the freezing conditions, morale was high with many CEOs choosing to stay awake and fundraise through the night via text, phone calls and social media platforms.

"Even though it was not as cold as previous years, it was still a very uncomfortable experience and all of us got very little sleep. It is hard to comprehend how so many individuals and families have to go through this every night," said Bernie van Wyk, CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn.

The 130 participants who attended the physical event, arrived at the National Arboretum Canberra bringing nothing but a sleeping bag. They were provided with three pieces of cardboard to set up shelter for the night and after selecting a place to sleep, had soup and a bread roll for dinner. A panel of speakers which included Vinnies volunteers and clients discussed issues relating to disadvantage, poverty and homelessness, and the impact that Vinnies' homelessness and early intervention youth programs, have on the lives of vulnerable individuals and families.

As well as raising funds, the annual event aims to educate participants about the realities of homelessness and living life below the poverty line. This year, CEOs took part in an activity called 'Privilege Walk', which provided them with a better understanding of innate as well as structural privileges that give individuals an advantage or disadvantage in life.

"The activity was eye opening. It made me reflect on how challenging it is for people experiencing disadvantage in so many ways," Said Mr Keith Cantlie, one of the participating CEOs.

By 10:30pm, it was time for the CEOs to get into their sleeping bags and experience what it is like for the 116,000 people around Australia who do not have a roof over their heads.

The event, which exceeded its original and stretch targets of \$630,000 and \$800,000 for 2021 prior to event night, ended up raising \$971,641. **Vinnies is now aiming to reach 1 million dollars** as participants continue to fundraise until the cutoff date 31<sup>st</sup> July.

"We are incredibly amazed, inspired and grateful for the solidarity and generosity of participants and their supporters. Total dollars raised have surpassed our wildest expectations and exceeded the event's highest ever fundraising total to date of \$812,000 in 2019." said Mr van Wyk.

"These contributions mean we will be able to continue to provide quality intervention and support services to those at risk of or experiencing homelessness in our region.

*It's not too late to donate – fundraising will continue until the end of July. [www.ceosleepout.org.au](http://www.ceosleepout.org.au)*

*To register for the 2022 Sleepout, please visit <https://www.ceosleepout.org.au/>*

**for more information contact:**

Cristina Ocampo [cristina.ocampo@vinnies.org.au](mailto:cristina.ocampo@vinnies.org.au) or 0409 616 776

**Photos available via Google Drive:**

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12PUfcNr5gfyw8INbKyiBd5UsNEGL9JSL?usp=sharing>

Credit to: Helene C for group photo and Steve Moxey for photoboth shots