

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW – responses to questions on notice

1. Retail outlets are starting to reopen, how is operating in a COVID-safe environment impacting on them?

- The pandemic has had an ongoing impact on the revenue generated by Vinnies shops. A number of our shops have yet to reopen, many others are operating at reduced hours, and turnover in some areas has reduced.
- We have also been conscious of the mental health and wellbeing impacts on staff and volunteers. These include concern about the heightened risk of infection in a retail environment, stress linked to compliance with relevant safety controls (such as PPE, use of sanitiser, and social distancing) and ensuring responses are appropriate to an ever-changing situation, and ensuring the safety of customers accessing our shops through the consistent observation of COVID-safe practices.

2. Obviously it has been a really difficult time and people are seeking different types of financial support than they might usually be. During the remote schooling period, did you have people approaching you for support to bridge the digital divide? Did you have anyone coming to you seeking support either for themselves or for their families?"

During the remote schooling period, examples of the support our services provided to families included:

- Provided education support to children, young people and families by offering them links to websites, information and activity packs that they could do in the comfort of their homes, or encouraged them to continue attending school if this was the most suitable option for the family. Activity packs included stationary supplies, games and activities, and psycho-educational materials to help children and families discuss, process and record their thoughts and feelings about COVID and its personal impacts on them.
- Supported families to access technology so children could learn at home. This included supporting families to access devices and/or internet through their school or via the Stronger Communities Investment Unit which is part of Department of Communities and Justice.