

VINNIES COMMUNITY SLEEPOUT

The Maitland Vinnies Community Sleepout proved to be an outstanding success. Because of Covid, the Sleepout became a “virtual sleepout” , however participants entered into the spirit and devised their own ways of sleeping out under the stars. At last count, the Sleepout has raised more than \$33,500, a reflection of the willingness of those who participated, and the generosity of families and community members who sponsored them. The Society is grateful to all.

Let me pass on some reflections among those who participated. A group of three young girls, sisters who attend Lochinvar Catholic schools, and who dubbed themselves the “Bush Jockeys”, raised the incredible amount of more than \$10,000. Let them speak for themselves:



“I slept out because I want to help the homeless and I also want to encourage other people to donate because every cent counts.” (Brianna 9 years)

“I did the Sleepout because I wanted to help the homeless and discover how hard it is to sleep outside with no home. We were very lucky to have so many people donate and that all of the money goes to the people who need it.” (Chloe 11 years)

“It was a great experience and I think the main reason I did it was because I wanted to know what it was like to be homeless for a night. We did it last year with Uncle Dave, and when I was told it was

happening again this year I jumped to my feet in excitement. It’s a great way to raise money and help others even though it was scheduled to rain, but it was for a great cause and it was so much fun.” (Sophie 13 years)



Members of local Vinnies Conferences, Mary Adamson and Anne Horadam, also participated in the Sleepout and raised thousands of dollars in sponsorship.

Mary comments: *“The Sleepout made me more aware of the challenges homeless people face. The amount of gear you need to keep warm, the necessity to find a safe environment, and the need to store belongings while looking for employment presents many challenges. Health, nutrition and hygiene – in addition to everyday comforts - are also things we take for granted.”*



Anne reflects: *"I have already met several homeless people but often feel powerless to give them what they need most, a safe home. I decided to sleep out on my screened-in back verandah, with some suitably sized cardboard, a sleeping bag and a beanie. Did I have a good night's sleep? Definitely not! Tiles and cardboard are not good for the*

back. While there was entertainment in the form of Friday night burnouts and startled cats, there were also stars, so clear and bright. I was proud to be a small part of this community event."

The St Vincent de Paul Society is very grateful to all who made the Sleepout such a resounding success – to Clare Van Doorn, the event organiser, to all those who participated and slept out, and the very many sponsors who contributed so generously. The homeless and disadvantaged in our community will certainly benefit from their efforts.

Michael Healy
Regional President