A Group of Year Twelve students from Benalla P-12 College recently volunteered at the St Vincent de Paul Soup Van in Melbourne. The Soup Vans operate 365 days of the year and travel to a number of locations across Melbourne to provide meals for those who seek them. This predominately includes people living on the street, in crisis accommodation, or in situations which mean that buying food is a struggle. The vans can assist hundreds of people per night.

While the program is designed to provide people with food, equally important is the connection and conversations between the volunteers and people seeking assistance. On the Soup Van run, students and volunteers have a unique opportunity to interact with people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage. During this interaction the students are able to share in conversation and friendship and to offer gifts such as warm socks and beanies.

Year Eleven Coordinator and Teacher Rebecca Pell said “I was incredibly proud of the students who volunteered and the way they upheld our College values. They approached people with genuine care and interest and this was much appreciated. Well done to all students involved. I would also like to thank St Vincent de Paul Society Benalla for assisting with our travel expenses for this trip. Year 12 students are encouraged to apply for the next upcoming Soup Van experiences, held on Friday 26th July and Friday 18 September. “

Some of the students’ reflections:

Emma Winzer: “It was really eye opening to see the amount of homeless people in Melbourne”.

Clare Martin: “The Soup Van experience makes you realise how much you have. It felt good being able to give to people that needed it”.

Isabella Fragomeni: “Tonight made me realise how important it is to listen to others. Hearing the stories from different people was a real eye opener and reminded me that we shouldn’t be so quick to judge others”. 

Soup Van Term One Team - Mr Rod Taylor, Thomas Nolan, Dylan Sheehan, Hayden Lowen, Cara Hamilton, Isabella Fragomeni, Miss Rebecca Pell [back row], Clare Martin and Emma Winzer [front row] at The Jean