

**LAUNCH OF THE ST VINCENT DE PAUL 2013 WINTER APPEAL  
BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC, GOVERNOR  
OF TASMANIA, HOBART, THURSDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2013**

It is a pleasure to be here today and a privilege to have been asked to launch the St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal. Two centuries have passed since the establishment of the St Vincent de Paul charity but it seems that the demand for its services is as great today as it was in the beginning. As it says on the Winter Appeal site “There is no magic solution to poverty. It takes compassion, commitment and money. No person wants to suffer the debilitating effects of poverty. Not knowing how you’ll pay next month’s rent or where this week’s groceries will come from isn’t something anyone wants to go through. Especially a family. Both parents and children will do everything they can to keep their family’s heads above water, exhausting all opportunities and options along the way. And when everything else proves futile, there’s still the hope that the problem will magically disappear, because the reality is simply too distressing to accept. Unfortunately poverty can’t be solved with the wave of a wand. This winter, Vinnies commitment to helping those affected by poverty will be more essential than ever. A global economic crisis, an increasing unemployment rate and high rents mean many will struggle to make ends meet.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Society’s last summer edition of its publication “Record” there is a photograph of an elderly woman and underneath the text reads:

“At my age I never expected to care for a child again.

But when my daughter Kerry passed away her son Jake was

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.vinnies.org.au/winter-appeal-2012-national>

my only connection to her. He's with me now but my pension isn't enough to support us both. Some nights I skip dinner so there is more for him. I just tell him that I ate before he got home. He's a growing boy so he needs it more than I do. God bless Vinnies. They drop by every week to see how we are doing. They even helped with Jake's school fees and the bills. I don't know what I would do without Vinnies. They make me feel like there is still some hope for our little family of two."<sup>2</sup>

During my years on the Supreme Court, I got to know that an account like that is all too common. It cannot be glossed over as fund raising propaganda. I also got to know that all too often people of all ages became homeless and in need of shelter, particularly in the winter time. This need can't be dismissed on the basis that it's their own fault for, in most cases, homelessness is not the person's own fault but arises out of circumstances beyond their control. I also got to know that due to accident or illness, economic downturn or other like cause, family bread winners lost their jobs and source of income. I learnt that, almost invariably, once people fell behind in making their payments, the size of the debts increased in an exponential curve and a feeling of despair and hopelessness set in. The ACOSS Poverty Report for 2012 estimates that in Australia 12.8% of the population or 2.265 million including 575,000 children live in households below the most austere poverty line widely used in international research.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://issuu.com/svdpnatcl/docs/the\\_record\\_summer\\_2012/28](http://issuu.com/svdpnatcl/docs/the_record_summer_2012/28)

The daily struggle experienced by every Tasmanian who is living in poverty is getting harder and harder as winter closes in. Vinnies mission is to help those in need of shelter, food, clothing, relief of debt and so on, but Vinnies cannot do it alone. St Vincent de Paul depends on the help of the more fortunate in our community; hence the importance of the Winter Appeal.

Firstly, Vinnies needs your support to act as a volunteer to fundraise and to work in the 35 collection centres across this State. When publically thanking its 50,000 volunteers last year, National Council President, Tony Thornton, said the volunteers who work in Vinnies Centres and Conferences around Australia are, without question, the organisation's greatest asset. He said "We owe a great debt to our volunteers. They are doing a marvellous job and it is not an easy job by any means, but the rewards for both the volunteer and the people they are assist are great".<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, Vinnies needs every one of us to pitch in and give generously to this Winter Appeal. Australians pride themselves on what is described as mateship; it's said to be a national characteristic and there is no better way to show mateship than to give generously of your time and your money to help those who are not as well off as you are.

So, I launch the 2013 Winter Appeal with the earnest entreaty that everyone gives St Vincent de Paul a helping hand this winter and start it with a modest contribution from myself.

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<http://www.vinnies.org.au/files/NAT/SocialJustice/2012/MR%20National%20Volunteer%20Week%20May%202012.pdf>