



St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*

# Vision

A publication of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW  
**SPRING/SUMMER 2012**

CEO SLEEPOUT

**SPONSOR THE POTENTIAL**

FREEMAN HOUSE

**MARGARET DRUITT  
DAYCARE CENTRE**

WYONG VINNIES RETAIL CENTRE

**HELPING REMOTE COMMUNITIES**

NATIONAL YOUTH CONGRESS



Vision is produced by the Community and Corporate Relations department, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, and is distributed free of charge through the Society to Catholic parishes, schools and relevant entities in NSW.

**Supervising Editor:** Julie McDonald

**Editor:** Yolanda Saiz

**Art Director:** Claudia Williams

**Distribution:** Ozanam Industries, a Special Work of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW (02) 9807 4066 [www.ozanamindustries.org.au](http://www.ozanamindustries.org.au)

**All correspondence and contributions can be sent to:**

Communications Manager  
Community and Corporate Relations  
St Vincent de Paul Society  
PO Box 5, Petersham NSW 2049  
Email: [yolanda.saiz@vinnies.org.au](mailto:yolanda.saiz@vinnies.org.au) Phone: (02) 9568 0293

**State Council:** Ray Reynolds (President), Peter Leckie, Beverley Kerr, Gwen Sampson, Paul Shiel, Matthew Kirkham

**Central Council Presidents:** Kerry Muir, Bob Lulham, Barry Finch, Brian Goodall, Col Parker, Alan Ruff, Barry Jones, Don Jones, Vince Toohey, Cynthia Fenemore

Disclaimer: The views expressed in Vision are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Responsibility for the content of this publication is taken by Julie McDonald, CCR General Manager.

© St Vincent de Paul Society NSW 2012 ABN: 46 472 591 335

**We'd love to hear what the Society is doing in your area. Send us a letter or email, or call with an idea for a story or news piece: [yolanda.saiz@vinnies.org.au](mailto:yolanda.saiz@vinnies.org.au) or (02) 9568 0293.**



5



17

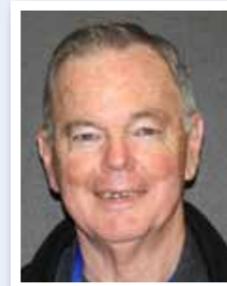
21



26

- 4 MEMBERS NEWS
- 10 COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE GIVING
- 12 YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS
- 16 FEATURES
- 31 SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**Dear friends,**

Welcome to the Spring/Summer edition of Vision, which highlights the important work being undertaken by our members, volunteers and staff to address social injustice and help people who are living on the margins of society.

In this edition, 'Members News' will tell you of the critical work being undertaken by our dedicated members across the state, as well as celebrate their personal milestones and achievements.

Starting on page 12, you will read of the great work of our youth and young adult members, who continue the great tradition of St Vincent de Paul in serving the poor through Christ. You will also see a personal account of the learning and spirituality that occurred at the National Youth Congress and read about the unique opportunity experienced by participants as

part of the Immersion Program.

We should also be very proud of the great work being undertaken by our Special Works and you will read how services such as Margaret DrUITT Day Care Centre, Ozanam Learning Centre, Youth Housing Macarthur and Freeman House are changing lives every day. I am sure that Krystal's story will touch you as it did me when she spoke of her experience at this year's Vinnies CEO Sleepout.

As we launch our Christmas Appeal, we should all spare a thought for the many Australians who will be alone and struggling at what should be a special time of year. I ask that we all remember the words of St Vincent de Paul who said: "Go to the poor: you will find God."

Yours sincerely,

**Ray Reynolds**

President, NSW State Council  
St Vincent de Paul Society

## CEO'S MESSAGE



**Dear members,**

I feel very privileged to be appointed CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, an organisation with such a long and proud history of providing assistance to people experiencing disadvantage. The dedication and courage of the

Society's founders should inspire all of us to put our faith into action by addressing the inequality that exists in our community.

I come to the role with a mix of experience in the private, not-for-profit and government sectors which I hope will be of benefit to the Society. Starting my career as a chartered accountant, I eventually moved into the community sector working for the Brotherhood of St Laurence and then as CEO of Sacred Heart Mission for nine years. Most recently I worked at the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in a social policy role.

I was particularly attracted to the Society because of its grass roots nature. The fact that this approach is central to the way the Society operates means it is well placed

to make a real difference in the lives of people and communities. A key part of my role is to ensure you get the support to do this work well.

Australia is a strong and prosperous nation with much to be proud of. However, we still have a responsibility to advocate on behalf of those we work with; to share their stories and highlight what can be done to address the challenges they face.

I am also pleased to be joining the Society as it finalises its Strategic Plan for the next five years. The plan creates a strong platform to make the Society more sustainable and improve its capacity to assist people in rebuilding their lives.

The Society is a wonderful example of the good that can be achieved when people come together for a common cause. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the coming months and building my understanding of this inspirational organisation.

Yours sincerely,

**Michael Perusco**

CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

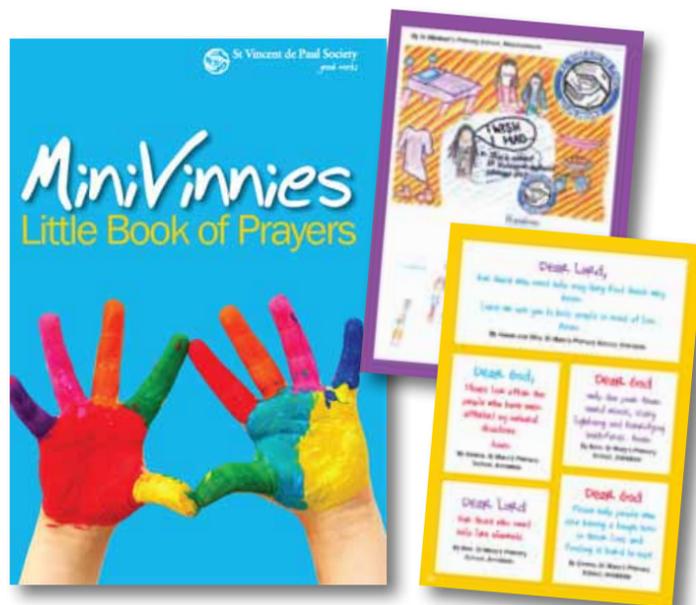
## TONY RYAN: PRESIDENT OF ST PATRICK'S CONFERENCE SWANSEA

Tony Ryan joined the St Patrick's Conference in Swansea towards the end of 2010, with the intention of remaining an active member for many years. Sadly due to ill health, Tony has been forced to resign from his position as President and from his work with the Conference.

While Tony's association with the St Vincent de Paul Society has been relatively brief, it is by no means less appreciated. For the past eighteen months Tony has made a wonderful contribution to the people most in need in his community. His work and friendship will be missed by his fellow Conference members.



Mary and Tony Ryan at his farewell lunch



## A HAMPER FULL OF PRAYERS

Our Lady Help of Christians Conference in Sawtell is reaching out this Christmas to spread spirituality in the community by distributing the Mini Vinnies Little Book of Prayers. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, Conference members will prepare hampers filled with Christmas cake, Christmas pudding, money vouchers and new toys for the children. A copy of the Mini Vinnies Little Book of Prayers will be placed in each of the hampers to be given to families experiencing disadvantage in the Sawtell area.

## SPIRITUAL DAY TO CELEBRATE 'YEAR OF GRACE'

On June 23, Sr Anne, Spiritual Director of the Orara Region, held a special Spiritual Day for 20 participants at the Coffs Harbour Vinnies Centre. The theme of the day was 'The Year of Grace' and it was attended by Vincentians from Urunga, Bellingen, Sawtell and Coffs Harbour.

Photo: Sr Anne (centre) with fellow Vincentians at their Spiritual Day.



Conference President Des O'Toole and Alstonville Conference members celebrate with Glad Kingdom on her 87th birthday

# GLAD TO SERVE AT VINNIES ALSTONVILLE

Like so many of our dedicated volunteers, Glad Kingdom has had a long association with the St Vincent de Paul Society, having spent the past 25 years as a valued team member of the Vinnies Retail Centre Alstonville.

During this time, Glad has been the gentle and friendly face of the Centre, often the first point of contact for people when they are in need. Glad welcomes every person as if they were an old friend, listening to countless stories from distressed clients seeking help from a compassionate heart.

Glad began her time at the Clothing Recycling Centre at Wollongbar, moving with Vinnies from a mobile caravan to the old Wales Bank in Main Street and then finally to the new Retail Centre in Alstonville. Glad says that

each location presented its own particular challenges but these were overcome with the knowledge that she was part of a much needed service in the community.

Glad spends a lot of her day talking with clients and organising home visitations, as well as hours spent sifting through many of the items donated to the Centre. From sorting antique bric-a-brac and warm blankets to the latest video games and books, there is always a happy smile and an aura of peace and calmness that surrounds Glad in her workplace.

Recently, Glad celebrated her 87th birthday and the St Vincent de Paul Society Conference members, together with all her friends at Vinnies, thank her for the tireless and wonderful work she does for her community.

## 50TH ORDINATION ANNIVERSARY FOR BISHOP WALKER

On 21 July Bishop David Walker celebrated the 50th Anniversary of his ordination as a priest with a celebratory Mass at Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Waitara. Barry Finch, President Broken Bay Central Council joined other well-wishers to celebrate with Bishop David.

Pictured are Bishop Kevin Manning (Administrator Wilcannia Forbes Diocese), Bruno Spedalieri (Broken Bay Central Council), Bishop David Walker, Barry Finch (President, Broken Bay Central Council) and Bishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto (Papal Nuncio).



## BROKEN BAY BBQS AWAY



The Broken Bay Central Council recently held two very successful fundraising BBQs to raise money for the Assist-a-Student Scheme.

The Pymble and West Pymble Conferences raised approximately \$1600 at their Belrose Bunnings BBQ. The Davidson Conference held a fundraiser at Frenchs Forest Woolworths. All the materials including the BBQ and gazebo were kindly donated by Forestway Woolworths.

Both events helped the Conferences sponsor a number of students via \$70 study scholarships. Well done to Pymble, West Pymble and Davidson Conferences!

## SHARING THE VINCENTIAN SPIRIT



Ken Martin

**Ken Martin has been a long standing member of the St Vincent de Paul Society and dedicated volunteer in the Broken Hill community for more than 50 years.**

Ken has been the OH&S representative and Disaster Recovery Officer for the Society for many years, travelling thousands of kilometres carrying out his duties. Ken is a great contributor to the excellent state of Work

Health and Safety programs in the Wilcannia Forbes region.

Along with volunteering his time with the Society, Ken has been heavily involved with the St Patrick's Race Club and St John's Ambulance where he first joined as a member back in 1968.

His giving does not stop there, as Ken is also a volunteer and a board member at Southern Cross Care, helping set up the successful 'Men's Shed' at the Harold Williams Home.

In recognition for his tireless service Ken was awarded the Broken Hill City Council 'Citizen of the Year' award on Australia Day 2012. Ken is a Knight of the Southern Cross and recently received notification from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of his promotion to 'Commander in the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem' for his long standing and outstanding service as a volunteer.

The Society thanks Ken for his incredible volunteering work with Vinnies and throughout the Broken Hill region.

## LONGTIME VOLUNTEERS TURN 80

The Vincentian community of Cobar recently celebrated the 80th birthday of three of their wonderful long time volunteers, Nada, Jean and Kath. The three ladies and their friends from the Vinnies Centre all had a great time celebrating this milestone.

The Society would like to thank these generous women for their efforts and many years of dedicated service.



Celebrating a milestone

## ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY ANNUAL MASS

HIS EMINENCE GEORGE CARDINAL PELL WILL  
CELEBRATE MASS AT ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL  
CNR ST MARY'S ROAD & COLLEGE STREET, SYDNEY  
ON THURSDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2012 AT 10.30AM  
MASS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A LIGHT LUNCHEON  
IN THE COLLEGE HALL

RSVP to (02) 9568 0262 or events@vinnies.org.au by Friday 9 November.

## THE BREAKFAST CLUB

**Each morning in a local Catholic primary school in East Maitland, nutritious breakfasts are served up to about 60 students who may otherwise go hungry. The Breakfast Club initiative is run by the St Vincent de Paul Society in the Maitland-Newcastle Central Council area at St Joseph's Primary School.**

The program provides cereal, fruit and toast to students, ensuring they get a healthy start to the day. Studies have shown that even a basic breakfast can increase mental performance allowing children to pay better attention and increase concentration.

The Breakfast Club has been running for over a decade thanks to the wonderful efforts of the East Maitland Conference who coordinate and serve the breakfasts each week.

Anne Horadam, Coordinator of the Breakfast Club says the Club does more than provide food; offering a safe and comforting environment for children to visit before school.

"It is a place where they can socialise in a supervised environment without any of the complications that the playground might bring. It gives us an opportunity to teach the children the manners and skills of social eating from a young age," says Ms Horadam.

The kindness of children to each other enriches and nourishes the experience for the volunteers and keeps them coming back.

The volunteers are a diverse group ranging from retirees to university and high school students. Having older students volunteer has been beneficial for the younger kids. Ms Horadam says that "these students are brilliant young people and such wonderful role models for our children."

The East Maitland Breakfast Club program has had a great impact on the community, bringing together families, teachers and volunteers to provide the best opportunities for children to learn.

"The simple gift of food from local businesses creates ripples that affect those people and the school community. To me that's the St Vincent de Paul Society's work in a nutshell," concludes Ms Horadam.



## MEMBERS LEND A HAND TO THOSE MOST IN NEED

**The St Vincent de Paul Society has a wide-reaching network of members that are relied upon to provide care and support at a grass-roots level, with a key function being visiting people who are struggling in their homes.**

Members in a Sydney Conference have been busy helping a young family from Afghanistan who are doing their best to build a new life in Australia.

Baher was born in Afghanistan and has been in Australia for eight years. He is married to Ara, who is also from Afghanistan but lived most of her life in Holland. Ara arrived in Australia on a fiancé visa and was not allowed to work nor was she entitled to any government support for her first two years in Australia. Ara became highly stressed after her arrival and her forced withdrawal from the workforce.

Prior to his marriage, Baher purchased a house but with only three days work per week, could barely make the

repayments and was left with very little money to live on each week.

Last year, Baher and Ara welcomed a baby into their home. Despite being overjoyed, the financial pressures increased.

Seeing their plight, Conference members took the young family under their wing. They have paid for dental treatment, utility bills, land rates, and regularly supply nappies and other necessities. The Conference also looks to help the family in the long term and arranged for Baher to speak to one of the Society's financial planners.

All across the state, St Vincent de Paul Society members are making a difference to the lives of the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in our community. These members are a living testament to words of the Society's founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam who said, "let us do without hesitation whatever good is in our hands."



## HOTELS HAVE HEARTS

The seventh Hotels Have Hearts Gala Dinner surpassed all expectations raising more than \$450,000 for Matthew Talbot Homeless Services. The record breaking event, held on 29 May 2012 at the Hilton Sydney, is testament to the tireless work of the organising committee. These outstanding results would not be possible without the support of the Australian Hotels Association. (L-R: John Ryan, Stephen Harvey, Kim Maloney, Br Dan Stafford C.Ss.R, Jenny Farrell, John Lucas and Martin Short).

## AGL LIGHTS UP HOME VISITATION

We are excited to announce that over the next six years AGL will dedicate almost \$2million to the St Vincent de Paul Society to support our home visitation program in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. As part of this pledge, AGL will work with the Society to develop Energy Advice Packs which will include support and information for families struggling with their energy bills. This will be distributed by the Society's strong network of more than 40,000 members and volunteers nationally.

## A LASTING BOND

The Society has a long standing relationship with pharmaceutical sales and marketing company, Janssen Pharmaceuticals. Janssen has been supporting the St Vincent de Paul Society for over 20 years. Janssen has made a particularly outstanding contribution by giving \$150,000 over 3 years to the Society's domestic violence services in order to provide funding to cover the costs of rental bonds for women and their families as they make the transition into private rental accommodation.

## BE INSPIRED BY VINNIES

'Be Inspired by Vinnies' is the latest campaign to promote Vinnies Retail Centres and aims to show people how clothing and accessories from our Centres can be put together to create an outfit to suit any occasion.

The promotion of Vinnies Retail Centres is very important given the huge contribution they make in funding our Special Works and services. We are delighted that the photo shoot for this campaign was produced at no cost, made possible with the help of some very wonderful organisations and volunteers who were happy to lend their time and expertise to support Vinnies.

Kelly Doust, a prominent fashion author and stylist, styled and modelled in the shoot and has also committed to becoming a style ambassador for Vinnies Retail Centres. Former Vinnies Youth Housing client Krystal (read her story on page 23), former Xavier's House resident Aaron, and keen Vinnies volunteers Shane, Maggie, Louis and Maya modelled for the shoot.

To help on the day were Nigel Hall from De Lorenzo Hair and Cosmetic Research, talented makeup artists Moana Saiz-Rutene and Jody Puha, photographers Robbie and Andre from Dimension Studios (a part of PMP Digital) and videographer Noel from Skip Film Productions.

The underlying message of the campaign focuses on the connection between shopping at Vinnies and supporting the local community. Materials can be seen in store now.

For more information go to [www.visitvinnies.org.au](http://www.visitvinnies.org.au)



## WHITE LADY FUNERALS SUPPORT VINNIES

After volunteering with the Parramatta Night Patrol Vinnies Van, staff at White Lady Funerals decided to become more involved with the Society. Setting up an online donation page and placing a donation box in one of their offices, they were able to raise over \$1,200 for the Vinnies Winter Appeal. They also approached local media to raise awareness of their Winter Food Appeal which brought in mass donations of food and blankets that were distributed to clients via the Night Patrol Van.



## GENESIAN THEATRE DEDICATE SHOW TO VINNIES

The good people at the Genesian Theatre have raised \$1,500 for the Society. The theatre's Director, Barry Nielsen said they are very community-minded and dedicate fifty percent of the box office proceeds from one night of every show to a charity. These important funds will go towards the Sydney Archdiocese Central Council Conference of the Maternal Heart in Sydney's CBD, which runs a homeless drop in centre. Thank you to everyone who attended the show and to the Genesian Theatre for nominating the Society as one of their charities!



## VINNIES CHAMPIONS GO EXTRA MILE

Thank you to all the dedicated runners who literally went the extra mile to fundraise for Vinnies in the Sydney Morning Herald Cole Classic and Sun Run and the Sun Herald City 2 Surf. The Vinnies Champions raised a staggering \$15,000.

Special thanks go out to the Hilton Team who raised \$6,500; to Daly International who raised \$2,600 specifically for Mingaletta Family Centre in Eagle Vale and to the Vinnies Staff Team who raised \$3,215.

Congratulations and thank you to all our Vinnies Champions!

## STOCKLAND BOOSTS VINNIES WINTER APPEAL

In June this year Stockland Wetherill Park supported the Vinnies Winter Appeal by running a sales initiative in their shopping centre. For every purchase made over \$10 at the Wetherill Park Centre, a \$1 donation was made to the Vinnies Winter Appeal.

The campaign raised a grand total of \$5,437 which was presented to the St Vincent de Paul Society in support of those people struggling through the colder winter months.

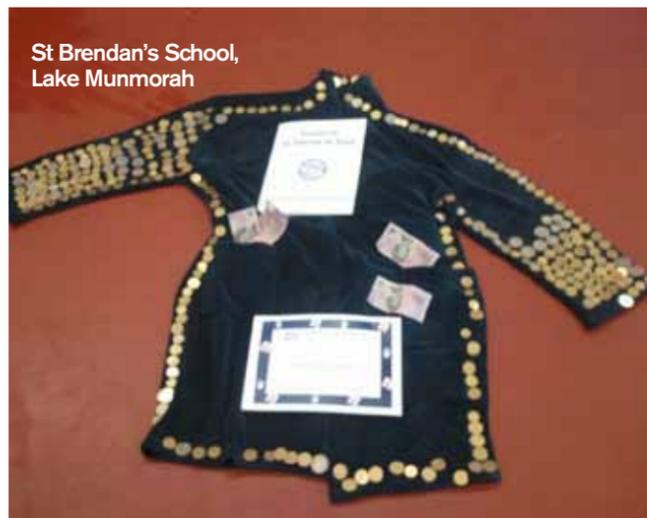
# INNOVATION IN WINTER APPEAL SUPPORT

The Broken Bay Youth team worked with many local schools to support the Vinnies Winter Appeal and raise awareness for people experiencing homelessness. This year's ideas were particularly creative and inspiring. Some of the great activities included:

- 'Pyjama Days'; in order to wear pyjamas on the day both students and staff had to contribute a gold coin donation to the school.
- A number of schools ran clothing drives and this resulted in a huge response with Vinnies receiving good quality pre-loved items, new clothing and blankets for distribution.
- The Youth team have also been assisting families manage the weekly budget by providing food hampers during home visits.



A conga-line of cans from St Cecilia's, Wyong



St Brendan's School, Lake Munmorah



'Getting Handsy' organisers with Sydney Youth Representative, Clare Mullen and Sydney Youth and Young Adult Coordinator, Paul Longobardi

## GETTING HANDSY

GETTING HANDSY is an annual local event, where young adult Telstra workmates and friends give to a local organisation or initiative. This year, Vinnies Youth was the grateful recipient and with the help of the Getting Handsy organisers were able to hold a clothing drive event. The room, music and hospitality services were all donated by The Gazebo and the entry fee was a donation of clothing suitable for other young adults. Sydney Vinnies Youth will now donate the clothing to some of our Special Works for distribution to people most in need.

## LORETO KIRRIBILLI PROVIDES WINTER WARMTH

The hard working students and staff at Loreto Kirribilli have helped raise almost \$2,500 for the St Vincent de Paul Society's Winter Appeal. Thank you to everyone who contributed and for sharing their kindness and warmth with countless families this winter.

### SNAPSHOT



ROCK CLIMBING AT THE ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE TWEED HEADS BUDDIES DAY

# BUDDIES MENTORING PROGRAM

The Vinnies Buddies Mentoring program has been successfully providing vulnerable children from Western Sydney with an opportunity to build social skills and friendships.

The program is run by young adult volunteers from Parramatta Central Council.

The days are run for groups of up to twenty children and include varied activities such as sports, museum visits, fire safety skills, gardening and tree planting. The children also enjoy cooking days where they whip up muffins, pizzas and rice paper rolls.

More adventures are planned for later in the year including a learn-to-swim program and bike riding days.



Volunteers at the Maitland/Newcastle Teen Camps

## FOCUS ON TEEN LEADERSHIP

Since 2010 the Maitland/Newcastle Central Council has been focusing on developing initiatives around teenager leadership. In that time, there have been two summer Teen Leadership Camps and eight Teen Leadership Days. These days are designed to recognise leadership qualities in young people as well as build their self-esteem and guide future choices.

Sarah and Ben first came to Vinnies as young children aged 9 and 10 from a single parent family. Over the next three years they formed strong and meaningful relationships with Vinnies volunteers. The local youth team identified that there was a need to re-energise the teen programs so that children like Sarah and Ben could continue their development as they grew older.

During evening affirmations at one camp, a very shy and quietly spoken Sarah said she was grateful for her little brother Ben who was also on camp. This year Sarah turns 16 and the hope is that she will become an honorary Vinnies Youth Leader bringing with her a wealth of knowledge and compassion nurtured over many years.

# ST STANISLAUS ACTS JUSTLY

In early August a social justice event was held at St Stanislaus College in Bathurst with the topic 'Act Justly: Refugees and Asylum Seekers'. The forum asked, "For those who've come from across the seas, we've boundless plains to share." How true are these words from the Australian National Anthem in Australia today?

Around 140 people attended the forum which was organised by a committee made up of two Youth Conferences from St Stanislaus, a Youth Conference from MacKillop College, and adults from Bathurst, Orange and Cowra, including a number of Society members.

Father Paul Devitt, Parish Priest of Orange was the MC for the forum with Dr Mary Anne Loughry, a Sister of Mercy who is considered an expert on refugees and asylum seekers, the keynote speaker.

Illustrating the plight of many of the people that are trying to make a new life in Australia was speaker Jonathon Ngor, a refugee from South Sudan, who



shared his touching personal story with the audience. After Jonathon was orphaned at the age of seven when both parents were killed, he came to Australia. Jonathon spoke about his journey and how over time he has slowly rebuilt his life having recently completed a degree at the Univeristy of New South Wales.



Sydney Mini Vinnies gathering – Australian Catholic University Chapel, Strathfield

## SYDNEY MINI VINNIES GATHERING

Over 200 students, staff and parents from 53 Mini Vinnies Primary Schools were joined by staff from Sydney Vinnies Youth, State Youth, the Sydney Catholic Education Office and the local Regional Vinnies Conference President for a beautiful mass and celebration. The children worshipped, got involved in some workshops and then mingled over a BBQ lunch.

## SOUP'S ON US PROJECT



As part of the Australian Detention Centre's National Day of Giving Back, which encourages young people in custody to get involved in community based projects, Vinnies Youth across the state were the recipients of painted bowls and mugs.

Young people involved in the initiative designed and created the gifts that Vinnies Youth teams can put in the hands of young people experiencing disadvantage.

In Sydney, staff from Sydney Vinnies and Client Support staff from Redfern gladly received the gifts from some very creative young women involved in the initiative through the Sunning Hill School and the Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre.

Sydney Vinnies Youth and Young Adult Coordinator, Paul Longobardi said: "The students' willingness in giving back to the community was a celebration for all involved."

In Grafton, Vinnies Youth also received decorated soup bowls designed by students from Acmena Juvenile Justice Centre. Speaking about the initiative, Brian Goodall, President of the St Vincent de Paul Society's Lismore Central Council said: "We are so proud to be the recipients of this wonderful gesture from the students. We appreciate their effort and the soup bowls will certainly be put to good use."



Sydney Vinnies staff share in the significance of the gesture



Lismore Central Council members and staff at Acmena Juvenile Justice Centre

## ARMIDALE WINTER WARMERS



Christian Vimpany, Ethan Bain, Elizabeth Chard, Ruby Beatty and Sari Campbell display the Mini Vinnies collection of socks and scarves



Executive leaders of Mini Vinnies at St Joseph's School Glen Innes, Genevieve Whitehead (President), Gracie Martin and Zari Campbell

In Armidale, Mini Vinnies members spent the winter months collecting socks, scarves and beanies to ease the cold on those people struggling to make ends meet. The items were donated to the local Conference for distribution and to the Vinnies Retail Centre.



# FAREWELL FROM GRAHAM WEST



**Dear Friends,**

Many of you know that the St Vincent de Paul Society has played an important part in my life, just as it has for most members. I think it's important to begin by highlighting that I'm simply taking off my CEO hat and putting back on my volunteer one, as my family and I make the final steps in our great tree change adventure. In a way it's no different to how we, as Vincentians, chop and change the roles we have within our Conferences and Special Works.

Tanya and I have packed up our bags and moved to rural NSW about 10 minutes out of Berridale in the south of the State. I have started as the CEO of the National Australia Day Council based in Canberra, an exciting role that plays a part in celebrating our shared Australian identity and highlighting many great Australians.

I still plan on being active in the Society and will continue to be part of the conversation around its future directions and co-operation in our housing and homeless services, as well as being involved in other works in the local area.

During my time as CEO I saw the Society transition from a period of uncertainty to a unified and co-operative Council, not to say there is not hearty debate held on issues! At the same time I hope that our State Support Office team have been able to increase their ability to reach out and provide assistance where needed.

There are challenges that remain for the Society, some

are new and may be led by government or changing community requirements, others such as membership, have been discussed as long as I have been involved in the Society but are becoming more critical as membership of institutions becomes less permanent and attractive.

Our organisation must reach out to embrace a new generation in a welcoming and empowering manner. The Society belongs to its members but its membership is open to all who seek to live our mission and provide direct service to those in need.

The Society must welcome the young and the young at heart, recognising that any mistakes made by youth and enthusiasm are simply different mistakes to the mistakes that we all make. We must seek to see Christ not only in those we assist, but in those who challenge us, and also in each other.

I look forward to being part of this process as we experience the vision of Frederic Ozanam and the other founders through new eyes, in an ever changing world.

Yours sincerely,

Graham West



## PRAYER FOR THE CANONISATION OF BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

In September 2012 a report was released by Amin A. de Tarrazi, Chairman of the Commission for the cause of canonisation of Blessed Frederic Ozanam. This report included the final and official prayer for the canonisation.

The report explains "the enclosed prayer we presently suggest, with the full agreement of our President General, is the synthesis of a long patient and careful thought of several protagonists."

Chairman de Tarrazi hopes that Blessed Frederic Ozanam's birthday bicentenary in 2013 will "warm up our enthusiasm and strengthen our zeal so that, thanks to our joined endeavours, we shall be able, as soon as possible, to invoke St Frederic Ozanam!"

*Lord,*

*You made Blessed Frederic Ozanam a witness of the Gospel, full of wonder at the mystery of the Church.*

*You inspired him to alleviate poverty and injustice and endowed him with untiring generosity in the service of all who were suffering.*

*In family life, he revealed a most genuine love as a son, brother, husband and father.*

*In secular life, his ardent passion for the truth enlightened his thought, writing and teaching.*

*His vision for our society was a network of charity encircling the world and he instilled St Vincent de Paul's spirit of love, boldness and humility.*

*His prophetic social vision appears in every aspect of his short life, together with the radiance of his virtues.*

*We thank you Lord, for those many gifts and we ask, if it is your will; the grace of a miracle through the intercession of Blessed Frederic Ozanam.*

*May the Church proclaim his holiness, as a saint, a providential light for today's world!*

*We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## ANTI-POVERTY WEEK

14 - 20 October 2012

This October marked the tenth year of Anti-Poverty week in Australia, where communities were encouraged to get involved with activities that highlight the issues and devastating effects of poverty in Australia and overseas.

While many of us never have to face the tough choice of skipping a meal in order to buy your child's school uniform, 11% of Australians living below the poverty line are faced with these types of decisions every day.

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW CEO Michael Perusco was the Co-Chair of the Anti-Poverty Week Committee in NSW. Anti-Poverty Week is a great way for the public to participate in community activities that develop an understanding of poverty.

Mr Perusco said, "The St Vincent de Paul Society is committed to assisting people who experience poverty and hardship, which is why we are proud to be part of the Anti-Poverty Week initiative."

Anti-Poverty Week aims to strengthen general understanding about the consequences and causes of poverty and to encourage community action and participation in finding solutions to these problems. In Australia, the support and success of Anti-Poverty Week has grown every year from just four activities in 2002 to hundreds of activities in 2012. Events such as public forums, information stalls, fundraisers and projects were held all over Australia in local councils, community centres, schools, social clubs, cafes and hotels.

The St Vincent de Paul Society mission is to work with people affected by poverty by offering a "hand up" to those who are most vulnerable.

For more information on Anti-Poverty Week go to [www.antipovertyweek.org.au](http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au)

# CEOS SLEEP ROUGH FOR VINNIES



CEOs bunk down for the night



Over 230 CEOs slept out in Sydney



Ann Sherry (Carnival Australia)



Gail Kelly (Westpac Banking Corporation)



Ian Narev (Commonwealth Bank), Peter McIntyre (Transgrid) and Ellie Comerford (Genworth)

**Every night tens of thousands of Australians find themselves without a home. Some sleep on the streets, others in the family car, many find themselves couch-surfing or in crisis accommodation services.**

The 2012 Vinnies CEO Sleepout in June was held in capital cities across Australia, and sought to make homelessness an issue discussed openly and frankly in the search for long-term solutions.

By sleeping rough for one night in winter, senior business and opinion leaders raise crucial awareness and funds in support of men, women and children for whom having no home is a reality.

The event raised \$5.3 million nationally for our homeless services, ensuring that we can continue to help get people back on the road to independence. The \$1.9 million raised by participants in Sydney will support two key homeless services: Our Lady of the Way refuge for older, female victims of family violence and the Matthew Talbot Food Program. An additional \$200,000 has been allocated to regional services across NSW.

Participants in the Wollongong chapter of the Vinnies CEO Sleepout raised \$82,000 which will directly assist homeless services in the Illawarra.

Highlighting the long-term value of this unique event, the \$1.5million raised by CEOs who participated in the 2011 Vinnies CEO Sleepout in Sydney, has enabled us to maintain existing homeless services and establish new programs including:

- Ongoing funding for 30 crisis beds at the Matthew Talbot Hostel in Woolloomooloo
- New health services at the Matthew Talbot Hostel including a smoking cessation clinic and a metabolic clinic for disease prevention
- The development of new activity and training programs

at the Ozanam Learning Centre, including a TAFE accredited course in literacy and numeracy skills

- A refit for training rooms and activities for our Beyond the Link program that assists men experiencing homelessness build the life skills and self-esteem they need to settle into independent housing
- Four newly employed case workers and \$50,000 worth of material aid packages to support families and singles through their transition from homelessness into independent housing
- Establishing a night patrol service in Wollongong to deliver food, beverages, blankets and companionship to people living on the streets.

# HEARTFELT THANKS

At the core of the St Vincent de Paul Society's work is the commitment to help the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in our community. In 2011/12, the Society assisted close to 620,000 people in NSW alone.

The St Vincent de Paul Society helps people through home visitations, its Centres, and a number of services including: homeless services; assistance to migrants and refugees; home, hospital, prison and detention centre visitation; clothing and material assistance; mental health programs; vocational services for people with a disability; drug, alcohol and gambling counselling services; financial counselling; disaster recovery; and food vans.

Recently the Society received this letter of thanks for the kindness and compassion shown by members.

*Dear Sir,*  
*I have just been released from NSW Prisons, I spent nine months incarcerated.*  
*I write to express my untold appreciation for the men of the Society who faithfully visited me during this time. They experienced great difficulty dealing with the Corrective Services, but, in spite of the obstacles placed in their way they persisted and remained faithful.*  
*I come from interstate and have no family or friends in NSW, so, you can somewhat appreciate the importance of their visits.*  
*They will always have my support as best I can from afar. I am sure that the Society would have equal support for this important, but somewhat hidden work.*  
*I pray that this small but highly effective group will grow in numbers with persons of equal calibre.*  
*Yours faithfully,*  
 K.P.



## OFFERING FOOD AND FRIENDSHIP

**Martin Place was recently converted into an outdoor dining room as Sydney Archdiocese Central Council Night Patrol held a special dinner event for people experiencing homelessness.**

The event, held during Homeless Person's Week, provided a sit-down meal to people who regularly rely on Sydney Night Patrol. The special feast included a three course meal cooked and served by volunteers.

The dinner was held on St Mary MacKillop's Feast Day and her spirit of generosity resonated throughout the evening as guests not only enjoyed a wonderful meal, but were surprised by the winter warmer gifts made by the Sisters of St Joseph and the school community from MacKillop College Bathurst.

Sydney Night Patrol Coordinator, Che Walsh-Kemp said that the community event brought together people from all walks of life to share a meal and conversation.

"I believe the event had a significant impact on the people who attended. Many of the guests shook my hand and thanked me personally for organising this special occasion," she said.

The event was a great success due to the partnership between the St Vincent de Paul Society and other organisations including Commonwealth Bank, City of Sydney Council, Milkcrate Theatre and OzHarvest.

## GIVING A VOICE TO HOMELESSNESS

The Matthew Talbot Hostel in Woolloomooloo was abuzz with activity recently as Grammy winning musician and The Voice judge Seal paid a visit to the Hostel and the Ozanam Learning Centre (OLC).

Seal met with clients and spent some time learning about the Centres programs and facilities.

Seal met with Jon, a budding musician undertaking classes as part of the OLC's music program. Seal and Jon spent some time in the Centre's music room, where they discussed everything from living on the streets, the importance of music in their lives, and even Jon's chances of trying out for The Voice next year.

Seal spoke frankly about his experience of homelessness, which saw him on the streets at the age of 15, fleeing an abusive father.

"I too was homeless, I slept in subways, I know what it is like to be without a home," he said.

Seal explained his visit to services like the Matthew Talbot Hostel and OLC help him reconnect and noted that for many people experiencing homelessness the sense of not



being noticed can be devastating.

"Part of the battle is being heard or just knowing that someone actually sees you," said Seal.

The OLC provides opportunities for people to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness. To achieve this, the Centre offers a range of education programs, recreation activities, a drop-in day centre and an extensive information and referral service in a safe, supportive and non-judgmental environment.

## AUSTRALIANS OF THE YEAR VISIT OZANAM LEARNING CENTRE

Australian of the Year, Geoffrey Rush and Young Australian of the Year, Marita Cheng visited the Matthew Talbot Hostel and Ozanam Learning Centre recently as part of the campaign for people to nominate for next year's Australian of the Year awards.

They took in a tour of the Matthew Talbot Hostel including the kitchen and health clinic, as well as spent some time in the Ozanam Learning Centre where they learnt about the varied educational and recreation programs on offer.

Rush and Cheng took part in an art class at the Centre, where they had an opportunity to create their own artwork and speak to clients about their experiences.



# SEE THE FILM MAKER SPONSOR THE POTENTIAL

**If you passed Roy in the street, you would likely have no idea he is experiencing homelessness; in a pressed button-up shirt, crisp black jacket and suit pants, Roy is the picture of success.**

If you spoke to Roy, you would soon find that he is highly intelligent, very warm and loves to laugh. Despite appearances, until recently, Roy spent his nights sleeping at the Matthew Talbot Hostel in Woolloomooloo.

It was not so long ago that Roy was running a profitable exports business based in Japan. In an unfortunate turn of events including a couple of bad business deals, the devastating effects of the 2011 tsunami and some health complications, Roy lost almost everything. He moved to Australia in search of greater job prospects but with no friends or family to stay with he was spending his nights and the little money he had left on hotel rooms. After only a short time, his savings had diminished and he had to rely on crisis accommodation.

What Roy discovered during his time at the Matthew Talbot Hostel, is that anyone can experience homelessness. He was shocked to meet a University Professor whose ill health had landed him in the same position as Roy. When he showed a keen interest in wanting to share what he had learnt with others, the Society approached him to direct a documentary about homelessness.

Roy was ecstatic at having the opportunity to share the reality that homelessness can happen to anyone in the blink of an eye. Working alongside TAFE instructors based at the

Ozanam Learning Centre and film producers from creative agency George Patterson Y&R, Roy has completed many hours of filming and editing.

The release of his documentary will coincide with the Christmas Appeal and will form part of the 'Sponsor the Potential' campaign. People like Roy are not just experiencing homelessness, they are filmmakers, chefs, nurses and accountants. Given the right opportunity they can be empowered to leave homelessness behind forever.

Roy has been given a second chance at life. He is working again and with assistance from his case worker, has found secure housing for up to two years. Far beyond being just bricks and mortar, a home will give Roy the confidence and solid foundation he needs to move forward in a big way.

For more information visit [sponsorthepotential.org.au](http://sponsorthepotential.org.au)



Krystal, a 21 year old woman who says she feels like she has been homeless forever. Krystal has been in and out of homelessness since she was ten, the product of a dysfunctional home with a mother who suffered from mental health issues and drug addiction. At far too tender an age, Krystal was left to her own devices.

"To me homelessness is feeling isolated, desperate and inferior. It's meant struggling just to complete everyday tasks and fight to try and build a brighter future," says Krystal.

Having never met her real father and not knowing where to turn after her mother kicked her out of the house, Krystal went from one temporary solution to another, often finding herself on the streets.

After sleeping on a friend's couch for some months, Krystal eventually ended up in foster care away from her school and the few friends she had managed to make. Feeling isolated and lonely, Krystal eventually called her mother asking if she could return home to Sydney.

Back at her mother's house, the mental and physical abuse continued. After one violent altercation, Krystal was

## PROVIDING CRUCIAL HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**In outer Sydney, the St Vincent de Paul Society is providing a crucial service that assists young people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. Vinnies Youth Housing Macarthur addresses the often high need areas of the Macarthur Local Government area and surrounds.**

The service provides safe, affordable semi-supported medium to long-term housing for young men and women aged 16 to 21, and sole parents and young families aged 16 to 24.

Vinnies Youth Housing provides a safe and supportive environment for up to two years and focuses on maintaining family contacts and restoring the young person back to the family home if safe to do so.

Each client is assigned an individual case manager throughout their tenancy to assist them to develop life skills, complete their education, develop their parenting skills, maintain their tenancy and prepare them for independent living.

One young woman easing back into independence is

forced to flee what should be every child's safe haven – her mother's side.

"Not having any friends and no family I was left with no other option but to go to a crisis refuge. When I got to the refuge I was shocked and scared I didn't know what to expect," she recalls.

Feeling at her lowest point, Krystal was eventually put in contact with Vinnies. Krystal was placed in a house and explains that, for the first time in a long time, she felt comfortable and safe.

"I had my own room and my own privacy. The experience has had a really positive impact on my life."

After speaking at the Vinnies CEO Sleepout and with the support of corporates and Vinnies, Krystal is now in a private rental property, continuing her studies, and holding down a job.

"Vinnies really changed my life. This is a new beginning for me," says Krystal.



Beverley Kerr, President, Matthew Talbot Homeless Services, Minister Simon Crean and Tony Windsor MP

The new facility will provide rehabilitation services and designated purpose-built areas for people who are rough-sleepers and an environment for professional learning and development, maximising opportunities to strengthen partnerships with TAFE, New England Institute, the University of New England and other key services in the region.

In speaking at the event, Minister Crean said: "Since 1979, Freeman House has operated a specialist homelessness and drug and alcohol rehabilitation service through the hard work of the St Vincent de Paul Society. The upgrade is due for completion in mid-2013 and will provide a modern place where the homeless can learn life skills and access vital specialist services."

Minister Crean added that the Federal Government was proud to partner with the St Vincent de Paul Society as "we both believe in localism, that the best ideas come locally."

President of Matthew Talbot Homeless Services Beverley Kerr said the St Vincent de Paul Society was very excited to receive the Federal Government funding.

"It took many years of planning and hard work by local members and the Matthew Talbot Homeless Services team to develop the tender project. Importantly, the St Vincent de Paul Society will match dollar for dollar the funding

## FREEMAN HOUSE CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY

**The St Vincent de Paul Society has celebrated the official sod-turning event to kick off the construction of the new Freeman House development.**

The event was attended by Minister Simon Crean and Mr Tony Windsor MP, Federal Member for New England, who both joined Beverley Kerr, President Matthew Talbot Homeless Services, in turning the first piece of sod on the site.

Freeman House received a grant of \$8 million from Round One of the Australian Government's Regional Development Australia Fund for the construction of the new state-of-the-art facility.

received from the Federal Government," said Ms Kerr.

Kerry Muir, President, Armidale Central Council says that the re-development of Freeman House will provide a safe, quality environment in which clients can heal and achieve their goals.

"The project will include the Society's first regional Ozanam Learning Centre with a comprehensive education program including computer literacy, vocational skills, health, nutrition and independent living. The Centre will be crucial in achieving community re-integration and sustained wellbeing, particularly for those living on the margins," said Mr Muir.

## EARLY INTERVENTION THE KEY AT MARGARET DRUITT DAY CARE CENTRE

**On the outskirts of Western Sydney, a St Vincent de Paul Society long day care centre is providing more than traditional day care services, instead offering good beginnings and hope for many children that might otherwise slip through the cracks.**

The Margaret DrUITt Day Care Centre is located in an area which is home to a large number of public housing estates. Opportunities for people to make their way in life are few and far between. The average household income in the area is \$712 per week, compared with the state average of \$1,036. This exceedingly low income level is compounded by an unemployment rate that is more than double the national figure.

The Centre provides affordable day care for around 90 children aged between two and five, offering a safe environment where children from low income and disadvantaged families can play, learn and develop their full potential in their most formative years.

It is well-known that, if not addressed, learning problems or barriers to learning in young children will impact negatively on the overall development of a child in the long-term. The earlier a problem is identified and treated, the better the chances are for improvement.

The Centre focuses on meeting the individual needs and interests of each child with programs designed to provide children opportunities to build relationships, make good choices and develop language, problem solving and literacy skills at their own pace.

Importantly, the Centre also provides three hot meals per day as well as two tea breaks. Sadly, many of these children would go hungry without these meals.

Sarita Baidya has been working at the Centre for 16 years and says that it feels like a "second home". With a degree in early childhood teaching and a passion for child development, Sarita oversees the daily running of the



Centre ensuring the children are given the best care and environment.

"The way all of the staff work as a team to provide the best they can for the children is the secret to making the Centre such a special place. The fact that the staff have all been here so long is a credit to its work and the passion we all feel," says Sarita.

Setting Margaret DrUITt apart from other centres is the work and care it dedicates to parents. Sarita explains that the help doesn't stop with the children.

"We not only educate the children but we offer support for the parents as well. We refer them to different agencies if they don't have food, can't pay bills, or if the children or parents have language problems."

Sarita recalls a recent success story as she tells the story of Aaron.

Aaron lives with his mum, a young unemployed woman who, without the assistance of the Centre, would have no access to resources vital to Aaron's overall development. Suffering from global delay, Aaron finds it difficult to maintain concentration and initiate ideas. Centre staff assist Aaron daily and have also referred him to various agencies such as an early childhood assessment team, an occupational therapist and a speech therapist.

"As a result of direct involvement from various professionals, Aaron's concentration has improved and he is able to take turns in games and is much better at following instruction. Without our Centre, this probably would never have happened and Aaron would have continued to struggle."

# JULIE GOODWIN COOKS UP A STORM



Helen Silvia, Beverley Kerr, Julie Goodwin and Chantelle Cameron

The experience she said was “enriching” as she helped to fundraise for those in need as well as went out on weekly patrols to feed and provide company to the people experiencing homelessness.

Goodwin, who is releasing a new cookbook called ‘Gather’, said that her main aim is to help people and communities reconnect and “believes in her heart” that sharing food is the ideal way to do that.

Family and Women’s Services Operations Manager Helen Silvia said Goodwin’s visit was

important, not only because it gave the residents some great tips on healthy budget-conscious cooking, but also made them feel valued.

“The visit left a great buzz with the residents and they enjoyed sitting down and sharing a meal with Julie and each other.

“We try to help the residents rebuild their lives; teaching them life skills and helping them rebuild their self-esteem. Days like these play a small but important role in that,” says Helen.



Residents enjoyed a nutritious and tasty meal

**Former MasterChef winner Julie Goodwin recently cooked up a storm at the St Vincent de Paul Society’s Vincentian House in inner-city Sydney.**

Vincentian House is a crisis accommodation and case management service for families and women experiencing homelessness or at immediate risk of homelessness. The service has a resident directed case management program which means residents work with their case managers towards identified goals during their stay. Important support plans are unique to each person to ensure best outcomes are achieved.

Residents have access to a range of onsite services including a health clinic; counselling; Positive Parenting Program; supported playgroups and Living Skills Programs.

During her visit to the service, Goodwin whipped up some butter chicken, freshly-made flatbread and beautiful fresh salads, all with an eye on teaching the residents how to prepare healthy and tasty meals on a low-budget.

Goodwin has a long history with the Society, which started with her joining a local Vinnies Youth group in Hornsby.

“After school finished, I found myself a bit lost and mentioned it to a friend who told me he had never been busier coordinating a youth group, so I asked if I could join,” explains Julie.



Staff and volunteers at the Vinnies Wyong reopening

# VINNIES WYONG RISES FROM THE ASHES

**Following a devastating fire in July 2011, the Wyong Regional office, warehouse and Retail Centre has risen out of the ashes bigger and better than ever.**

The Retail Centre had a hugely successful opening on Saturday 15 September and featured a fashion showcase modeled by local student volunteers from Mary Mackillop High School and St Peters Tuggerah.

There was also a BBQ, goody bags, lucky door raffles and a chance to win a children’s bedroom suite, lovingly handmade by the volunteers at St Joseph’s Workshop, a Special Work of the St Vincent de Paul Society. The workshop creates a range of woodwork items that are distributed to disadvantaged people in the local area and also sold in Vinnies Retail Centres.

Phil Coyte Central Coast Centres Manager said, “The grand opening was our way of saying thank you to the community for their support since the fire, especially for continuing to donate items in the lead-up to the opening.

“The new store spans over 400sqm and has ample parking space, so we were really excited about unveiling this new space and continuing to raise important funds for people in need in the Wyong area.

“The opening was a great day, and the local community really came out in support,” said Phil.

The office component provides a reception area for clients and visitors. There are three dedicated interview rooms and an office for the Wyong Conference. In addition, there is a ‘hot desk’ space for a number of other office users, open plan kitchen, Call Centre and a flexible meeting/training room.

Importantly, the new office will be shared with other local community organisations to assist them in delivering services to the local community.

“This is one concrete and positive way that Vinnies can continue to support the community and provide additional resources to those that need it. The idea is to establish Vinnies as a community hub,” said Phil.

The Society has 245 Retail Centres across NSW that distribute clothing and household goods directly to people experiencing disadvantage. In addition, all funds raised through the Centres go back into local communities to continue the good works of the Society.

The Northern Territory's remote Indigenous community of Nganmariyanga (Palumpa) welcomed ten St Vincent de Paul Society volunteers as a part of the 2012 National Immersion Program at Easter. The program offered an opportunity to learn about the culture and challenges facing remote Indigenous communities.

After spending five days in Darwin bonding and learning about the experience, the team headed to Nganmariyanga.



# HELPING REMOTE COMMUNITIES

No sooner had they arrived, and braving the late afternoon heat, the team began their venture sharing a game of footy with the local children.

As the shadows lengthened on Holy Thursday, Brother Chris led a ceremony for the washing of the feet, providing a wonderful opportunity for the team to meet senior members of the community, their children and grandchildren.

The Easter celebrations over Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Easter Sunday provided a wonderful insight into Aboriginal Catholic spirituality, and even included an Easter egg hunt for the children. The group began to build special bonds with the community and formed meaningful relationships with some of the families.

The days were filled engaging with the community through games of soccer and footy, makeshift waterslides, face painting, craft activities and swimming. Each day ended with a reflection on the day's events, giving the team time to consider how their experiences in the community were impacting on their Vincentian journey and individual spirituality.

Mentor of the Immersion Program team Simone Vrabac said that being a part of the Program was one of the most rewarding experiences she has had as a volunteer.

"We will never forget the time we shared and the things we learned from the people of Nganmariyanga. There is so much to be learned from such a culturally rich community.

"On our last night we were fortunate enough to have the opportunity to share a meal of kangaroo tail and damper cooked over a fire with one of the families and then the children showed us how to cook a turtle that they helped us catch," she said.

The St Vincent de Paul Society gives its deepest thanks for the kindness shown by the Nganmariyanga people in sharing the gift of their land and community.

"The Immersion Program was culturally and spiritually enriching and our volunteers left the Northern Territory with a renewed and inspired passion for their Vincentian works," said Ms Vrabac.

# NATIONAL YOUTH CONGRESS

The National Youth Congress was held in Melbourne in August and welcomed a large gathering of Vincentians to share their passion and thoughts. Following is Maitland/Newcastle Youth Representative Rachael Smither's account of the experience:

Over the three days of Congress, friendships were formed, experiences shared and much was learnt from enlightening speeches and interactive sessions.

On the first day, an ice-breaker revealed that each of us had joined Vinnies for a variety of reasons. Over dinner, National CEO, John Falzon spoke passionately about the persona of the Society in Australia and offered his wisdom on our journey and his own experiences. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to connect with John and other members of National Council who participated in the Congress.

Day two began with a spiritual reflection about neighbours, followed by a keynote speech by Janet Buhagiar on the central theme of the Congress: Love your neighbour as yourself and what that means in the context of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Participants split into groups to workshop a range of topics. My first workshop, 'Awakening to Life', focused on the Enneagram process of personality profiling. This powerful session helped me to view objectively some of my own stress response mechanisms and possible ways of managing them better.

My second workshop considered the past, present and future direction of Vinnies in the community. The overwhelming conclusion was that Vinnies needs to increase promotion of the works we do and further equip Conference members to support our clients locally.

An afternoon Mass was run by Spiritual Advisor to the NSW Vinnies State Youth Team, Fr Paul Ghanem, and featured a blessing from a 'young at heart' member, a lovely symbol of our shared Vincentian journey.

The final morning began with a spiritual reflection on the different forms love takes in our work within Vinnies followed by more workshops. For the final session of the day we identified issues that warranted further discussion in small groups. We discussed topics such as high school Conferences, challenges in Conferences, spirituality, teen programs, social injustice and regional outreach and possible actions needed to improve the support or development of these areas within Vinnies.

National Youth Congress was an experience that I will never forget. The most poignant reflection for me being that no matter how different our lives are, we are we all connected by our Vincentian values.

**Rachael Smithers**



## INAUGURAL ROSALIE RENDU LECTURE A GREAT SUCCESS



State Council President, Ray Reynolds with Loretta Baker, Sr Ann, Sr Marie and Sr Olive

The first St Vincent de Paul Society Rosalie Rendu Lecture proved to be a successful and thought-provoking event. Held at the University of Notre Dame, the Lecture attracted a strong audience of around 85 people and gave members an opportunity to discuss social justice issues as they relate to the Society's Good Works.

Keynote speaker, Loretta Baker, Councillor Maitland City Council, spoke about the partnership between the St Vincent de Paul Society and local health services which is delivering change for a marginalised community living in the Coachstop Caravan Park in Maitland. The caravan park is home to at risk families and individuals who have no housing or have arrived directly from a refuge, prison, mental health facility or juvenile justice institution.

Speaking about the community based at the caravan park, Ms Baker said: "It is not by choice that families and individuals live in such impoverished circumstances. They generally arrive through a complex set of circumstances including factors such as mental illness, family breakdown, addictions and domestic violence, compounded by economic factors such as limited housing supply and unemployment particularly for youth."

Ms Baker explained that for most people living at the Coaschstop Caravan Park, accessing basic services is an almost impossible task.

"The multiple barriers to accessing services due to the increasing prevalence of call centres leaves the most disadvantaged in our community at an even greater risk.

First you must have a phone and phone credit. If you are having a good day you may stay on the phone long enough to talk to someone who then gives you another number to call as you have rung the wrong line.

"The grass roots approach puts you in touch with the environment and the circumstances in which people live and enables you to design and deliver services that are acceptable and accessible. The value of looking someone in the eye and using their name and having a conversation cannot be overstated," said Ms Baker.

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW State Council President, Ray Reynolds attended the event and said that it is important for Society members to continue to think of new ways of helping people experiencing disadvantage.

"As more and more people turn to us for assistance, it is very important that we look to the power of partnerships with government and other agencies to get the best possible outcome for those people we are trying to assist," said Mr Reynolds.

## A NEW CODE OF CONDUCT

The Society has developed a new Code of Conduct which guides us in appropriate standards of behaviour and conduct that are consistent with the tradition, Mission and Vision of the Society, as well as The Rule. It reflects our commitment to working together to promote a professional and accountable work environment which promotes transparency and strong, compassionate leadership. The Code refers to the Rule's essential virtues which include simplicity, humility, gentleness, selflessness and zeal.

The Code of Conduct guides all of us in our values and behaviours for everyday work with colleagues, members, volunteers, clients and communities. It refers to the need for behaviour to be based on professionalism, transparency, accountability, collaboration, respect, confidentiality, and compliance with lawful and appropriate requests.

It is intended for the Code of Conduct to be used right across our everyday activities, including reflection, training or induction programs, service delivery guidelines, and as a Society wide statement which inspires respectful behaviour.



design includes text quoting Jesus in words from the last supper discourse of the gospel of John, as well as Vincent, Rosalie and Frederic. Beautiful stained glass panels of traditional, hand-made glass in modern arrangement and patterning, from darker to lighter colours, suggest the hopefulness of the Christian faith. At the centre there is a large, simple Cross, made from old and recycled timber. Finally, the Cross is overlaid with a vine and branches decoration in laser-cut aluminium pieces. The designers wanted to make a connection between the history and traditions of the Society and their relevance to its future.

We are confident that the chapel will continue to encourage and inspire all Vincentians in their conviction that the Society is a spiritual organisation, based on Jesus of the gospels, dedicated to practical concern for and personal relationships with the poor, and committed to strong community and unity of purpose.

## BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM CHAPEL OF PEACE AND PRAYER

In May 1993, a special room in the Mary Potter wing of the Little Company of Mary hospital became the hub of the Vincentian presence in Lewisham. It was the same month as the unanimous positive vote of the Cardinals for the Beatification of Blessed Frederic which took place in Paris on 22 August 1997. The chapel became known as the Blessed Frederic Ozanam Chapel of Peace and Prayer.

As planning of the site developed, it was always the intention to have a chapel or place of prayer in the building which we now know as Charles O'Neill House. A space on the third level was dedicated as the new home of the Blessed Frederic Ozanam chapel. Progressively, the chapel was furnished, and commissions were proposed and made for its decoration. The Founders commemorative window was installed in 2011 and the principal feature window installed in time for the election and first meeting of the New South Wales State Central Council on 11 July this year. Fr. Kevin Canty, Chaplain to the State Council, regularly celebrates the Eucharist for members, staff and volunteers and the Archdiocese has approved the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

There is a clear connection between the three figures represented in the etched glass corridor window and the themes of the stained glass on the opposite wall. Part of the

The New South Wales State Council wishes to place on record its appreciation of the design and realisation of this beautiful and prayerful addition. In particular, artist/designer Peter Campbell, and Rick Allan who was responsible for the stained glass fabrication and for the installation of the completed work.

We invite you to reflect on the messages etched into the glass of the chapel as a summary of Vincentian spirituality:

I am the true vine, and my father is the vinedresser  
**Jn 15:1**

Go to the poor, you will find God there...  
**St. Vincent de Paul**

If you have nothing to give, give yourself...  
**Bl. Rosalie Rendu**

Charity must always look to the future...  
**Bl. Frederic Ozanam**



# HILTON SYDNEY SERVES UP HOPE



Thank you to our generous partner Hilton Sydney for serving up hope to thousands of people experiencing homelessness through their support of the Sydney Night Patrol and the Matthew Talbot Hostel.



St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*