



MEDIA RELEASE

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Vinnies adapts services to respond to the COVID-19 lockdown

Following the recent COVID-19 outbreak in the ACT and extension of the lockdown until 2 September, the St Vincent de Paul Society has adapted its operations to assist vulnerable members of the community experiencing distress and hardship.

“Over the last week, our teams have worked around the clock to ensure that affected Vinnies members, volunteers and employees are safe and well. To enable Vinnies to continue its vital work in the community, we have swiftly adapted the way we operate our programs and services in the region to ensure the health and safety of our employees, volunteers and people in need is first and foremost.” said Bernie van Wyk, CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn.

Our Vinnies conference support model which consists of groups of devoted volunteers who respond to requests for help and provide financial, material, and emotional relief through home visitations, have pivoted towards a virtual, phone-based and contact-less support.

The Vinnies Helpline (13 18 12) remains open and all calls for assistance are directed to available volunteers in the region.

In compliance with ACT and NSW Government public health directives, all Vinnies shops in the Canberra/Goulburn region have been closed for trading during the lockdown. We ask that you please hold on to your donations until the lockdown ends and we can gratefully receive them.

We also request that the local community please not leave any bags of donated goods outside of our shops, as we are not in a position to sort or process these items currently.

“We are grateful for the offers of food and other in-kind donations over the past few days and are appreciative of the community’s understanding and patience as we navigate these complex circumstances,” said Mr van Wyk.

Vinnies’ essential services such as Street to Home, Samaritan House and Night Patrol will continue to provide assistance with modified safety measures in place. Additionally, Blue Door will keep offering take away options for Ainslie Village’ residents.

For the Street to Home program, Outreach and Case Managers continue to provide support to our community in accordance with ACT Health guidelines. While some face-to-face and transport options may be limited, Vinnies’ teams are committed to making every reasonable effort to support rough sleepers across the ACT.

To continue to support the youngest members of our community, all Vinnies Youth and Young Adults programs have cancelled face to face activities and are operating via online platforms.

We will provide further information on our shops and services via our [Vinnies C/G Facebook page](#) and [website](#).

“Our Mission has always been to offer a hand up to any person in our community that seeks help. While the method in which we do this has changed slightly, Vinnies will still be here to

listen, care and support everyone through these tough times,” said John Feint, President of the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn.

“If any members of the community are experiencing hardship whether physical or emotional, we encourage them to contact our Helpline on 13 18 12,” said Mr Feint.

In addition to Vinnies’ assistance, the ACT Government has partnered with VolunteeringACT and the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) to provide emergency food relief for Canberrans most in need during this lockdown.

To place an order for emergency food relief and/or essential items call: VolunteeringACT on 1800 43 11 33 between 9 am and 5 pm each day of the lockdown. If the phone goes unanswered, please leave a message and someone will return your call.

Media contact: Bianca D’Rosario [Bianca. D’Rosario@vinnies.org.au](mailto:Bianca.D’Rosario@vinnies.org.au) or 0417 836 494