



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

WINTER 2018
ISSUE NO. 83

Vision



**‘A HOME IS A
RIGHT, NOT A
PRIVILEGE’**

VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT 2018

**ADOPTING THE
RECONCILIATION PLAN**

**ART WITH HEART AT THE
OZANAM LEARNING CENTRE**

**BROOKVALE
FLAGSHIP OPENING**

**AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC
YOUTH FESTIVAL**



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Friends,
Whenever I pick up a copy of Vision, I'm always struck by the incredible variety and diversity of our Society in New South Wales. As always, this issue is bursting with voices from across the State, as we celebrate awards, anniversaries and stories of hope.

The issue is also brimming with new beginnings. We open by learning about a significant milestone in our shared history, the adoption of a Reconciliation Action Plan that details a shared future of respect, relationships and opportunities (page 4).

We see how the Vinnies' promise of renewal and rebuilding is taking a new turn – in the shape of recycling – via the return and earn scheme (page 16). And there's plenty more going on in Vinnies Shops with the reopening of the Brookvale

flagship store (page 22) and the launch of a vintage and designer event too (page 24).

And speaking of the new, it was my absolute pleasure to join with some of the Society's next generation at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in December (page 28) as we put our faith in action and 'opened new horizons'.

This spirit of newness and renewal is in all our blood. Our Australian co-founder Charles Gordon O'Neill set out all those years ago to offer people a fresh start and new hope, and the mission he began back then is just as relevant now.

Yours faithfully,

Denis Walsh
State President
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

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We'd love to hear what the Society is doing in your area.

Send us an email, or call with an idea for a story or news piece:
felicity.moody@vinnies.org.au
or (02) 9568 0278.

Please DO NOT send original printed photographs. Photos should be emailed as high resolution.

CEO'S MESSAGE



Our 13th Vinnies CEO Sleepout has been another big success, raising nearly \$2.2 million dollars across New South Wales. Nationally we raised the highest amount we've ever achieved - \$6.7

million. But far more than an important fundraising opportunity: it was a chance to explain, to people who can affect the change, the cause, effect, and solutions to homelessness.

The activity I found particularly moving on the night was the 'experiential', where CEOs had the opportunity to sit in a circle with a person Vinnies has assisted and discuss with them how they became homeless and what their experiences have been. You can read more about the Sleepout on pages 16-17.

Despite the positive results of the Vinnies CEO Sleepout, the shocking reality is that homelessness continues to increase. Victoria and New South Wales saw the

biggest rate increases with NSW rising by 27%. It is no coincidence that NSW also happens to have the highest cost of living. This year the theme for the Sleepout was 'A Home is a Right Not a Privilege', a theme we have long been promoting through our social justice team and our advocacy work. NSW needs more affordable housing to assist those struggling to keep up with rising rental costs.

Vinnies cannot tackle homelessness single-handed; we need to see meaningful policy changes from all levels of government, that recognise a home as a basic human right, not purely in monetary terms.

As you're reading this edition of Vision, I hope you find the stories encouraging and inspiring. If you would like to get involved yourself, to help people struggling to cope with the rising costs of living and to ensure they have a safe place to live, please get in touch with our Vinnies team.

Jack de Groot
Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW



Adopting the Reconciliation Plan

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is honoured to be adding its voice to reconciliation in our nation with the publication of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

For many years, the Society has worked very closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. This commitment has now been formalised within this plan, with goals and challenges to meet to enhance our shared future together.

We seek to be reconciliation leaders in the not-for-profit sector and use our reputation and influence to advocate for stronger recognition and respect for Australia's First Peoples. We will work tirelessly to extend a hand up with dignity, hope, love, justice, and compassion while valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' resilience, strength, and ageless connection with the land.

Furthermore, there will be accountability in all areas of Vinnies' own work, and a strong measurement framework to track our progress.

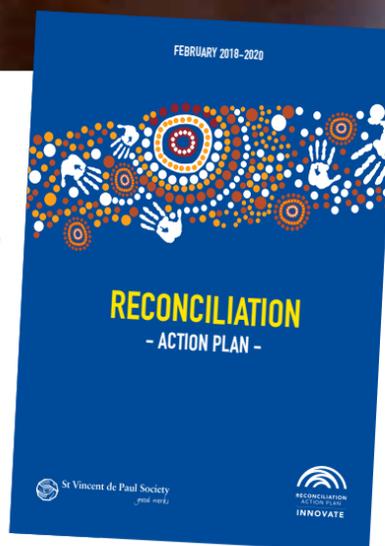
Events to welcome the RAP were held across the state including at the Vinnies State Support Office in Lewisham,

in Parramatta, Lismore, and many other places. Many of these events involved a traditional smoking ceremony, marking this meaningful organisational change. Aboriginal community members joined Vinnies on this journey.

Traditional Koori artist, proud Gamilaroi man and 2015 NAIDOC Artist of the Year Daren Dunn designed unique artwork for use by the St Vincent de Paul Society for promoting our RAP.

We are grateful to Reconciliation Australia for their expert guidance as we developed this RAP and look forward to a long and rewarding partnership.

To read or download the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Reconciliation Action Plan please visit: vinnies.org.au/rap



Order of Australia Medals for Vincentians

Our 25,000 members and volunteers make a difference in over 450 regions across NSW.

On Australia Day, the following Vincentians were recognised publically for their service to the community, receiving one of the country's highest public honours, the Medal of the Order of Australia:

- **Mr Kevin Coorey OAM** – who has been a member of the Society for over 60 years;
- **Mr Leslie Dell OAM** – who has been a member of the Society for over 20 years;
- **Ms Jennifer Ellis OAM** – a volunteer in our Wagga Wagga asylum seeker services;
- **Ms Pamela Richardson OAM** – who has been a member of the Society for over 20 years.



Mr Leslie Dell OAM

THE TRUTH ABOUT DISADVANTAGE

SBS put together a series of 'myth busting' videos to break down stereotypes about disadvantage and poverty. David Kelly, Vinnies Senior Operations Manager Health, shared his in-depth knowledge and understanding of the realities many people experiencing disadvantage face.

Pamela, a widowed pensioner assisted by Vinnies, also spoke about her experiences trying to make ends meet on a small income with the growing costs of living.

If you would like to watch the videos, visit: <http://bit.ly/TruthAboutDisadvantage>

VINCENTIAN HOUSE WINS AWARD



Vincentian House was thrilled to win the 'Excellence in Ending Homelessness-Children and Families' award at the inaugural Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Sector Good Practice Awards.

Accommodation Manager Kerri-Anne Williams (pictured right) accepted the award on behalf of the service.

Vincentian House's nomination emphasised the contribution of the Kids Engaged in Education Program (KEEP). KEEP provides tailored and holistic support to empower children and families, and uses education as a tool of engagement to help break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. Vincentian House is grateful for the generous support from Sydney Airport, Genworth and the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies for their financial contributions to KEEP.

Our Lady of the Way

ABC recently filmed at the Our Lady of the Way service for older women – the only one of its kind in Sydney. Several of the residents recalled some of their experiences and journeys in order to raise awareness of the growing number of older women facing homelessness.

The wonderful staff also shared their thoughts and experiences of the challenges these women face, trying to find suitable accommodation on limited pensions, often with no superannuation to draw on.





Reducing litter and helping Vinnies services

Several Vinnies Shops are now collection points for the NSW Government's Return and Earn Scheme. As a charity partner of the Return and Earn Scheme, Vinnies believe that we can better help our community through reducing litter while raising funds to assist people experiencing disadvantage.

We have also recently launched two Bulk Container Deposit Centres as part of the state's Container Deposit Scheme. The two sites are located in Unanderra and South Nowra on the NSW South Coast.

With the capacity to process approximately 100,000 containers per day, these new bulk processing facilities complement the existing over-the-counter sites and reverse vending machines with an efficient way to process large volumes of eligible containers.

Container deposit refunds can be received on-the-spot via reverse Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT); or users of the facility can choose to donate some or all of their refund to Vinnies to help support vital services, with tax deductible receipts issued for donations over \$2. Vinnies

receives a fee for each container processed through the centre, so by simply utilising the facility to deposit containers, users are supporting the provision of much-needed services.

Call in today to see these amazing machines process your containers in just a matter of minutes.

For more information on the Return & Earn Scheme, please visit: returnandearn.org.au



Peter Quarmby, Gay Mason, Denis Walsh, Beverley Kerr and Peter Knock

AWARDS FOR WESTERN SYDNEY

The Zest Awards are held in recognition of exceptional community service and programs across Western Sydney. We are proud to announce that Vinnies Western Sydney was awarded first place in two categories.

The first win of the night was for 'Exceptional Community Partnership Across a Region' in which we won for our Make Healthy Normal collaboration, together with the Ministry of Health. Vinnies Western Sydney is now in phase two of the Make Healthy Normal project, developing and engaging with disadvantaged communities on health promotion and free telephone health coaching through Western Sydney Vinnies shops. The second win of the night was for 'Outstanding Voluntary Group or Organisation' which we won for the Blacktown Community Hub. The Blacktown Hub is a client-centred support and referral service operated by Vinnies Western Sydney. It offers emergency relief, assessment and referral support for people experiencing disadvantage. Vinnies Western Sydney are very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with employees, volunteers and members who drive change within the local community to make these projects so successful.



New centre opens in Coffs

Pete's Place homeless services centre in Coffs Harbour opened in February 2018 under experienced manager Dave Tilson (pictured). The search has begun to engage around 10 volunteers to help run the city's much needed facility.

"This is a much needed drop-in service for Coffs Harbour," said North Coast Executive Officer Michael Timbrell, "which has a significant number of homeless people, often hidden to the broader community. For the first time they will be able to access personal supports such as bathroom and laundry facilities, and referral to specialist services."

Pete's Place is named after the late Peter Greal, a benefactor of the St Vincent de Paul Society. It is a purpose-built extension to the Coffs Harbour Neighbourhood Centre, and is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 1.30pm.

Pete's Place will be managed by the Society, relying strongly on volunteers. The New Horizons organisation will provide staff on a one day per week basis.

Pete's Place has been developed through a Community Capital Infrastructure Grant of \$111,000 from Coffs Harbour City Council, with financial inputs of \$35,000 each from St Vincent de Paul Society and the Rotary Club of Coffs



Harbour. Many local businesses in the building industry have provided valuable donations of skills and materials. Manager Dave Tilson (above) has worked in housing and homelessness services for 20 years. His family moved to Coffs Harbour after a lengthy stay in Geelong, where Dave's work included managing homelessness outreach staff and a support service for independent living units, mostly focused on people aged 50 and above, and linking homelessness services with aged care.



THE SORTING SHED

Doug Shields is a first-aider, and rightly proud of it. When his sister, Sonia, was stung by a bee, he knew what to do: he elevated her foot and applied an ice pack, ensuring she didn't suffer an adverse reaction.

The first aid certificate was something Doug (above) had aspired to for a while, and after doing some of the lessons from a book the next step was a course at TAFE. There he learned about treating complaints from asthma to snakebites, and how to apply the vital principles of the 'DRSABCD' action plan: (check for) Danger, Response, Send (for help), Airways, Breathing, CPR (CardioPulmonary Resuscitation) and Defibrillation. He practised by placing his friends and co-workers into the recovery position, and perfected his CPR technique on a teddy bear.

Soon enough, 6 December 2017, the day of the test arrived and Doug put his all into the multiple choice written test and practical examination.

"I felt a bit shocked when I learned I'd passed," said Doug, "and we went out for a milkshake to celebrate!"

If you've ever wondered where the clothes you give to Vinnies shops go, Doug has the answer. He is one of about 20 employees at Castlereagh Industries in Coonamble, a couple of hours north of Dubbo. One of the town's biggest employers, Castlereagh is essentially a warehouse to where donated clothes are delivered by truck. They are then checked over, washed if necessary, and deftly sorted into a multitude of categories: from women's fashion suitable for resale in Australia, to shirts and shoes destined for developing countries, to different grades of workshop rags.

Some of the workers are specialists, others are generalists and work at several different stations, but every one of them has an intellectual disability.

The scene in the factory is like watching a complex football game as each item is picked up from the conveyor belt, examined and tossed into one of the many 'bins' which in turn are sorted further. It is fronted by a pristine and popular Vinnies Shop, perhaps the best place in town to pick up a bargain.

Several of the employees also live at the nearby supported accommodation, Greene Villa, set up with funding raised by volunteers at the local St Vincent de Paul Society Conference several years ago. They share communal kitchens and gardens, and each resident has their own room which they spare no effort in personalising though sometimes there isn't quite enough space. For his 30th birthday, Doug received a signed and framed Parramatta Eels jersey: "I don't know where I'm going to put it, it's so big and heavy!" he says. Greene Villa also arranges excursions and activities: at Christmas, some of the residents went on an island cruise around Cairns and were still talking about it months later.

As you leave Coonamble, locally known for its 'Nickname Hall of Fame', what strikes you most of all is the sense of community here. Through Castlereagh Industries and Greene Villa, people with disabilities find independence, self-esteem and friendship as well as jobs. And it's all thanks to the dedication of Vinnies members, staff and volunteers that this dream became a reality



LEARNING FOR LIFE

People at Castlereagh Industries come from near and far, but local Belinda has a 25-year association with the enterprise. "I sort the rags," explains Belinda (above), who is soon to mark 25 years with Vinnies, "put them in the right order – track pants, pyjamas, t-shirts - and make sure there's no buttons or clips missing." Through Castlereagh and partners such as the Aboriginal Lands Council, TAFE and State Emergency Services, Belinda has been able to achieve not only employment and a steady wage but life skills such as driving, cooking, computers and much more.

A half-century for Ulladulla

St Vincent de Paul Milton/Ulladulla Conference has celebrated its 50th anniversary.

The Conference began in 1967 and has been serving the community ever since. Celebrations kicked off in Ulladulla with a special mass, followed by luncheon in the church hall. Regional Conference members also travelled to attend. The celebration cake was donated by the Parish.

Tony Surace entertained the gathering on his piano-accordion, and a good time was had by all.



President Neil Parker and Vice President Betty Cotter cut the celebration cake

ASQUITH CELEBRATES 60 YEARS



On 31 October 1957 the Asquith Conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society was aggregated in Paris, meaning current members celebrated its 60th birthday.

During the last 60 years, the Asquith Conference has been helping the poor and marginalised in the Asquith Parish; and along with Berowra, is part of the Ku-ring-gai Chase Parish in the northern region of Sydney.

The Conference has 12 active members and its main role is home visitations. It has strong support from two priests; St Patrick's Primary School, Asquith; and the parishioners for both the winter and Christmas appeals. They are also involved with the local soup van which is run by the St John's Uniting Church as part of a broad ecumenical effort with volunteers from other churches and organisations in the area, helping those in the local community who need support.

There is also a youth group comprising of 12 young women and men who attend St Leo's Catholic College at Waitara and surrounding schools which are also part of the Conference. Since the birth of the Youth Conference in May, they have already had two successful fundraisers and have donated the proceeds to Youth off the Street and the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter. These young members have a very strong sense of social justice and are also organising two separate Christmas events for local nursing homes which will include the local parish priests, the parish choir and the adult members of the Conference.

Bathurst Vinnies Van turns 10

Orange Mayor Reg Kidd, sponsors and volunteers come together to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Orange Vinnies Van and Café.



The Vinnies Food Van and Café celebrated 10 years of service with community members of Orange in March this year. For a whole decade, volunteers have been making sandwiches, preparing and serving lunches and delivering food to those in need. From July 2017 to December 2017, 1,561 people accessed the services with the help of 312 volunteers.

The Society is very appreciative of the many hours and donations community members have given over the past 10 years to the service. The celebration was a way to bring the Van to the community so everyone could see how the service worked and celebrate together. There have been many sponsors and volunteers over the years and it was Vinnies' turn to thank them.

Having reached this milestone, the Society looks forward to continuing to serve the community well into the future.



SHANE'S STORY

Shane Van Hees is a 30-year-old man who never imagined his life would have led him down this path he has taken. Shane has been homeless for many years and had minimal support and accommodation options until he came to the St Vincent de Paul Society in Wyong to ask for food assistance. St Vincent de Paul Society Wyong have been assisting and supporting Shane Van Hees for a number of years. The main assistance Shane has been in need of is accommodation, food vouchers and men's toiletry packs.

Shane has slept in various places including train stations, parks and beaches. He has had temporary accommodation from Housing NSW for short periods of a couple of days. Shane has also 'couch surfed' at friends on a short-term basis, although as he doesn't want to burden them he doesn't rely on this.

Shane also has a dog, which is his constant companion and has greatly helped him throughout his time without secure accommodation. "She has really helped me push through each day," says Shane.

Shane is currently receiving additional support from the Client Support Officer at Wyong, Brad Dingle, and was



recently able to secure permanent accommodation at Bateau Bay, NSW.

Shane has shown constant appreciation and gratitude for the ongoing support and guidance from the Vinnies staff and volunteers, and for the hand-up to get his life back on track. He often calls in to update Vinnies on his circumstances and to continue with his case management support.

A PIECE OF HISTORY FROM GUNNEDAH

Marie Hobson writes: The *Vision* article on the National Congress in Adelaide attracted my attention and I went searching for this photograph of the Ninth Triennial Congress at Hobart in 1951.

My parents, the late Beryl and Os Campbell of Gunnedah, attended this Conference and they often spoke about it as being a wonderful experience.

They eventually raised a family of five sons and three daughters, but their kind and generous hearts still had enough love and compassion to open their doors to others. My father received the Order of Australia Medal for his service to the community.

Growing up in the middle of this large family, I recall many occasions when we would squeeze someone down-on-their-luck around the dinner table. I have seen my father take his best shoes and shirt out of his cupboard to give to a stranger at our door. Equally, my mother often cared for other children when their mother was ill or needed help.

They were both involved in the local Conference until their deaths, my father at age 81 and my mother at 79. Dad was the volunteer manager here for many years, and used his carpentry skills to help convert an upholstery shed into the

first store. He also supervised the construction of a bigger store out of floods reach. He would be amazed at the wonderful store in use now at Gunnedah.

Marie Hobson's father, Os Campbell, wrote about the Gunnedah Conference himself in the 1950s: "We used to store clothing in the igloo garage at the presbytery (it is still there), and in a cupboard in the parish hall," he explained.

"Fr Leahy suggested that we store it all together in a tin garage at the presbytery. All clothing was given away.

"Denny Tydd arranged to buy a block of land in Marquis Street. It had a workshop. Denny approached the ANZ Bank for a loan to buy the site as he did some banking there and they agreed.

"There was a big flood in 1955 and we had six inches of water in the store so it was decided to build a brick structure with the floor twelve inches higher than the old store.

"A room was included in that building as we were getting a lot of men coming through when they were let out of jail in Sydney and were told that there was work at Wee Waa cotton chipping. They booked in for overnight beds on their way through."

TIMELY AWARD FOR GILGANDRA SENIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Vice-President Bev Kerr, NSW Volunteer of the year (left) and NSW CEO Jack de Groot (right) meet Gladys Ryan, a volunteer with 40 years of service who was named Gilgandra Senior Citizen, making the front page of the local paper.

Gladys told us that she had been nominated for the award around 12 years ago, but this time felt that she was old enough to receive it! As well as time spent managing Gilgandra Vinnies Shop, Gladys drives a community transport van and established the local Open Way Bookshop.



NEW HUB IN HARRIS PARK

Joining the Blacktown Hub in Western Sydney, the Harris Park Community Hub which opened in early 2018 is the area's second client-centred support and referral service. It offers support to those in the community who require financial, food or material assistance. The Community Hub staff, members and volunteers work with people who drop in to offer advocacy, referrals and support in navigating the appropriate services. They have a conversation with people, giving them the time and space to discuss their needs, ultimately helping them make informed decisions.

CENTRAL COUNCIL SLEEPOUT WEEK

This August, for the first time, Vinnies will shine a light on homelessness with Sleepout events not just in city centres but in local communities across the State.

The inaugural Vinnies Community Sleepout Week is about more than just a night in the cold. It is about like-minded people getting together to help rebuild the lives of community members in need.

The last census showed that more people experience homelessness in New South Wales than in any other State, and this number is growing. Meanwhile, the high cost of living, stagnant wages, and unsteady jobs can push anyone into crisis. Many families living on the edge are only three pay packets away from homelessness. More and more people are turning to Vinnies for assistance.

Community members will be challenged to sleep rough across eight regional locations in New South Wales. They will join in solidarity not only to raise crucial funds for local area services, but to raise awareness about those in our community who are experiencing disadvantage and homelessness.

Vinnies Community Sleepouts will be held around late August in Parramatta, Maitland, Lismore, Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Bathurst, Mudgee and Orange.



IGA spreads their wings of love this Christmas

Our National Retail Partner IGA once again supported the Vinnies Christmas Appeal in 2017, selling Christmas Baubles for \$2 as well as donating a proportion of the proceeds from their Community Chest line. The Christmas Appeal campaign raised a staggering \$300,000 for Vinnies nationally. The significant funds that were raised over the duration of the campaign have assisted Vinnies in providing a range of support to people experiencing poverty and homelessness over the Festive Season.



BRIGHTER BATHROOMS RESTORE DIGNITY

Access to a bathroom and a hot shower is something most of us take for granted.

The facilities at Matthew Talbot Hostel were in need of an upgrade so Vinnies approached supporters to find a solution. "We had a wonderful response," says Gift in Will Manager, Cherie McKenna. "Our major funder was The Fussell Foundation. Thanks to them, work was completed before Christmas and they also generously funded a special needs bathroom."

"We also thank the Maple-Brown Family Foundation, who ignited the fundraising effort with a generous donation; and the other trusts and families who generously supported this much-needed renovation. With the refurbished bathrooms, we can restore men's dignity and open new doors."



MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

Our valued supporters, the Claude Group, Coca-Cola Amatil, ASI Solutions, Johnson & Johnson and Scentre Group all helped to spread Christmas cheer throughout our services during the 2017 Festive season.

Alison Watkins and the Executive Level Team from Coca-Cola Amatil arrived at the Matthew Talbot Hostel at the crack of dawn in mid-December to serve up a hearty cooked breakfast to the residents. The team then took a tour of the hostel and adjoining Ozanam Learning Centre with CEO Jack de Groot to learn more about the varied services available thanks to our wonderful supporters.

The Claude Group (above) hosted a Christmas BBQ at Maroubra Beach for residents and outreach clients of our Eastern Suburbs Refuges. Complete with Christmas carols, a game of cricket and a festive feast, there were smiles all round.

The ASI Solutions team generously sacrificed their Christmas Eve to help provide companionship and a hearty breakfast to those accessing the Brekky Van service in Prince Alfred Park, Redfern.

Johnson and Johnson volunteers hosted a delicious Christmas lunch for the residents of the Marian Centre including a face painter for the kids.

Scentre Group rallied behind us by running a personal care pack donation drive for men, women and children. We can't thank you all enough for helping us to brighten the Christmas season for the people we assist.

Moving on to 2018, in February Mike Ullman, Executive Vice President, General Counsel of Johnson & Johnson and his team from the J&J global office donned their hats and aprons and prepped hundreds of sandwiches for the Matthew Talbot Hostel kiosk and served the evening meal to the residents.

GENWORTH RENEWS HOPE

Genworth has supported the KEEP program since 2013 and this financial year they raised the bar by increasing their funding to \$50,000. Their ongoing support to KEEP over the years has impacted a large number of families and children who have experienced homelessness and disadvantage. Genworth CEO, Georgette Nicholas, said: "Genworth is committed to assisting the KEEP program by providing families and children with opportunities to learn or experience something new by connecting with the local community. This program is always oversubscribed by Genworth volunteers and this is a testament to the amazing Vinnies support staff and the rewarding experience it provides for all of the Genworth staff!"



KEEP is expanding thanks to SEED funder Sydney Airport

Thanks go to our valued partner Sydney Airport, who donated vital funds toward the Kids Engaged in Education Program (KEEP) Expansion project, supporting the employment of the KEEP Project Manager for an 18-month period. During this time, KEEP expanded in the City of Sydney, working with four of the Society's Services - Vincentian House, the Marion Centre, Elsie's Lodge and Killara House - to offer additional support to families and children who are experiencing homelessness and disadvantage.

The employment of the KEEP Project Manager has allowed Vinnies to build a solid foundation of support for vulnerable families in our services. The KEEP Expansion has allowed people in Greater Sydney access to a range of social, health and educational opportunities, helping children, young people and families become more resilient. We can't thank Sydney Airport enough for believing in the program and providing the opportunity for Vinnies to create a bigger impact on more children and families during times of instability and hardship.



SYDNEY HOTELIERS SMASH FUNDRAISING TARGET

On 2 May at the Hilton in Sydney, the Hotels Have Hearts Gala Dinner raised a record \$750,000 with an incredible 540 people attending, including Patron, Sir William Deane, and MC Vince Sorrenti.

"Hotels Have Hearts is a statement from the NSW hotel industry that we care, that we are prepared to give, that we believe in a society where those who can help, do so for those who are struggling to keep their heads above water," said Kim Maloney OAM, Chairman of the Committee.

"The record result from this year's event is proof of what can be achieved when we all work together for an important cause."

Founded in 2001 by a group of generous hoteliers who wanted to do more to help Sydney's homeless, Hotels Have Hearts is now one of NSW's premier hospitality industry fundraising events, and is supported by the Australian Hotels Association (AHA).

Over the last 17 years, the event has raised more than \$4.5 million altogether. The money has contributed to significant improvements to the Matthew Talbot Hostel, including support for the home outreach service and medical equipment, as well as a training kitchen, computer laboratory and art studio.

Past proceeds have also gone towards the refurbishment of the recreation and garden space at Vincentian House.



The Hotels Have Hearts Committee consists of the following representatives: Kim Maloney, OAM, Maloney Hotel Corporation; John Ryan, Ryan's Hotel Group; Patrick Gallagher, Gallagher Hotels; Danielle Willis, Laundry Hotel Group; Jack Lucas, John Lucas Hotel Management; Martin Short, W Short Hotel Group; Stephen Harvey, Harvey Hotel Group; Jenny Farrell, Schwartz Family Co; Br Dan Stafford C.Ss.R., Fundraising Ambassador St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.

AND THE WINNER IS... HORATIO O'SHEA

Surry Hills-based Society Link and Special Projects Manager Horatio O'Shea entered the boxing ring after 12 weeks of training with Corporate Fighter and emerged victorious! An equal win was the \$7,000 he raised for the Vinnies Asylum Seeker Program to assist those seeking refuge and support within our communities. Well done Horatio!



MUSS CLOTHING SWAP

The Macquarie University Sustainability Squad (MUSS) hosted their first Clothes Swap in March to promote sustainable clothing and ethical choice. The swap was a success with donations coming from students at the university and funds being raised for Vinnies.



DIY FUNDRAISING

Over the last Christmas period, many communities rallied together and held inspiring fundraising initiatives to support our Vinnies good works.

- The Anawim Society raised \$4,000 at their annual gala dinner for the Elsie Refuge to help give the women there a second chance of life.
- Cath Sullivan, a long-time supporter of Vinnies, took to a group of school children to the shopping centres of Southeast Sydney and hosted musical performances for the crowd to spread Christmas cheer.
- Meanwhile, a group of year 12 students at Southern Cross Vocational College gathered donations from local office suppliers and created care packages for the families at the Marion Centre.



Loose change makes a world of difference

Lagardère Travel Retail once again got behind our Christmas appeal by running a collection across their Newlink stores in domestic and international airport terminals around the country. In addition, Lagardère staff coordinated a Christmas food and stationary drive for Vincentian House to support the families residing at the service. Lagardère will continue their kind-hearted support for the Vinnies Winter Appeal from June to end of August 2018. If you are travelling over the Winter season, don't forget to add your gold coins to the Vinnies Winter Appeal collection boxes in Newlink Retail stores. Thanks to Lagardère for continually helping Vinnies to rebuild and restore lives.



VINNIES
CEO
SLEEPOUT™
21 JUNE 2018



'A Home Is A Right, Not A Privilege'

Sydney

More than 350 CEOs and business leaders braved the cold in Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong on 21 June for the annual Vinnies CEO Sleepout, raising almost \$2.2 million and counting.

All the money raised goes towards Vinnies Homeless Services such as crisis accommodation, food essentials, education, case management and other vital relief.

"Even after the thirteenth Vinnies CEO Sleepout," said Bernie Fehon, who founded the event in 2006, "there's still much more work to do. Homelessness is getting worse, making this event and others like it more important than ever."

In NSW, homelessness increased by 37% between the 2011 and 2016 censuses, affecting one in every 200 people in the State.

"If we are to tackle the issue," continued Bernie, who was awarded the OAM this year for his services to the community, "it's critical to engage different sectors – from government and non-profits to academia and industry."

As Vision went to press, the total raised in Sydney alone stood at \$1.86m. The Wollongong event had raised \$167,500 and Newcastle \$153,000 while the national figure had exceeded \$6.75m. A massive thanks go to everyone who took part, not only to the participants but to

the sponsors and volunteers who made the event possible. Donations remain open until 31 August for anyone wishing to contribute, either through sponsoring a participating CEO, or by giving directly to the event itself at www.ceosleepout.org.au

SYDNEY

This year's Sydney venue, the White Bay Cruise Terminal, Rozelle, offered participants a cold and damp night sleeping on the concrete wharf. Though the wind and rain were merciful, the 300 CEOs received a glimpse into what life is like for people who sleep rough every night.

As well as meeting people Vinnies has assisted during group 'face-to-face' sessions, before hitting the dock participants heard poignant stories from people such as Tony, a father who found help from Vincentian House, and Megan, who was assisted by Vinnies after experiencing domestic violence.

Sydney's top fundraisers – Monika Tu of Black Diamondz Property Concierge and Robert Kelly of Steadfast, a general insurance broker network – each brought in about \$50,000. For Monika it was a particularly special night since she and her husband, Jad Khattar, were also celebrating their tenth wedding anniversary.



Sydney

NEWCASTLE

At Newcastle's sixth CEO Sleepout, 58 participants raised more than \$153,000 at the McDonald Jones Stadium, Broadmeadow. Fundraiser of the Year for the second year in a row went to John Kell of Hicksons Lawyers, who encouraged CEOs to stay involved and stay passionate.

The CEOs, plus Vinnies staff and volunteers, were moved by personal accounts from Mathew Talbot Staff about people they work with, on the theme of "Do not judge my story by the chapter you walked in on."

Sister Carmel Hanson, Social Justice Representative for the Maitland/Newcastle Central Council, spoke on the humility of living and working alongside people suffering from addiction and the cycle of homelessness.

WOLLONGONG

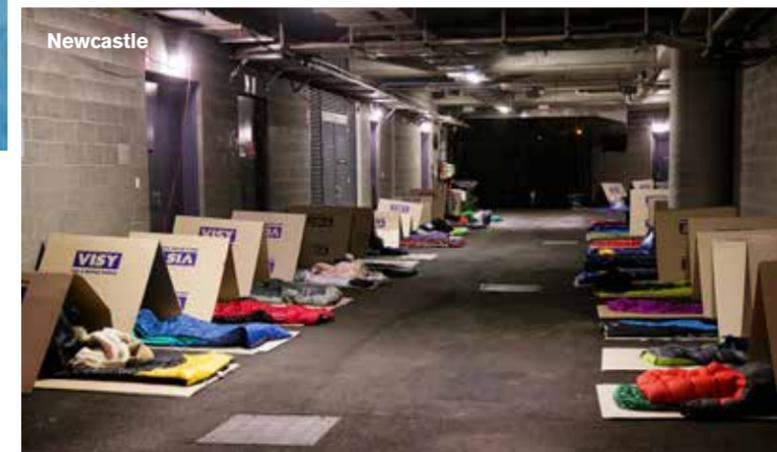
A relatively mild night in Wollongong saw more than 30 community and business leaders come together for an evening of story-sharing, reflection and experiential activities aimed at shedding light on the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness.

The group heard from a person who sleeps rough, a Vinnies Van volunteer, teachers whose students have been involved in the Vinnies Van program, and someone who shares the parenting of a young boy with his homeless mother. Leaders also participated in a 'Privilege Walk' activity, helping to highlight the potential impact of various circumstances on a person's life.

The event generated \$167,500, the highest in the seven-year history of Wollongong's CEO Sleepout.



Sydney



Newcastle



Wollongong



Sydney

ART WITH HEART

Paint-A-Plate is one of the longest-standing creative programs at the Ozanam Learning Centre (OLC) in Woolloomooloo just by the Matthew Talbot Hostel.

On a practical level it introduces the glazing and decorative process of ceramics to people we assist, but on an interpersonal level the program provides so much more: social engagement, personal empowerment and a close-knit supportive community.

The program started eight years ago, when Eva (right) joined the OLC volunteer team, bringing with her a wealth of creative expertise, including: textile design, painting, drawing and of course glazing. Eva started volunteering at the OLC as she wanted to combine her recently completed Social Work honours degree with her creative endeavours and passion for working with the community.

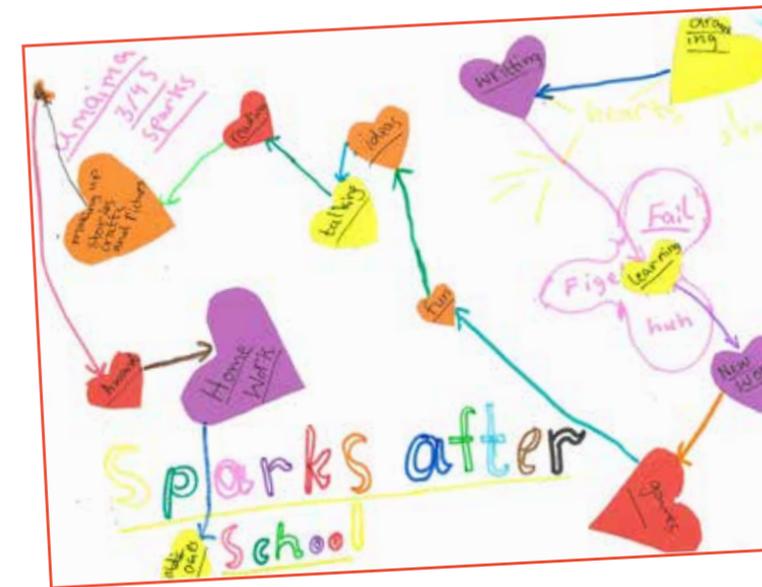
Eva has taught many to draw, design and glaze in her program, but two OLC artists' journeys over the years stand out for her. Craig* joined the Paint-A-Plate program a few years ago. He would not engage with the group and the work he created would often depict scenes of violence. Eva supported his creative process, never judging, but focusing on his creative strengths and achievements. Eva watched as Craig found a sense of joy and catharsis in his creative process, which she says was illustrated in his new art, as well as becoming an engaged and social member of the group.

Jane,* another artist at the OLC, joined Paint-A-Plate several years ago with very little creative confidence. Eva recognised Jane's fear of drawing freehand, as she chose to trace everything. Eva helped Jane slowly move away from this and develop her freehand drawing. Eva shares Jane's accomplishments with a sense of pride as she describes Jane as a 'go to' in the art



studio for others learning to draw and glaze. Jane has also exhibited in all three OLC Art Shows (an annual exhibition showcasing OLC artists) and exhibits her work on site at the OLC, which often sells out fast. Asked what keeps her coming back, Eva says: "I love the sense of community that has developed in this space. There is a real warm sense of reciprocity and empathy among the whole group, including me. There is a creative dialogue that influences both the artists and my creative practice, where our experiments are continually pushed and the outcomes are often surprising, unexpected and sometimes beyond our expectations. However, mistakes are also made and it is the support of each other that always shines through."

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of people we assist



SPARK

"At a 123 Magic course follow-up session," explains one of our staff, one of the parents from Iraq told a SPARK staff member that she was trying to implement some of the strategies that were talked about in the course with her young eight-year-old son, and they were working!

"She spoke about the difficulties of raising a child here in Australia without the support of the social networks she had back home. Her husband was constantly working just to cover their basic needs, and he was unable to help with parenting, and certainly not able to respond to any difficult behaviour. She was struggling, and wanting to do the best thing for her kids.

"Talking with other parents at the workshop and realising that she was not alone in dealing with these issues helped her, and she was using strategies like counting to ensure she herself had better control of her emotions when her son was angry and upset."

Over 2016-17, the Fairfield LGA became home to approximately 7,000 newly-arrived refugees, presenting a clear need to support children and families to settle into the community. SPARK is an early intervention program that works with under-12s and their families to support them during their early settlement period. It aims to help people settle well in their new community, and builds



bridges with schools, local volunteers and community organisations.

At Bright Spark Learning Club, newly-arrived children receive tailored social, emotional and physical support from trained bilingual staff and volunteers. It aims to help them develop trusting friendships; build a sense of belonging at school; develop their self-confidence and resilience; develop their English language, literacy and numeracy skills; and an overall love of learning.

Initiatives such as Teddy Bear hospital by the UNSW Paediatric Society provides a child-friendly health awareness program to whole year groups, supporting newly-arrived children to integrate with their peers. Similarly, a six-week program gives children a safe space for physical and creative expression, where the principle is that there is no 'good' and no 'bad' when it comes to ability; it is only about being the best 'you' can be.

And for the parents of newly-arrived children, initiatives include parenting programs 123 Magic and Tuning into Teens in the Arabic language. SPARK also partners with other community organisations and schools to host Kids and Blokes Playzone, which is aimed at engaging fathers and father-figures in quality play with their children, and to connect the 'blokes' with each other and the school community.

ABILITY LINKS

Social Inclusion Week

To mark Social Inclusion Week, Vinnies Ability Links designed coffee cups featuring quotes from people with disability which were then used at 100 cafes across NSW. The quotes highlighted how people would like to be included.

During this week, Vinnies Ability Links Metro South also hosted six 'Tea and Talk' events across Sydney to encourage communities to embrace diversity and engage in conversation with one another.



All-terrain wheelchair

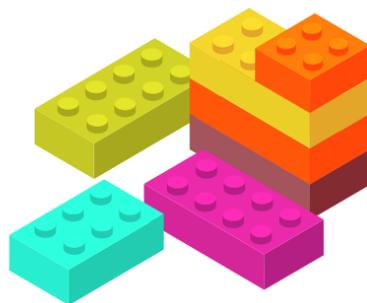
Vinnies Ability Links, in partnership with Sutherland Shire Council, introduced the new wheelchair to the beaches of Sutherland Shire in February. The wheelchair, which can go on sand, in water and over rocky terrain, ensures all community members have equal access to beautiful beaches and National Parks.



Lego Clubs

Vinnies Ability Links started introducing schools to Lego Clubs two years ago,

after working with a child with autism whose mother had heard of Lego Play therapy. The activities in Lego Club help children improve their verbal and non-verbal communication, sharing and turn-taking, as well as their collaborative problem solving skills. Vinnies Ability Links Metro South have now initiated Lego Clubs in over ten different schools and youth groups across South-East Sydney, and have helped schools promote the idea to other schools in their districts.



Cinema Captioning

Open-captioned cinema screenings make the cinema experience accessible for people who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, and also help people learn English. The Vinnies Ability Links Cinema Captioning Project started with the GU Film House Cronulla showing one captioned screening a fortnight. It then grew to include The Ritz cinema in Randwick, which started showing one captioned screening a fortnight, but now has two sessions a week.

Ability Links recently commissioned market research which demonstrated that at least 70% of the population supported captioned screenings.



INCLUDING YOU

With two young boys on the Autism spectrum, there is nothing simple about a family outing for Maitland mum, Donna Casson (above).

To go a step further, and to attend a large event, can put the entire family's well-being at risk.

The planning for such an event starts days beforehand, and even then "it's almost guaranteed one of them will have a meltdown" she says, because the noise is too much, there are too many people, or there is nowhere to retreat to.

Since coming across the Including You tent, some of that has changed.

"When we came across the tent, my youngest son Mason was already saying: 'I want to go home, I want to go home, I want to go home,'" she said.

But once they came in the tent, Mason didn't want to leave.

"Our bribe to get him out was, 'Well we'll come back! So for us it meant we got to stay. And then in fact he was so comfortable that he then went on a camel ride which ordinarily would never happen. It might sound very simple for some families but for us it was a huge achievement!'"

The Including You tent, which started in Maitland, is rolling out across local government areas in the Hunter, Central Coast, Sydney, and the south coast. The aim is to build

community capacity to host more accessible and inclusive events. It provides a safe place to retreat to and offers items for free hire such as noise-cancelling headphones, sensory tools and wheelchairs. The next step is to spread the word among potential volunteers, including Vinnies.

"From the perspective of a family, you're helping us have those fun moments, which is in turn keeping a family together... reducing stress in the home, and helping the parents cope with the kids better," says Donna.

"Having somewhere that you are not going to be judged for their behaviour is huge. And not only to get the support but to have the sensory tools to (calm) them down so that they can come back out."

Cathy Burns, who volunteered at the Port Stephens Including You tent along with her daughter, says she sees a lot of value in the initiative.

"I decided to volunteer at the Including You Tent because it is an amazing project," Cathy said.

"It helps people with a disability to engage with their community by giving them the opportunity to have a time out area during an event, which means they can go to an event or stay longer at an event than they would otherwise have had the chance to do."



GRAND OPENING!

New Vinnies Brookvale Shop Opens and Delights

In September last year the doors of the bright, beautiful new-look Vinnies Brookvale flagship shop opened in the heart of Sydney's Northern Beaches. Hundreds of people attended the Grand Opening Day and were delighted with the new concept which makes the most of the open plan floor space and original industrial architecture of the building.

On the preceding day the Most Rev. Peter A. Comensoli, the then Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay (now Archbishop of Melbourne), presided over the Blessing Ceremony for the Shop, together with members, staff and volunteers from Broken Bay, neighbouring Central Councils, and the Vinnies State Support Office.

The original Vinnies Shop in Brookvale was opened in 1979 and was much loved by the local community. The new concept flagship has been well received and is drawing in people who have never previously shopped at Vinnies. The concept takes advantage of the building's original features of exposed brick walls, steel framework, and concrete look floors, with almost 1,000 square metres

of retail floor space. The retail team added custom and found fittings, and recycled elements to produce a rustic yet modern feel. Fashion, homewares and furniture are offered as a total Vinnies Lifestyle look, giving customers inspiration for how their Vinnies finds will work in their homes and wardrobes.

The Brookvale Shop remains true to the Vinnies offering of value-for-money prices and a treasure trove of gems to seek and find, together with warm and friendly customer service. Staff and volunteers who have been with us for many years at the old Brookvale shop have enjoyed welcoming back our loyal customers as well meeting new ones!

The Brookvale Shop also tells the Vinnies story with new signage encouraging customers to donate and shop in order to support the Society's good works. It also tells customers 'where the money goes' by highlighting the good works in Broken Bay on a special 'Thank You Wall'. This Vinnies concept is a real innovation and a necessary step forward in our retail offering, particularly relevant in the ever-changing and always evolving world of retail.



VINNIES: STYLING FOR THE STARS

Our Vinnies Newtown shop had an exciting visit from American singer Børns (top) recently. Flying into Sydney just the day before, he called in to do some filming as he perused the racks of vintage finds. He also stopped for a photo with staff before heading off to get ready for his performance with fellow American singer, Lana Del Rey. Thanks for dropping by Børns!

Earlier in the year Australian rapper '360' (above centre), known for his work in raising awareness of mental health issues, hid some of his signed vinyls in Vinnies Shops across Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. This event drew big crowds of his young followers to our shops. '360' shared videos of himself promoting Vinnies and the vinyl hunt to over 100,000 followers on his social media accounts creating lots of positive engagement. He had a great time at the Vinnies Newtown shop searching for unique, vintage pieces and encouraging his followers to visit.



Shop Donation Tips

Vinnies Shops happily accept good quality, pre-loved donations.

TOP TIPS TO DONATE

1. Is it in good condition and working order? Would you give this item to a friend? Then it's perfect for Vinnies.
2. Donate during Shop opening hours. Where possible, please don't leave donations outside shopfronts or beside donation bins as they can be damaged or stolen.
3. Ask your local Vinnies Shop if they can accept your donation. Some Shops are not able to accept furniture or electricals.

To find your local Vinnies Shop, visit our website: www.vinnies.org.au/page/Shops/NSW



Vintage and Designer Event

The first Vinnies Vintage and Designer event was held in March at the Vinnies Brookvale Shop, and it was a resounding success.

The excitement was tangible as keen customers lined up outside the door for up to 45 minutes, waiting to discover vintage and designer gems. As well as a cohort of local and loyal customers, there were also some first-time visitors. People came from as far away as the Central Coast, the Western Suburbs, and the Sutherland Shire to be part of this exciting event.

Nearly 300 eager, fashion-conscious ladies (and a few gentlemen) enjoyed a lovely Thursday evening shopping a curated selection of clothing, shoes, accessories, bric-a-brac and furniture, whilst refreshing themselves with drinks and nibbles, and mingling with other avid Vinnies shoppers.

The first 50 people through the door received a limited edition Vinnies shopping bag and a copy of 'The Vinnies Styling Guide' – a guide to maximising their op-shopping trips.

Vinnies Brookvale Shop manager Theresa Hughes was thrilled with the success of the event and received much positive feedback from customers who were delighted with their purchases. Volunteers and staff enjoyed being a part of this unique occasion.

The Vintage and Designer event was the first of its kind in a bright new store location. It was wonderful to see our customers embrace and enjoy the night where the community spirit was strong, and the desire to find a vintage or designer bargain even stronger!



CHILDREN'S STORYTIME

In a series of firsts for the new Brookvale Shop, Vinnies held its first ever Children's Storytime Sessions. The events featured two accomplished Australian children's authors reading their award-nominated stories.

Debra Tidball read her book, *The Scared Book*, which has been nominated for a Children's Book Council of the Year Award.

Author Brydie Wright read her book, *Daddy and the World's Longest Poo*, which was awarded a finalist place for the Independent Author Network 2017 Book Awards, an international competition for self-published books. Both authors and the children and parents attending had a ball.

Big Turnout at Sydney Vinnies Social Justice Event

Over 35 young adults, Conference members and volunteers attended the first Sydney Central Council 'Encouraging Youth to Engage in Social Justice' event in March at Two Wolves Cantina.



Mary Yaager, Social Justice Representative for Sydney, spoke about Vinnies' 'Right to Home' campaign and encouraged young people to get involved by signing and distributing our ongoing petition for 15 per cent affordable housing on all new developments.

For more information on the Right to Home campaign please visit: <http://bit.ly/Right2Home>

ELECTRICITY INQUIRY

Vinnies NSW appeared before the Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry on Electricity Supply, Demand and Prices in NSW in February 2018. One of the people we assist shared her moving story of the daily choice she faces in feeding her family or paying the electricity bill.

Speaking on behalf of Vinnies, State Council Vice President for Social Justice, Peter McNamara, and Joanne Yates, Executive Director of the Executive Secretariat, called for energy retailers to provide a 'basic service offer' to all consumers and reform the current concession system to make it more equitable.

We received significant media coverage; you can read the ABC article on the Inquiry here: <http://bit.ly/No-frills>



If you would like to receive the latest on Vinnies' campaigns for a more equitable NSW, sign up to our monthly Social Justice e-Newsletter at <http://bit.ly/VinniesSJnews> or contact social.justice@vinnies.org.au

PALM SUNDAY RALLY

Vinnies volunteers, members and employees attended the Palm Sunday Rallies for Refugees in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. At the Sydney rally, a group of 17 attended



and displayed our campaign posters.

Sister Carmel, one of our dedicated Social Justice Representatives, spoke at the rally in Newcastle saying, "When John Howard stated that 'WE will decide who comes to this country', he really was meaning that WE – you and I – would decide who comes... So let us each write to the Liberal and Labour MPs, claiming our right to decide who comes to this country and tell them that WE have decided that refugees are welcome here."

Western Sydney Survey on Housing

Over 130 leaders and friends from across Sydney Alliance, including Vinnies, joined together to survey the Penrith community on the needs for affordable and secure rental housing in March.



Hundreds of people in Penrith completed the survey and spoke to us about the impact of housing costs on themselves and their family. The Vinnies' group included our Social Justice representatives for Parramatta Central Council, Jan Speers, and Sydney Archdiocese, Mary Yaager.

Survey results show strong community support in Penrith for the NSW Government to deliver more affordable rental housing.



VINNIES STAR RECEIVES TOP VOLUNTEER AWARD

Vinnies volunteer, Beverly Kerr (second left), was recognised with two accolades at the 2017 NSW Volunteer Awards. Mrs. Kerr was honoured as the pre-eminent overall Volunteer of the Year as well as Senior Volunteer of the Year 2017 for her work with Vinnies.

Bev has been volunteering with Vinnies since 2001 and has held a number of leadership positions, including her current roles of Vice-President of St Vincent de Paul Society NSW and President of Support Services.

Mrs. Kerr has been instrumental in the revitalisation of Freeman House in Armidale, a service which provides residential and community-based programs for adults experiencing homelessness and/or drug and alcohol addiction. Her work also includes coordinating emergency assistance to those affected by domestic violence, mental or physical health problems, and sudden poverty. She has campaigned for social justice to advance the rights of people seeking asylum in Australia. In addition to her state-wide advocacy, Mrs. Kerr remains a grassroots volunteer within her own local community of Corrimal in Wollongong.

In reaction to her awards, Mrs. Kerr said: "I'm a bit overwhelmed. Just very humbled, and very emotional. I get great self-satisfaction from helping people and seeing the end result in their lives."

Mrs. Kerr works seven days a week, and has no interest in lessening her service. She is mother to seven children and has twenty grandchildren, and lives with her husband and their blind dog.



It is with sadness that I leave a role which I had become so passionate about and dedicated to over the years. My journey with Vinnies began when I was 15, volunteering at a Vinnies Shop in northern Sydney; at 18, I went on to then become a tutor with the Vinnies SPARK program, and finally ended up as a Shop Assistant in Sydney's Inner West!

I've seen the most beautiful garments, antiques and second-hand treasures you can imagine and had the pleasure of processing them and passing them on to new loving owners. I've found vintage coats, the softest leather bags and shoes, fabulous fancy dress pieces, divine linens and silks, and rare vinyl records. I've dressed people for costume parties, school formals, weddings in hospitals, and much more!

Over the years I've met thousands of amazing customers and have been challenged by a few too. In my first few months I realised this was much more than a normal retail job, sorting donations and pricing funky second-hand clothes. We were there for a purpose, to raise money for those in need and to help the most vulnerable members of our community and it wasn't always easy.

Through hearing and witnessing stories of hardship, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, discrimination, poverty, and mental illness, I've developed an immense sense of gratitude for all I have and the life that I've lived so far. Some days I'd walk back to my car in tears after hearing the hardships of people we assist and wondering if I could come back. But I did. Because as challenging as it got, the work gave me purpose knowing in a very small way I was making a difference.

Op-shops play such an important role in not only fundraising to help our most disadvantaged community members, but also in providing an outlet for people to rescue AMAZING quality, one-of-a-kind garments from landfill and this is one of the greatest lessons I have learnt – the importance of recycling and up-cycling.

I might not be working there anymore but I'll always have a special place for Vinnies in my heart. My time at Vinnies has made me who I am and taught me so much.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN NEYLAN

Compeer is a community mental health program that aims to improve the quality of life and self-esteem of adults with a mental illness through one-to-one friendship with a caring volunteer. Friends meet up regularly for simple social activities, such as grabbing a bite to eat, going for a walk or visiting a local attraction.

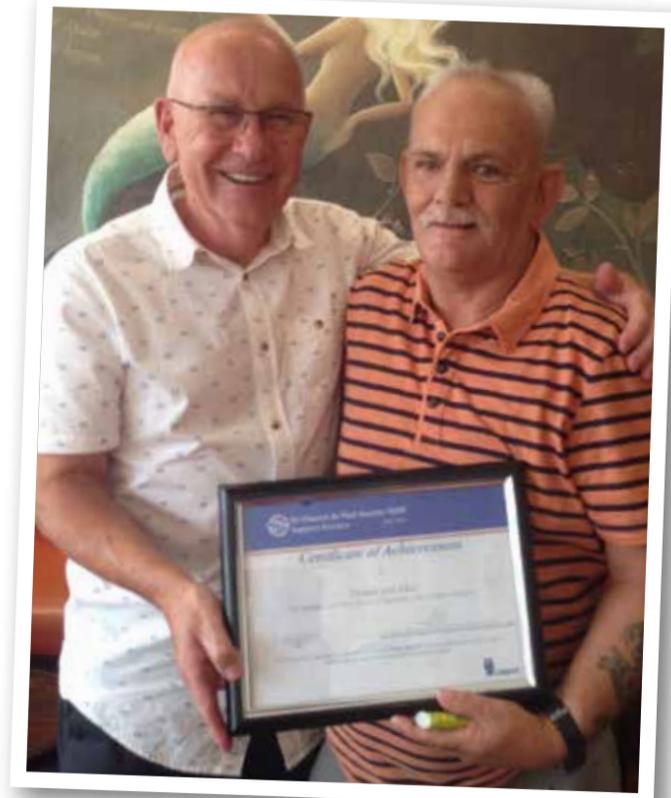
Q: What has been the most enjoyable thing about being a Compeer volunteer?

I guess it's the mutual enrichment both Dennis (right) and I have been able to experience over the years. I didn't fully realise when I joined Compeer that I would gain as much personal growth from our friendship as he has, especially given our family and health backgrounds are poles apart.

Compeer has allowed me to broaden my life considerably, in that I was able to move out of my comfort zone and into his world. From my working life, lunching with clients and associates in Martin Place, to joining Dennis for a BBQ lunch in the humble backyard of a Blacktown drop-in centre. I have been so privileged to get to know a totally different group of truly beautiful people, all trying to make the most of the situations they have found themselves in.

Q: How did it feel celebrating 15 years of friendship with Dennis?

The years have gone by so quickly and our separate lives have come a long way. It's quite amazing to look back on our journey and to realise how close our bond of friendship



has become. It is hard to put in words and for people to understand, but it's an absolute joy and blessing.

Q: What would you say to anyone thinking about volunteering for Compeer?

It's a wonderful Vinnies programme, which I highly recommend. The training and ongoing support you receive from the Compeer Coordinators is terrific and, throughout the year, you get to meet many other volunteers and their friends.

Regional President Takes Australia Day Award



Krystyna Whittaker, Regional President of the Liverpool Regional Council, won the local Fairfield Council Australia Day Volunteer of the Year Awards 2018.

Krystyna has been a volunteer for more than 30 years with Vinnies. She serves people in the Liverpool/Fairfield LGA by visiting them in their homes and assisting with financial and material needs. Krystyna also volunteers at the Community Support Centre.

After the ceremony one of the judges explained to Krystyna that she and her family were refugees from Vietnam and were supported by a local Vinnies Conference and it was something her family have never forgotten.



ACYF PAVING THE PATH TO 2018, THE YEAR OF YOUTH

In December 2017, Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher and the Sydney Archdiocese hosted the Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) at Sydney Olympic Park. The event theme 'Open New Horizons for Spreading Joy' was a challenge met by over 20,000 young people from across Australia.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW asked those at the Festival to 'put their faith into action' through a myriad of activities. Each morning of the three-day Festival, the Society ran a fundraising appeal underneath our 12-metre balloon arch with a battalion of members, volunteers and staff brandishing donation buckets.

The energy continued throughout the day as young people visited the Society's expo stall, exploring our history as presented on our six-metre-long timeline, purchasing merchandise, and grabbing books and other brochures and giveaways. The photo booth in particular was a big attraction, with young people and clergy taking photos to remember their encounter with us at ACYF. The Society had a strong presence in the Festival's 'Encounter Dome' due to the large number of activities organised.

The Society highlighted the life cycle of each dollar spent at a Vinnies pop-up shop. It was a huge success, clearing out a truckload of stock and raising vital funds for our services. Heightening the op-shopping fever were the Fashion Shows in collaboration with Royale Modelling Agency, whose models volunteered over the course of the Festival.

The Society's Social Justice expo focussed on garnering signed letters to be sent to the NW Premier on the issue

of housing affordability, and to the Prime Minister regarding the treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum. They exceeded expectations, receiving over 1,000 letters. The Society's social justice message was also reflected in the homelessness workshop which was a great eye-opener to many in the room. So too was our human library, a Q&A style session where the audience had the opportunity to ask about the many ways they could get involved.

In the 'Give Back and Pack' activity, festivalgoers had the opportunity to create care packages for people experiencing homelessness and to write them messages of hope and joy in decorated Christmas cards. Over 1,000 care packages were made and over 200 personal Christmas cards written.

The State Council and Executive Leadership Team were invited to experience the Festival for themselves. They greatly enjoyed participating in the Festival activities alongside participants and seeing the impact of the Society's stalls and activities.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW State President, Denis Walsh reflected: "It was exciting to see so many young Catholics from all around Australia gather together to celebrate their faith."

Launch of New State Council YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

Three youth representatives were recently welcomed to the State Council. Denis Walsh, NSW State Council President, described this as "a new beginning for the Society in NSW and one that will be driven by our younger members."

In April, Denis appointed Michelle Chahine the State Council Vice President for Youth and Adi Koneru and Maddie Sirris Deputy Vice Presidents. The new Youth Representatives are supported by Kathleen Thickett, State Council Vice President for Membership, Youth and Volunteers; and several State Support Office employees from the People and Culture Department.

Kathleen Thickett said: "We want our new recruits to feel empowered and valued. Their energy and enthusiasm will enliven all our members, young and old. I look forward to creating initiatives with them to grow a more welcoming and effective place for our members and volunteers to work."

Michelle Chahine explained, "With support and encouragement for young members to enhance their skills and abilities, NSW Vinnies Youth will be



empowered to lead and make positive contributions to the Society, their peers and their communities."

Participants discussed how youth have a desire to express their spirituality through passionate participation and are attracted to Vincentian service which is grounded in compassion and putting one's faith into action.

The group named one of their first priorities as encouraging all Central Councils to appoint at least one Youth Representative. To get in touch with our Youth Representatives please contact Liz Hayes at elizabeth.hayes@vinnies.org.au or (02) 9568 0231.

UNIVERSITY ORIENTATION WEEKS

Stalls were set up to support Vinnies Young Adult Conferences at UNSW and Sydney University, along with Vinnies Groups at the University of Notre Dame, University of Technology Sydney, the Australian Catholic University, and Macquarie University.

These were manned by volunteer students with the Society, keen to promote opportunities and to form campus groups. The stalls promoted interest in volunteering for programs, services and other activities.

Training for new volunteers was arranged through the Buddies Day, Green Team and Homework Help programs, along with involvement in Sydney Vinnies Vans.



Youth Reach Coffee Cart

Youth Reach operates as a drop-in centre for 11-24 year olds and offers a variety of early intervention programs and activities.

Youth Reach run a Café Skills training program to give young people the opportunity to gain confidence and credible work skills. The new Mobile Coffee Cart Program allows young people the opportunity to be part of a social enterprise that is economically sustainable and can lead to financial independence.



Trainees recently took part in the Family Day and Market Day events at the new Vinnies Brookvale Shop. The experience was invaluable as they had the opportunity to showcase the skills they have learnt in a customer-facing environment.

Vincentians Remembered



Don Clarke



Alan Kennedy



Jack Dempsey

DON CLARKE AND ALAN KENNEDY

In 2017, the St Patrick's Conference in Lithgow lost two of their long-standing members, Alan Kennedy (centre) and Don Clarke (left). Both of these men had worked tirelessly for the Society over many years.

Alan and his wife Margaret (deceased), who had also been a Vinnies member, moved from Armidale to Lithgow in 2007. It was not long before they were both back in the saddle within the Society as members and volunteers.

Alan, along with his conference work, also ran an after-school homework class for children whose parents had little schooling. He taught religious education in primary schools and played records for the elderly at a Lithgow Aged Care facility on weekends. He did this up until his death at the age of 90, on 24 October 2017. Alan and Margaret had both been awarded OAMs.

Don Clarke joined the Society at the age of 20. He helped on the Vinnies shop truck doing pick-ups and deliveries for over 50 years. He was treasurer for St Patrick's Conference for many years. Outside of his Society work, Don also coached tennis for children in the town.

Both Alan and Don were great mentors to new members, helping them settle in when they joined. Don also received a Society Lifetime Achievement Service Medal.

These men are sadly missed by the members of St Patrick's Conference and the Lithgow community in general.

May they rest in peace.

JACK DEMPSEY

Jack Dempsey (right) will be sadly missed. He was taken in a tragic car accident on Easter Sunday while driving with life-long friend, Noel Whighton.

Jack was very active at the Albury Vinnies Welfare and Support Centre in the Ritz Arcade. He interviewed and provided assistance to people with a variety of problems such as homelessness, medical expenses, food shortages, rent payments, financial counselling, and much more.

He had a special interest in the Charles O'Neill and Marillac housing facility in Albury that provided low-cost, permanent accommodation to those in need. Here Jack developed friendships with the residents and offered a compassionate ear to the residents, visiting them on an almost daily basis, even arranging some funerals if there were no next of kin.

Jack was also involved in early discussions regarding development of the new affordable housing project currently under construction in Olive Street Albury where 34 units will be available when completed.

A true Vincentian, we acknowledge the outstanding contribution Jack made to people experiencing disadvantage for over 54 years.

Rest in Peace Jack.



OUR LAY CATHOLIC SAINT

For the past few years, with the passionate encouragement of Bishop Terry Brady, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has begun some steps in the process of canonisation of our Australian co-founder Charles Gordon O'Neill.

In October 2017, NSW President Denis Walsh, CEO Jack de Groot and Director of Mission Leo Tucker met at the Polding Centre in Sydney with Bishops Anthony Randazzo and Terry Brady. During this meeting we discussed and discerned the question; why would the Church choose Charles O'Neill to be specially recognised for holiness?

Apart from his depth of faith, compassionate care for the disadvantaged, his establishment of the Society in Sydney and beyond, it was thought that essentially Charles was a faith-filled lay Catholic person who in the business of everyday life listened to God's inner calling to love and serve others especially those who were marginalised and

destitute. Such a model of spirituality is, not only for the Society but also for the wider Australian Catholic Church, vitally important.

Charles' spirituality was based in everyday life, nourished by the Sacraments and personal prayer and sustained by understanding Christ in the poor and the poor in Christ. A lay Catholic faith is our legacy as Vincentians. It is a spirituality imbued in humanity and in many ways the opening words of the document *Gaudium et Spes* gives a lay spirituality much to ponder: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of humanity of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ" (1965)

In February this year I had the privilege of delivering into the eager hands of St Patrick's Church Hill Parish Priest, Fr. Michael Whelan, the cast bust of Charles Gordon O'Neill. The parish is celebrating important anniversary milestones this year and Fr. Michael wanted to highlight throughout the

year significant contributions to the history of this remarkable parish, of course Charles O'Neill is one!

Fr. Michael suggested that the bust may possibly be placed in the courtyard at the door to the crypt areas where the first Society meeting was held in July 1881 by Charles O'Neill with Fr. Peter Piquet as the first Spiritual Advisor. A blessing of the bust will be held later in the year.

I would encourage all Vincentians to continue to pray the prayer for the canonisation of Charles as we move forward: Charles O'Neill, pray for us.



Leo Tucker

State Director of Mission and Spirituality

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Images and names have been changed to protect the privacy of the people we assist.