



St Vincent de Paul Society  
NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc. *good works*

# NATIONAL OVERVIEW

## 2022-23



**LET'S BUILD A FAIRER AUSTRALIA!**

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In the spirit of reconciliation, the St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

While St Vincent de Paul Society is not a First Nations organisation, we have a long history of working with and assisting Indigenous communities and individuals. We are acutely aware of the disadvantage and pain so many First Nations people have experienced, and how their pleas for social justice have been ignored.

We encourage our Parliamentarians and all Australians to answer the invitation of Indigenous Australians, expressed so generously through the Uluru Statement from the Heart, to walk together to create a better future. Being able to influence national decision makers on a range of key issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people is fundamental to creating [A Fairer Australia](#).

## Front cover

*Commissioning Mass for incoming National President Mark Gaetani at St Christopher's Cathedral, Canberra on 12 March 2023.*

*Rear from left: Paul Burton (NSW State President), Danny Cloghan (WA State Vice President), John Feint (C-G Territory President), Brad Hocking (SA State President), Maurice Ryan (Vice President), Jocelyn Cull (NT President), Matt Nunan (Vice President)*

*Front from left: Michael Quinn (Vic State President), Bernard Meadley (National Treasurer), Sr Therese Haywood (Spiritual Advisor), Archbishop Christopher Prowse, Mark Gaetani (18th National President), Mary Gaetani, Warwick Fulton (Deputy President), Corey McGrath (Tas State President), Trish McMahon (Qld State President)*

*Front Cover Photograph: Robin Osborne*

# OUR VISION AND PURPOSE

## Our Mission

The St Vincent de Paul Society (the Society) is a lay Catholic organisation which aspires to live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

## Our Vision

The Society aspires to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering 'a hand up' to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope, and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.

## Our Aspiration

An Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice. The Society advocates on several pressing social justice issues such as homelessness, poverty, and asylum seekers. To read more about the Society's work in these areas and others, please visit the 'Our Impact' section of our website.

## Our Key Values

We have identified seven key values to which we are aligned. They include commitment, compassion, respect, integrity, empathy, advocacy and courage. We are proud of the key values for which we stand and invite you to find out more through the 'Get Involved' section of our website.



### Commitment

Loyalty in service to our mission, vision and values.



### Compassion

Welcoming and serving all with understanding and without judgement.



### Respect

Service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions.



### Integrity

Promoting, maintaining, and adhering to our mission, vision and values.



### Empathy

Establishing relationships based on respect, trust, friendship, and perception.



### Advocacy

Working to transform the causes of poverty and challenging the causes of human injustice.



### Courage

Encouraging spiritual growth, welcoming innovation and giving hope for the future.

## Faith in Action

Vincentians believe that Jesus Christ is not only God, but also truly human and at home in our world. When the voice of the poor calls, they willingly leave their prayers, or other religious practice knowing that they are leaving God for God.

They seek to honour, love and serve their truly human God by honouring, loving and serving the poor, the abandoned, the victims of exclusion and adversity. Inspired by the compassion of Jesus Christ to all people, Vincentians seek to be compassionate, kind and deeply reverent to all those they serve. With trust in God's help, they see their work as a continuation of Christ's own work. Vincentians express their love for God and for all God's people, by the sweat of their brow and the strength of their arms. They seek to do this with gentleness and humility, striving to be selfless and genuine, yet passionate about the needs of the poor.

## With Thanks

St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia wishes to acknowledge and sincerely thank those Foundations and individuals that have made generous bequests and donations to support the Society's work over the past year. As a voluntary, not-for-profit organisation the Society is immensely grateful for the financial support we receive.



**MARK GAETANI**  
National President

At the meeting of National Council on 5 November 2022, I was honoured to be elected as the 18th National President of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia. On Sunday 5 March 2023, all Members of the National Council, as well as staff from the National Council Secretariate, attended my Commissioning Mass at St Christopher's Cathedral, Canberra.

This was a wonderful precursor of the support I have received since the start of my four-year term as National President, and I continue to be deeply appreciative.

As I reflect on the Commissioning Mass it was encouraging to have the work of the Society recognised by the Church with which we have been closely associated since the Society's founding in Paris in the mid-19th century. Archbishop Prowse was very well informed of the Society's good works. I found the experience to be deeply moving, and a day that my wife Mary and I will never forget.

Following the Mass, it was back to business, with National Council resuming its first meeting of the current term.

Like its forerunners, National Council recognises the challenges and opportunities that face the Society regarding membership. Our Members are at the heart of what we do and their daily interactions and conversations with Companions provide hope, compassion, and much needed support.

I am committed to pursuing a member-centric Society. To that end, I was pleased to receive support in appointing a current Member to take on the role of Vice President – Membership. This new role is tasked with championing membership at all levels across the Society and throughout Australia.

I would like to pay special tribute to my predecessor, Claire Victory, who had completed three four-year terms on National Council, the last one as National President.

In a wonderful address to the Commissioning Mass, Ms Victory said, 'The role of President is a serious one with considerable responsibilities. The President must look outwards with vision to the poor and to the wider society, the Church and the world in which our humble organisation lives and grows.'



*Commissioning Ceremony - Archbishop Christopher Prowse with National President, Mark Gaetani*

'At the same time the role of the President is a ministry of love and service. The President must lead and encourage all fellow Members to give generously and wisely of their gifts, in loving service of the poor. It is always the poor who count the most with us.'

'The St Vincent de Paul Society as a lay Catholic organisation continues to live the Gospel imperatives serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.'

Challenges such as the unacceptable level of poverty in Australia and the dire lack of safe and affordable social housing remain a priority for the Society.

Regrettably, inadequate services and income support for those in our community who rely upon JobSeeker, disability support and parenting payments, continue to put pressure on the Society to fill the void left by government



## The Society will continue to focus on the five key policy areas outlined in our A Fairer Australia statement

apathy. No government should expect the generosity of individuals to pay for the needs of the disadvantaged and disenfranchised.

While the Society will always be there for people in need, surely the primary function of government is to offer adequate care for the welfare of its citizens, especially the most vulnerable. In accordance with Catholic Social Teachings, we are committed to recognising the sacredness of life and the belief that every person has inherent dignity and worth, and to prioritising the needs of the socially disadvantaged and vulnerable.

During my term, the Society will continue to focus on the five key policy areas outlined in our A Fairer Australia statement: poverty and inequity, housing and homelessness, people seeking asylum, secure work, and First Nations people.

As a Society, we will continue to advocate for all of our Companions and those vulnerable members of our communities, no matter where they live across Australia.

The ongoing challenging economic and social headwinds faced by so many will, in my view, place even more of our communities under financial stress. The St Vincent de Paul Society will continue to be a strong advocate for equity and social justice.

Housing is a basic human right, yet many Australians struggle to have a secure and safe place to live. Rents are astronomical and even finding a property is increasingly difficult. However, certain commitments by the Australian Government and several States and Territories are encouraging.

With a strong delivery mechanism in Amelie Housing

Ltd, the Society is working to deliver on the social and affordable housing needs of residents in each State and Territory. We have continued to engage with all stakeholders to deliver better housing outcomes for many people across the country.

Towards the close of F/Y 2022-23, National Council confirmed the holding of a National Congress in late 2023. The expressed aim was to bring together Vincentian leaders from across Australia to reflect on and discuss the key issues of Society membership, mission and spirituality, and to strategise and guide the revitalisation of the Society.

A project team was established in the National Council Secretariate to support the delivery of what was named Congress 2023+, the first such event since 2017. It was agreed that the event would carry the hopes and prayers of the current generation of Members as well as those who will follow in their footsteps, especially younger Members whose energy and ideas are so important for our future. We must be committed to being the change we wish to see in society.

I hope you will enjoy this window into the activities of St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia over the past year. While a great deal has been achieved, we must remember that much remains to be done.

I would like to convey my thanks to everyone who has served the Society over the past twelve months, as well as those who have provided support for our endeavours. Your commitment has been central to our Good Works and to the resolute stance we have taken on behalf of those struggling to support themselves and their families.

**Mark Gaetani**  
NATIONAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT

### The 18<sup>th</sup> National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia:

Mr Mark Gaetani - National President/Chair

Mr Warwick Fulton - Deputy President (continuing)

Mr Ryan Erlandsen - Secretary (continuing)

Mr Bernard Meadley - National Treasurer (new in the role)

Sr Therese Hayward DC – Spiritual Adviser (continuing)

Mr Patrick Wallis – Vice President (continuing)

Mr Maurice Ryan - Vice President (continuing)

Mr Matt Nunan - Vice President (new in the role)

Mr Paul Burton - NSW State Council President

Ms Jocelyn Cull – NT Territory Council President

Mr John Feint - Canberra/Goulburn Territory Council President

Mr Brad Hocking - SA State Council President

Mr David Kennedy - WA State Council President

Mr Michael Quinn - Vic State Council President

Mr Corey McGrath - Tas State Council President

Ms Trish McMahan - Qld State Council President



**TOBY O'CONNOR**  
Chief Executive Officer

Every year is a big year for the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Australia; not least because the demand for our assistance continues to rise. The fact that during this past year our Members have seen the unprecedented phenomenon of people coming to the Society for help for the first time in their lives indicates to all the impact of the 'cost of living crisis' which has followed the COVID-19 pandemic.

Providing an important hand-up to people in need is a role performed magnificently by our Members in all states and territories supported by our legion of volunteers and assisted by our committed employees.

National Council does not operate good works or directly offer a helping hand to those people living in our communities who are having to cope with the latest distress in their lives from the cost of living tsunami.

One of the activities entrusted to National Council by the Members is to advocate to Commonwealth Ministers and the Federal Parliament on behalf of the Companions our Members walk alongside every day, the individuals struggling to survive and those people who due to their dire circumstances are forced to live on the margin of our communities.

We want to build a more inclusive Australia so that everyone can feel welcomed to participate in their own community.

Advocacy was the core strategic goal in the 2020-23 Strategic Plan. To provide a compass for the advocacy work undertaken by the Society, National Council commissioned a document on Catholic Social Teachings that chronicles magisterial writings since *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. *Dreaming as a Single Human Family* documents the Catholic Social Teaching Principles against which National Council can assess how well government programs and services deliver on human dignity, encourage the common good and promote a 'preferential option for the poor'.

Drawing on these Principles as benchmarks against which to assess public policy ensures the Society at all times remains apolitical in public discourse and in private discussions with Ministers.

[A Fairer Australia: 2022 Election Statement](#) outlined to all political parties the key social justice priority areas the Society wanted addressed during the lead-up to the Federal Election and implemented by the incoming government. Those priority areas were Australia's First Nations Peoples, People Seeking Asylum, Secure Work, Homelessness and Affordable Housing, Income Support, Poverty and Debt, and A Fairer Tax and Welfare System.

Advocacy is a mainstay in the 2023-27 Strategic Plan. The Society's social justice priorities developed in consultation with a national advisory committee, continue to be the focus of National Council social policy agenda. A [Report Card](#) against these priorities is updated on our website whenever new policies or initiatives are announced by the Albanese Government.

During the period, National Council was highly active in responding to Parliamentary inquiries, Royal Commissions and a multitude of departmental reviews that were undertaken following the change of government. The gravitas threaded through these submissions and responses comes from the feedback provided by Society Members who reflect the needs of Companions and those seeking emergency aid and assistance, whether this be following a natural disaster or as a result of the cost of living crisis.

On 6 October 2022, I addressed The Australia Institute's Revenue Summit 2022 at Parliament House, noting our pre-election advocacy materials, collated in the package titled *A Fairer Australia*, saying it is important that we don't lose sight of the fact that Australians are generous people: a recent ANU survey had found that 42 per cent of respondents placed assisting people living in poverty in the top three priorities for the federal election, while reducing the budget deficit was a low priority.

I explained that our Members spend most of their time providing emergency relief and housing support. That we're seeing people presenting five or more times a year for help, with more people seeking help for the first time and more people needing help with the basics, including food, rent, electricity and phone bills.

I stressed that we must increase income support payments,



*17th National President, Claire Victory with 18th National President Mark Gaetani*

review Commonwealth Rent Assistance, raise the earnings threshold for income support and continue to push for a significant increase in housing supply. Also, we have to be open to reviewing the tax and welfare systems.

The Society worked closely with the major church charities on a number of social policy matters where there was strength and alignment in mission to seek more just outcomes for people living on the margins. We look forward to continuing to push together on a range of social justice issues moving forward.

A major milestone delivered at the commencement of Claire Victory's term as the 17th President of National Council was the implementation of a comprehensive [governance framework](#).

This framework allowed National Council to manage a growing diversity and volume of policy matters that related to the Society's internal governance in accordance with The Rule and the Association's responsibilities in the domestic and overseas environments. It included formal linkages around consultative mechanisms with State and Territory Councils in line with the Society's internal governance protocols.

When Mark Gaetani was elected as the incoming 18th President of National Council, he undertook a review of the governance framework with some changes to the Standing Committee to ensure governance arrangements from an operational perspective continue to be fit for purpose to achieve National Council's strategic goals.

A major initiative commenced under the 17th National Council was a [review of The Rule Part III](#) which continues under the present National Council. Comments on the first round of proposed amendments to the Articles and the Procedural Guidelines were received from November 2022 to June 2023. Second amendments are being drafted

drawing on this feedback. A revised Part III is scheduled to be presented to the Council General International in late 2024.

Conferences are the bedrock of the Society as conceived by our founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam. Work in the membership space, including supporting Conferences, explore new ways of connecting with new potential Members, continued throughout the period. Planning for Congress 2023+ was an outcome of ongoing work to explore new ways to encourage potential Members and explore how Conferences could be responsive to contemporary lifestyles of young and enthusiastic Members.

National Council's Secretariate also played a facilitative role in bringing together a number of other national networks such as Mission, Spirituality, Safeguarding and the Overseas Partnerships Program. It managed an extended period of consultation and collaboration to deliver a redesigned, more user-friendly one Society website.

The Secretariate's operations are premised on respect for the Society as a membership-led organisation. National Council employees do not make decisions that fall under the aegis of National Council; employees facilitate and support the Good Works carried out by Society Members and in the name of National Council.

Within the Secretariate there is a growing talent pool that is assisting National Council implement its strategic goals and Board resolutions. In order to deliver on National Council's strategic goals and a growing number of domestic and international initiatives, the number of staff has grown over the past three years, always mindful that resources are precious.

On behalf of the Secretariate, I want to acknowledge Members of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the present National Councils for their vision and their commitment to the Society's mission in Australia and to building relationships with our sisters and brothers in our Overseas Partnerships Program.

The significant contributions made by our two National Presidents, our Deputy President and office holders, along with the State and Territory Council Presidents, who have significant duties attached to their own councils, merit the acknowledgement of our Members.

At the time of writing, I am aware of the recent public feelings on the First Nations Voice to Parliament. This matter highlights to us that walking towards a fairer Australia for all Australians is a long journey. The Secretariate will support National Council in its efforts to ensure that Australians in need do not fall by the wayside.

**P Toby oConnor**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

# MEMBERS OF THE 18<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL COUNCIL – 30 JUNE 2023

Member	Position	Dates	National Council	
			17 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>
Claire Victory	<b>National President</b>	<i>Elected 17 March 2019 – term ended 4 March 2023</i>	●	
	Vice President	<i>Appointed 25 March 2015</i>		
	Vice President	<i>Appointed 19 May 2011</i>		
Mark Gaetani	<b>National President</b>	<i>Elected 5 March 2023</i>		●
	Acting National Treasurer	<i>30 May 2022 – 5 March 2023</i>	●	
	Tas State Council President	<i>1 January 2019</i>	●	
Sr Therese Haywood DC	Spiritual Adviser	<i>Appointed 5 March 2023</i>		●
		<i>Appointed 22 March 2019</i>	●	
Warwick Fulton	Deputy President	<i>Appointed 5 March 2023</i>		●
	Deputy President	<i>Appointed 17 March 2019</i>	●	
	Canberra-Goulburn Territory Council President	<i>Elected 4 March 2016</i>	●	
Ryan Erlandson	Secretary	<i>Appointed 5 March 2023</i>		●
		<i>Appointed 22 March 2019</i>	●	
Bernard Meadley	National Treasurer	<i>Appointed 5 March 2023</i>		●
Paul Burton	NSW State Council President	<i>Elected 19 February 2022</i>	●	●
Jocelyn Cull	NT Territory Council President	<i>Elected 8 July 2020</i>	●	●
David Kennedy	WA State Council President	<i>Elected 28 June 2021</i>	●	●
John Feint	Canberra-Goulburn Territory Council President	<i>Elected 7 June 2019</i>	●	●
Corey McGrath	Tas State Council President	<i>Elected 16 January 2023</i>	●	●
Brad Hocking	SA State Council President	<i>Elected 28 October 2020</i>	●	●
Patricia McMahon	Qld State Council President	<i>Elected 1 June 2022</i>	●	●
Michael Quinn	Vic State Council President	<i>Elected 19 March 2022</i>	●	●
Maurice Ryan	Vice President	<i>Appointed 5 March 2023</i>		●
		<i>Appointed 20 June 2019</i>	●	
Patrick Wallis	Vice President	<i>Appointed 23 April 2023</i>		●
		<i>Appointed 20 June 2019</i>	●	
Matt Nunan	Vice President	<i>Appointed 5 March 2023</i>		●
Wina Zhu	Vice President	<i>Appointed 7 June 2022 – term ended 4 March 2023</i>	●	

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

## St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia Inc. Board of Directors Meetings

Director	Description	A	B	C
<b>Claire Victory</b>	National President (Chair) until March 2023	5	5	
<b>Mark Gaetani</b>	National President (Chair) from 5 March 2023	2	2	
<b>Sr Therese Haywood DC</b>	Spiritual Adviser	7	7	
<b>Warwick Fulton</b>	Deputy President	7	7	
<b>Mark Gaetani</b>	Treasurer (Interim) until March 2023	3	3	
<b>Bernard Meadley</b>	Treasurer	2	2	
<b>Ryan Erlandson</b>	Secretary	7	7	
<b>Paul Burton</b>	NSW State Council President	7	1	1
<b>Jocelyn Cull</b>	NT Territory President	7	6	
<b>David Kennedy</b>	WA State Council President	7	3	5
<b>John Feint</b>	Canberra-Goulburn Territory President	7	7	
<b>Mark Gaetani</b>	Tas State Council President until January 2023	2	2	
<b>Corey McGrath</b>	Tas State Council President from January 2023	4	4	
<b>Brad Hocking</b>	SA State Council President	7	5	
<b>Patricia McMahon</b>	Qld State Council President	7	7	
<b>Michael Quinn</b>	Vic State Council President	7	6	1
<b>Maurice Ryan</b>	Vice President	7	7	
<b>Patrick Wallis</b>	Vice President	6	6	
<b>Matt Nunan</b>	Vice President from March 2023	2	2	
<b>Wina Zhu</b>	Vice President until March 2023	4	3	

### Legend

A = Meetings held during the period

B = Meetings attended by Director

C = Meetings attended by Representative of State/Territory Council President

# BOARDS AND DIRECTORS MEETINGS

## Board Standing Committees

Committee	Chair
Membership, Mission & Vincentian Spirituality	Matt Nunan
Legal and Governance	Warwick Fulton
Audit Risk and Finance	Bernard Meadley
Data Integrity & Cyber Security	Ryan Erlandsen
Safeguarding	Corey McGrath
Brand Stewardship, Marketing & Fundraising	John Feint
International	Mark Gaetani
National Natural Disaster Appeals	Maurice Ryan
Spirit of Youth	Patrick Wallis

## Advisory Committees

Committee	Chair
Social Justice	Matt Nunan
Overseas Partnerships Advisory Committee	Kevin McMahon
The Rule Part III Review	Warwick Fulton
States & Territories Youth Representatives	Patrick Wallis
Society CEOs Group	Toby oConnor
States & Territories CEOs Group	Kevin Mercer
Improving Transparency of Charitable Donations During National Disasters	Maurice Ryan

## St Vincent De Paul Society National Redress Scheme Ltd Board Of Directors Meetings

Director	Appointed	A	B
Denis Walsh (Chair)	25 Nov 2019	3	3
Damian Wallis	25 Nov 2019	3	0
Anne Stanfield	16 Nov 2021	3	2
Dennis Innes	1 Jun 2022	3	3
Tony Brennan	27 Jan 2023	1	1
Philip Cranny	27 Feb 2023	-	-
Claire Victory	20 Mar 2023	-	-

### Legend

A = Meetings held during the period  
B = Meetings attended by Director

## Meetings Held

Meeting	Date	Via
National Council	8 October 2022	Microsoft Teams
	4 – 6 November 2022	<i>in situ</i>
	4 February 2023	Microsoft Teams
	4 March 2023 (Old NC)	<i>in situ</i>
	5 March 2023 (New NC)	<i>in situ</i>
	1 April 2023	Microsoft Teams
	2 – 4 June 2023	<i>in situ</i>
National Redress Scheme	9 August 2022	Microsoft Teams
	21 October 2022	Microsoft Teams
	05 November 2022 - AGM	Microsoft Teams
	20 February 2023	Microsoft Teams

# NATIONAL COUNCIL SECRETARIATE STAFF – 30 JUNE 2023

## Chief Executive Officer

Toby oConnor

## Executive Officer

Donna Scheerlinck

## Executive Assistant

Karen Hutchinson

## National Policy & Research Director

Rose Beynon

## National Manager - Membership, Mission & Youth

Cass Bull

## National Communications Director

Phillip Adams

## Director of IT & Digital Services

Vincent Nguyen

## Overseas Partnerships Program Facilitator

Tricia Wilden

## National Strategy and Projects Manager

Julie Goodchap

## National Publications Officer

Robin Osborne

until 28 June 2023

## Digital Social Media Officer

Nodi Karimova

## Senior Policy Officer

Adam Henry

## Digital Platform Administrator

Diep Le

commenced March 2023

## Archivist

Paul Dagleish

until 5 June 2023

## Overseas Partnerships Program Administrator

Erin McIntyre

until 23 June 2023

## Overseas Partnerships Program Administrator

Ryhannon Robinson

commenced 13 June 2023

## National Website Content Manager

Deborah Gai Hicks

until 4 July 2022

## National Coordination Group Secretariate

Megan Street

seconded from Department of Social Services

## NATIONAL STATISTICS

	Canberra-Goulburn	NSW	NT	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA	Total
<b>Number Conferences</b>	46	520	5	206	57	28	251	75	<b>1188</b>
<b>Number Members</b>	492	3,757	62	2,621	763	253	3,745	1,006	<b>12,699</b>
<b>Number Volunteers</b>	1,447	6,878	290	5,145	1,596	857	6,728	2,416	<b>23,357</b>
<b>Number employees (F/T)</b>	190	608	27	365	36	46	321	113	<b>1,706</b>
<b>Number employees (P/T)</b>	46	329	7	215	89	190	329	114	<b>1,319</b>
<b>Number of Retail Centres</b>	30	221	10	30	33	26	113	54	<b>517</b>

“ As always, our young people continue to make a difference...”

This year the National Membership Network met 11 times, including an in situ gathering in Canberra following the National Volunteering Conference in February 2023.

Initially, the National Council Membership Renewal project focussed on research and analysis, resulting in the writing of the Membership Green Paper which was circulated in mid-2022 to conferences.

- Following feedback and consultations from Members who had engaged in the Green Paper, a roadmap was then developed alongside jurisdictions.
- The roadmap for Membership sign posted four key pillars: Improved data integrity, Increased digital presence and story telling, Training and Formation at all levels, and Flexible models of Conference.

The National Membership Network agreed to work collaboratively towards a month of Revitalisation, which was scheduled to take place in September 2023. A particular focus of the Membership Network was on revitalisation, and how to recruit and retain active Members across the country.

As part of the revitalisation focus, National Council decided the Society would come together for Congress 2023+ in October 2023.

## International Network

The National Council of Australia, through the National Council Secretariate, has created an International Membership Network that meets quarterly (via Teams). These meetings are hosted by Australia and include a mixture of Members and staff from USA, Canada, England, Wales, Ireland, and New Zealand.

These meetings, typically early in the day for our Australian representatives, provide a great insight for National Council as to how other western countries are also tackling the same strategic hurdles. The network prays together, shares resources, discusses different ways to address common challenges and sometimes enjoys healthy banter about any sporting world cups held around the time.

## Youth

The 2022/23 year has seen a change in Spirit of Youth (SoY) Committee Chair, with Patrick Wallis rejoining National Council, this time in the capacity of Vice President – Youth.



From left: Teresa Lynch (on screen), Cassandra Bull, Amanda Rickman, Louise Hearnden, Trish McMahon, Toby oConnor, Tony Roach, Melissa White, Siobhan Sweeney, Samantha Hill, Omar Bajouri, Paddy McGrath, Brendan Podbury

With the impacts of COVID-19 being deeply felt by many Youth Communities across the Society, the SoY Committee also required a new energy and a refresh of Committee membership to ensure all the key portfolio roles were filled.

As a way of reforming the communication and connection, the SoY Committee met online throughout the year, and convened in person from 24 -25 June 2023. There has been a strong focus on rebuilding support structures for the local and regional youth programs.

The National Immersion Committee recommenced after a pause whilst the program was under review. The committee Members, all with significant expertise in the National Immersion program and with the support of First Nations communities, were excited to work in close partnership with the NT Council to re-establish this important program in 2024.

As always, our young people continue to make a difference, not just in their own programs and youth communities, but by continually looking at new ways to express the Vincentian charism to respond to the emerging needs of today. The 2022/23 year saw a continuation of Frédéric Ozanam’s innovative spirit being expressed across the country in the many youth activities, conference meetings and school-based programs led by our Youth Members.

## MISSION & SPIRITUALITY

The National Mission and Spirituality Network is made up of the Mission and Spirituality leaders from each jurisdiction across the Society in Australia. The Network meets quarterly, and works collaboratively to share resources, ideas and provide ongoing formation and support to each other.

The Network gathered face to face in May, with a desire to strengthen the understanding of its purpose, and to identify ways each jurisdiction can work collaboratively in this space.

The National Mission and Spirituality Network sees itself responsible for:

- Developing and sharing resources.
- Holding, sharing, influencing, and inspiring collective wisdom of the Society's mission, the founding story, contemporary expression of Catholic identity and Catholic Social Teaching.

- Supporting each other as peers and leaders.
- Supporting the National Council in its mission and strategy.

Collaboratively, the Network worked on key parts of the Congress 2023+ agenda, also sharing reflection and resources to assist at key moments in the life of the Society in Australia.

In 2022/23 the Network also provided an additional prayer card to assist Conferences and Councils in having a variety of prayer options to use as part of their meetings.

## NATIONAL COLLABORATIONS – NATIONAL COUNCIL WEBSITE

After a widespread and lengthy (three-and-a-half year) consultation process within and outside the Society's jurisdictions, and the engagement of industry expertise, a redesigned and reconfigured [website](#) was launched in May 2023, to considerable acclaim.

The Project Team within the Secretariate engaged successfully with this long and complex challenge, focusing on delivering a faster and cleaner user experience for this vital ICT function.

The Society has already benefited greatly from the ability to present content in a more efficient and accessible way, communicating the breadth of our support work and advocacy, and acting as the gateway for major fundraising appeals and the Vinnies CEO Sleepouts.

During this project, Tasmania and Western Australia joined the new national website (after operating separate sites)

and Queensland worked towards doing the same. With all states and territories represented on the one site, a better experience for website visitors has been provided.

The new website is made up of a central page that promotes the Society as a whole and highlights current campaigns and activities. Each state and territory manages its own pages, with information and services relevant to their community and information on Vinnies shops.

The Society's goal was, and remains, to make sure the website is simple to navigate and information is easy to understand and act upon. In the early post-launch phase the most popular pages on the website were found to be the home page and access to seeking assistance, current campaign pages, Vinnies shops and information about donating goods, and the general search function.

# COMMITMENT TO FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

The Society honours Australia's First Nations Peoples' cultures, lands, waters, histories and their rights to live in a society free of economic, social and cultural oppression.

The Society recognises and admits past and continuing injustices as the first step towards Reconciliation.

Our Members, Volunteers, and employees acknowledge and adhere to these values in every aspect of their work.

## What the Society does

The Society provides emergency relief and support to all who seek help. Up to one-in-four of those whom the Society assists identify as First Nations Peoples. However, this varies significantly by location and the type of assistance provided. In the Northern Territory, the proportion is 90 per cent.

The Society works with First Nations Peoples to provide:

- Accommodation including emergency housing and homelessness services.
- Assistance with day-to-day essentials including food, transport, clothing, medical and utility needs.
- General support, including home, hospital and prison visits

## Advocacy and Referral

The Society is committed to providing employment and procurement opportunities for First Nations Peoples and strives to ensure the Society's workforce and supply chain reflect the diversity of the communities served.

The Society welcomes the Fifth Catholic Church Plenary Council of [Australia's First Decree](#), [Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts](#), which endorses the Uluru Statement and commits to walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in working towards recognition, Reconciliation and justice.

The Society is also committed to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, noting that improved outcomes will only be achieved when First Nations Peoples are able to "live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their self-determined development, in keeping with their own needs and aspirations".



***This striking artwork appears in the email signature block of National Council Members and the National Council Secretariate and in other documents and materials.***

It was commissioned by the Society from Budda Connors, a Ngunnawal artist from the Canberra region, who explains the meaning of the artwork as follows:

*The Centre piece represents a meeting place for all six states and the two territories where the Society's Members and services work.*

*The three big white circles with the coolamons represent the three cups (vessels) the hand of Christ blesses the cup; the hand of love offers the cup; and the hand of suffering receives the cup.*

*The seven light blue circles represent our seven key values. The handprints represent strength, unity and belonging. All the small white dots represent the healing that is circulated throughout our country. The small blue dots represent the people.*

The logo of the Society in Australia features three hands around a cup. It was created by well-known Australian sculptor the late Tom Bass, who was a Member of Ingleburn NSW Conference, and a graphic artist friend. The design was adopted in 1976 by National Council to represent the Society Australia-wide.

The National Council Strategic Plan 2020-2023 outlined the purpose and mission of the National Council and provided a roadmap for building Conferences of well-informed and spiritually enriched Members, to undertake Good Works in a safe and sustainable manner, and to influence law and policy through example and tenacious advocacy.

Five strategic goals were identified in the Strategic Plan:

- Our Spirituality and Membership
- Our Advocacy
- Our Governance and Leadership
- Our Work Together
- Our Sustainability.

The following information provides Society Members with updates on the work National Council undertook to progress the five strategic goals with an emphasis on outcomes achieved during the reporting period.

## Spirituality and Membership

A National Membership Network was established in 2022, supporting work progressed by State and Territory Councils on membership development. Best practice models for membership have been explored, and a revised national Emerging Leaders Program has been reviewed, with the aim of encouraging young people to be future leaders. A national platform for sharing resources was provided to the National Mission and the National Spirituality networks.

Current numbers of Members, Associate Members and Volunteers have been documented, and amendments to The Rule Part III have been explored, that relate to membership.

The Society's Prayer Card has been renewed. A commitment by most States and Territory to the Society's Renewal focus that aligns with our Feast Days every September has been made.

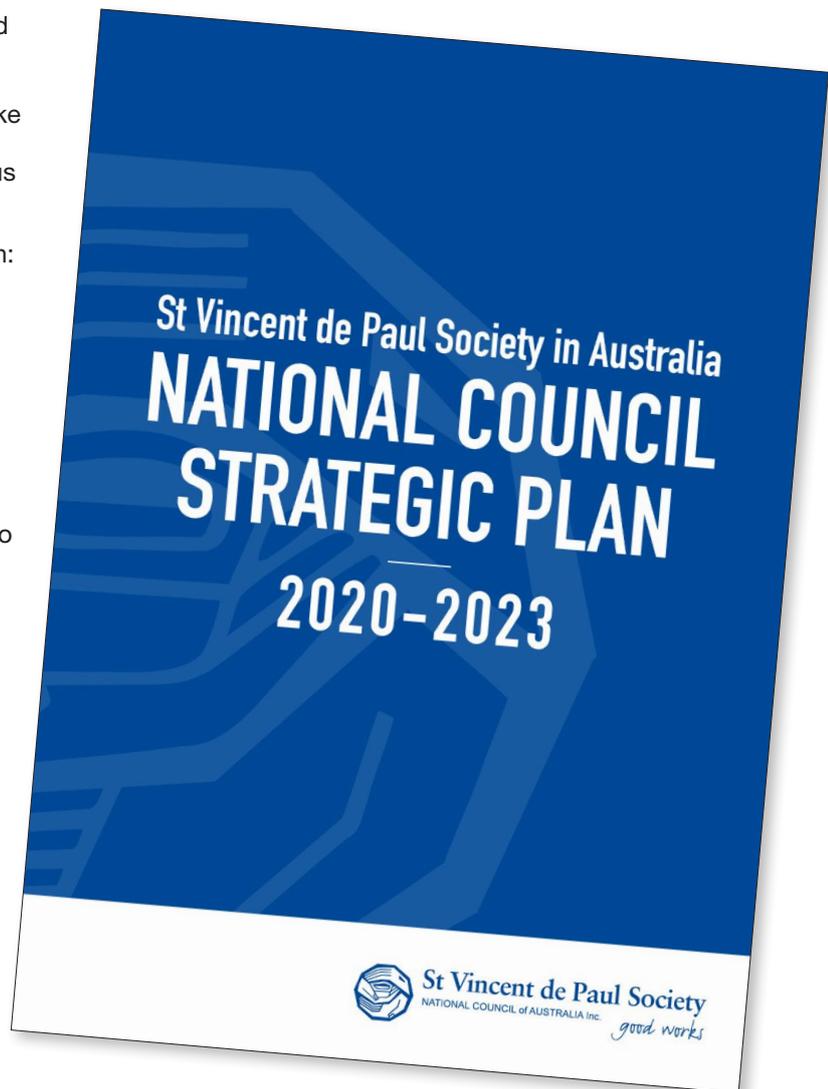
## Advocacy

The National Council's Social Justice Advisory Committee and Vincentian Refugee Network developed workplans to support implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Advocacy statements were developed for social justice priority areas of First Nations peoples, people seeking asylum, housing and homelessness, poverty and inequity, income support and tax reform, and secure work.

Fifteen submissions were made to Federal Parliament covering social justice priority areas, as well as reform to the charitable sector and Commonwealth disaster responses.

A series of strong strategic alliances were formed with other major church charities and peak Non-Government



Organisations, including ACOSS, Anglicare Australia, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (including the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office), Baptist Care Australia, Catholics for People Seeking Asylum, Catholics for Refugees, Catholic Social Services Australia, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC), Jesuit Refugee Service, National Shelter Australia, Refugee Council of Australia, The Salvation Army and UnitingCare Australia.

The Society provided public support for a number of campaigns, including the anti-racism campaign 'It Stops with Me', the 'Save Sorry Business' coalition formed following the collapse of Youpla insurance, the 'Stop the Debt Trap' established in response to the Buy-Now Pay-Later regulations, Stronger Charities Alliance which considered reforms to deductible gift recipient status and donation caps, Justice Reform Initiative, ACOSS' Energy Concessions Report and the call to increase energy efficiency rations for new residential homes, and joint charities' support for The Voice.

◀ The Society also sponsored “Everybody’s Home” and “Anti-Poverty Week”.

A number of public statements were delivered in support of our national advocacy positions, including evidence given before parliamentary inquiries.

The Society also provides management of the National Coordination Group, which is the advisory body to the Minister for Social Services on Commonwealth Emergency Relief responses.

## The Society as a significant influencer

Through 2022-23, National Council updated its federal advocacy materials as contained in [A Fairer Australia](#). These source materials are publicly available and designed for use by Members when representing the Society and meeting with federal MPs and Senators.

National Council CEO sat on the following Commonwealth advisory bodies:

- National Coordination Group, established to advise the Minister of Social Services on Emergency Relief, Food Relief and Financial Counselling Services
- Community Services Advisory Group (CSAG), which includes the CEOs of peak social service organisations. CSAG provides advice to the Department of Social Services on aspects of sector and government/department relations and government funding agreements.
- Blueprint Expert Reference Group (BERG), established by the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Charities and the Minister for Social Services to develop a 10-year roadmap for government reforms and sector-led initiatives. The aim is to support growth of the not-for-profit sector and provide strategic direction and more opportunities for philanthropic involvement.
- National Emergency Management Australia’s Tell Us Once” Working Group, a Whole of Government initiative established to progress recommendations from the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster relating to the sharing of personal information to enhance delivery of support services
- National Emergency Management Australia’s Charities Coordination Group

## Governance and Leadership

Despite COVID-19 unfortunately impacting the ability to conduct face to face meetings in 2022-23, a positive and collaborative culture exists within the membership of the National Council, in part due to a series of domestic and international initiatives.

The Legal and Governance Standing Committee of the National Council progressed and advised on principles to sit behind key clauses in corporate body Constitutions.

The National Council’s Rule Review Committee released the first draft amendments to The Rule Part III in November 2022. The proposed amendments are seeking to revise Part III so that it better reflects sound contemporary governance practices which are responsive to corporate regulatory frameworks and which align with the Society’s own governance framework.

The feedback and comments on the first amendments provided by State and Territory Councils have been useful in drafting a second round of amendments. Following another round of consultations, National Council is hoping to provide a revised Part III to the Council General International for consideration and approval.

A Safeguarding Policy was progressed, along with early plans for safeguarding training for Members of the National Council and its Secretariate. National Council, on behalf of the Society in Australia endorsed the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS). National Council is working closely with Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd to ensure that each jurisdiction’s legislated safeguarding requirements can be readily supplemented so that each Council and any related corporate body(ies) can meet the higher standards required by the NCSS. All Councils and corporate bodies will need to demonstrate compliance with the NCSS by June 2025.

National Council has established a practice of meeting with the Society’s CEOs at least once annually.

In the international arena, National Council was a contributor to the Council General International Committee established to review some aspects of The Rule Part II and the Committee on Good Governance. Australia’s two National Presidents, both Claire Victory and Mark Gaetani, participated in meetings of the Council General International.

Resources and information are shared within the CGI, and information is shared with other overseas National Councils relating to the transfer of funds to some countries in the Asia and Oceania regions that face internal administrative challenges.

Support is provided to the International Territorial Vice-President to promote good governance practices within National Councils across the Oceania, Asia 1 and Asia 2 regions.

Stronger connections and ongoing initiatives are underway with overseas English-speaking National Council CEOs and senior staff to discuss and consider opportunities in a number of areas including the challenges each National Council is facing in relation to engaging with Society Members and exploring new membership opportunities.

## Our Work Together

A range of activities were undertaken to promote working together, including the work done through bringing together common subject matter experts to explore communities of practice. These include:

- National Coordination Group Secretariat which provides a pathway for highlighting the needs of Companions during the cost of living crisis,
- National Membership Working Group
- Spirit of Youth Committee
- SOY Schools Committee
- National Mission and Spirituality Committee
- Website Redesign Program Working Group, and the Cyber Security Audit and preparation of mitigation strategies with Society Chief Information Officers.

Highlights of this strategic pillar include the preparation and publishing of a Risk Appetite Statement and a Risk Management Framework, and development of the [Working Together Guidelines](#) to address a lack of uniformity across the nine Australian Councils' codes of conduct.

## Our Sustainability

The ongoing performance of the National Council Secretariate is closely monitored through rigorous National Council processes. The Society's Chief Financial Officers Group will commence work on progressing financial sustainability modelling in order to bring financial stability to the Society as it moves into the future.

## New Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027

In early 2023, work commenced on the preparation of the next four-year Strategic Plan under the leadership of the incoming National President. The 18th National President and Members of the National Council reviewed the progress made against the 2020-2023 five strategic goals identifying outcomes achieved and identifying roadblocks that require further attention to allow the Society in Australia to continue its development as a contemporary for purpose organisation with inclusive governance structures that reflect *The Rule*.

The 2023-2027 Strategic Plan was released in July 2023. It was distributed to State and Territory Councils and is available to the Australian public through the Society's website at [National Council Strategic Plan \(vinnies.org.au\)](https://www.vinnies.org.au).



# THE SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA 2022-23



The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018 allows all of the Society's incorporated bodies and their related entities to be enlisted as a single 'Participating Group' for the purpose of being joined to the Commonwealth Redress Scheme. St Vincent de Paul Society National Redress Scheme Ltd ('the Company') is the entity that joins the Society in Australia to the Redress Scheme.

Redress claims are limited to a maximum \$150,000 damages and do not require detailed supporting evidence with the threshold being that an allegation(s) "is plausible".

The Society, through the Company, has over 700 institutions (special works, retail centres, offices, etc...) listed with the National Redress Scheme. National Council and the State and the Territory Councils established the Company to make it as easy as possible for a person making a claim of child sexual abuse against the Society. The Company simplifies the past and present activities and structures of the Society in Australia in a way that makes it easier to bring a complaint involving one of the Society's many special works or charitable activities.

National Council is the sole Member of the Company. The Company's board of directors is appointed by National Council. The Company Directors for the period were:

- Mr Dennis Innes (Cairns) Chair
- Ms Anne Stanfield (Sydney) appointed December 2021
- Mr Tony Brennan (Melbourne) appointed January 2023
- Mr Philip Cranny (Brisbane) appointed March 2023
- Ms Claire Victory (Adelaide) appointed April 2023

**P Toby oConnor**  
COMPANY SECRETARY

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[National Redress Scheme - St Vincent de Paul Society - Good Works \(vinnies.org.au\)](https://www.vinnies.org.au)

The 2022-23 Federal Budget recorded a surplus of around \$20 billion as Australia benefited from elevated commodity prices, low unemployment and some wage growth. However, as we slowly emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, economic pressures have prevailed. The causes are many and varied, with global uncertainties leading to disruptions to supply chains and inflation surges.

While domestically, rising interest rates, chronic housing shortages, and the reopening of borders have combined with global pressures to trigger the cost of living and housing crises. The slowing of the economy is also predicted to persist in 2023 and 2024.

Our Members and Volunteers are all too aware of the disproportionate impact these conditions have on the most vulnerable in our communities, with households relying on income support and working age payments, or comprising single parents, lone persons and renters, more likely to be living in poverty and experiencing financial stress.

The 'costs' of poverty are similarly disproportionate. Low-income households spend a greater portion of their income covering the basics, such as housing, food, credit, transport, data/telecommunications, energy and insurance costs. These increased costs can range between 50 to 150 per cent more, for many reasons.

Low income households are unable to reap the benefits of upfront payments or regular direct debits or of buying in bulk. They have limited consumer choice which may simply be due to where they live or their credit history.

People with fewer choices often end up using Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) products. Financial counsellors report seeing more people becoming overcommitted, sometimes with multiple accounts. Concerningly, in the last year, one in four BNPL users used this credit product to pay for essential products or services. One in five BNPL users missed or were late with a payment; and of these, two in five took out another loan to pay for BNPL fees or debts.

Advocating for change in the areas of income support, poverty, housing and homelessness, refugees, secure work and First Nations peoples remains a key priority for the



*St Vincent de Paul Society National Council CEO Toby o'Connor (second from right) with Senator Patrick Dodson (centre) and representatives from Australia's leading faith-based social services charities (St Vincent de Paul Society, The Salvation Army, Anglicare Australia, Baptist Care Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia and UnitingCare Australia) that supported an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament in the Constitution.*

Society. Other key advocacy areas covered in the 2022-23 financial year included tax and welfare reform, mutual obligation and work for the dole, disability, energy efficiency (for low-income households) and disaster responses.

Against this backdrop, the first year of the newly elected Albanese Government has seen much activity as it works to progress its mandate. Many of the Government's social justice priorities align with the Society's, as contained in A Fairer Australia (2022).

From July 2022 to June 2023, the Society advocated for, and welcomed these outcomes:

#### **Welfare and credit**

- repeal of the cashless debit card
- passing of the Financial Sector Reform Bill 2022 (small amount credit contracts)
- increases to Commonwealth Emergency Relief funding
- establishment of an Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee

- new Disability Support Pension impairment tables
- small increases to the base rate of income support payments
- some pension recipients being able to earn an additional \$4,000 to June 2023 without losing any of their pension
- commitment to review the Buy Now Pay Later sector
- commitment to review mutual obligation requirements and employment programs under Workforce Australia

### **Australia's First Nations Peoples**

- additional funding for Closing the Gap's Second Implementation Plan
- commitment to hold a referendum on recognition of First Nations peoples and The Voice
- enduring resolution for Youpla insurance victims

### **Housing and Homelessness**

- elevation of the Minister for Housing and Homelessness to Cabinet
- Equal Remuneration Order funding for specialist homelessness services
- Housing Ministers' commitment to strengthen renters' rights through National Cabinet
- commitment to establish the Housing Australia Future Fund, a National Housing Supply and Affordability Council, a Regional First Home Buyer Scheme, a Help to Buy Program and a National Housing Accord with additional funding
- widening of the remit of the National Housing Infrastructure Facility, the Treasurer's Investment Roundtable and Planning Ministers' reforms through National Cabinet
- development of a new National Housing and Homelessness Plan

### **Secure Work**

- passing of the Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022
- extended powers to the Fair Work Commission to set minimum standards for new forms of work
- establishment of Jobs and Skills Australia
- commitment to increase protections for casual workers, labour hire workers and to establish a national labour hire licensing scheme
- commitment to improve jobs and training pathways for women, First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse people and people in regional Australia

### **People Seeking Asylum**

- commitment to means-tested access to support services (health, housing, income support), in addition to work rights and study rights
- commitment to end temporary protection visas, providing nearly 20,000 refugees with pathways to permanency and reform of the family reunion program
- commitment to abolish the fast-track processing of people who arrived in Australia by boat
- commitment to progressively increase the annual refugee intake to 27,000
- commitment to immigration detention being no more than 90 days
- commitment to the humane, durable and timely resettlement of refugees subject to third country resettlement agreements

### **Other reforms**

- state and territory agreement to reform charitable fundraising laws
- commitment to change concessional tax rates for superannuation accounts greater than \$3 million
- calls for a Human Rights Act (led by the Human Rights Commission)

With input and advice from National Council's Social Justice Advisory Committee, Vincentian Refugee Network and states and territories, the National Council Secretariate prepared 15 submissions covering:

- repeal of the cashless debit card
- financial sector reform (small amount credit contracts)
- the Disaster Ready Fund Bill
- regulation of the Buy Now Pay Later sector
- the 2023 Federal Budget (May) and 2022 Federal Budget (October)
- the Disability Services Act
- the extent and nature of poverty in Australia
- disaster reliance
- Workforce Australia, mutual obligation and Work for the Dole
- legislating the objective of superannuation
- the Constitution Amendment Bill (The Voice)
- philanthropy
- the cost of living, and
- the Humanitarian Program.

Additionally, the National Council and its CEO made representations to crossbenchers to pass significant legislation relevant to our social justice priorities including the Secure Jobs, Better Pay Bill and the Housing and Future Fund Bill. The National Council's CEO provided evidence at parliamentary inquiries on the Disaster Recovery Fund Bill, the cost of living and the extent and nature of poverty, and also spoke of tax and welfare reform at the 2022 Australia Institute's Revenue Summit and participated at the Parliament of Australia's Day of Engagement (for The Voice).

The Society has representation on key government and non-government advisory groups and boards which enables them to contribute to the shape and form of social justice policy and programs. The National Council CEO has representation on the Department of Social Services' Community Services Advisory Group, Blueprint Expert Reference Group (community sector reform), National Coordination Group (emergency relief), National Shelter Australia's board, the National Emergency Management Australia's Charitable Group and the Tell Us Once Working Group. The Society also participated in forums reviewing the Disability Support Pension (impairment tables), and the need for a national anti-racism framework.

By joining forces with other major charities and not for profit organisations that hold similar positions on social justice issues, the Society's advocacy voice has been bolstered. These include ACOSS, Anglicare Australia, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (including the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office), Baptist Care Australia, Catholics for People Seeking Asylum, Catholics for Refugees, Catholic Social Services Australia, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC), Jesuit Refugee Service, National Shelter Australia, Refugee Council of Australia, The Salvation Army and UnitingCare Australia.

The Society wants to acknowledge the strong, collaborative working relationship it has with the major church charities. These charities hold in common a thirst to bring about a fairer Australia where all people are treated with respect and their human dignity is at the centre. During the life of the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan our inter-faith colleagues have come together on advocacy matters that we hold in common.



*Mark Gaetani, St Vincent de Paul Society National President, The Hon Julie Collins MP, the Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness, and the CEO of Amelie Housing, Graham West, meeting in Hobart. St Vincent de Paul Society is 'the largest homelessness prevention service outside of Government.*

**“ By joining forces with other major charities and not for profit organisations that hold similar positions on social justice issues, the Society's advocacy voice has been bolstered. ”**

The Society signed onto the following campaigns:

- It Stops with Me (anti-racism campaign)
- Save Sorry Business coalition (collapse of Youpla insurance)
- Stop the Debt Trap (BNPL regulation)
- Stronger Charities Alliance (reforms to deductible gift recipient status and donation caps)
- Everybody's Home (which we sponsor)
- Anti-Poverty Week (which we sponsor)
- ACOSS' Energy Concessions Report and call to increase energy efficiency ratings for all new residential homes
- One Journey Together (NATSICC)
- Justice Reform Initiative, and
- Joint charities support for The Voice.

### Ongoing Advocacy Matters

The Society continues to advocate for taxation and welfare reform, in particular, dropping the stage 3 tax cuts and using savings to increase base rates for working age payments and Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

The inadequacy of the safety net for people seeking asylum, those rejected by the fast-track assessment process and for refugees left behind in PNG or offshore detention continues to be a concern for the Society and we continue calls for funding of the Status Resolution Support Service to be reinstated.

The Society also supports calls to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years, and for ongoing funding of justice reinvestment and programs aimed at Closing the Gap. The Society fully supports policy development that is co-developed, co designed and led by our First Nations peoples.

Increases to Commonwealth Rent Assistance and rapid action to address the chronic shortage of social and affordable housing remain a high priority for the Society across the country.

The Society looks forward to the Government's Employment White Paper as more must be done to assist the long-term unemployed and under-employed reach their full potential. A flexible employment service sector is



essential – one that offers employment training programs that enhance self-esteem, preserve human dignity, align with people's skills, and meet labour market demands. Significant change is required to address the gender pay gap and ensure adequate protections are in place for new forms of work.

The Society's Report Card, accessible on our website, monitors the commitment and progress made by the Australian Government with respect to our advocacy priorities. The suite of advocacy materials developed for the 2022 Federal Election have been updated through 2023 and will be available on our website.

Thanks to Members who engage with their respective social justice networks and, through them, the National Council's Social Justice Advisory Committee and Vincentian Refugee Network. The Society appreciates and looks forward to your continued support and commitment to advancing our advocacy priorities.

# EMERGENCY RELIEF NATIONAL COORDINATION GROUP



The Emergency Relief National Coordination Group (NCG) was established in April 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide advice to the former Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston on the implementation of Emergency Relief (ER), Food Relief (FR) and Financial Counselling (FC) support during the COVID-19 pandemic. This ministerial advisory committee now reports to the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP.

The scope of the NCG has been expanded since 2020, initially in response to the flooding in NSW and Queensland in 2022, and subsequently to broaden its remit to advice and recommendations on demand for ER, FR and FC for vulnerable people in Australia due to cost of living pressures. Since June 2023, the NCG has been tasked with providing expert advice and intelligence from the ER, FR and FC sectors, including advice on emerging areas of need and demand; consulting as a key stakeholder on recommendations under the review of the Financial Wellbeing and Capability programs; facilitating collaboration and increased information sharing among the sectors; and developing the evidence base in support of the value and use of the ER, FR and FC programs.

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council is represented on the NCG by Mr Toby oConnor. Other

members include leaders of national charities and non-government organisations - including Indigenous-led and remote and regional organisations - providing ER, FR and FC services, and the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Social Services (DSS). The NCG provides monthly advice and recommendations to the Minister and was commended by her in June 2023 for helping to shape services and supports for the most financially vulnerable Australians.

In response to NCG advice in May 2023 that the high cost of living was driving increased demand for ER and FR in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania, the Minister allocated an additional \$2.1 million in ER funding to these jurisdictions and approximately \$500,000 in additional funding for FR.

In June 2023, NCG members synthesised the findings from various research projects and presented recommendations on the design of the ER and FR programs to the Minister. Recommendations included the co-location of ER and FR services where appropriate; embedding ER in wraparound services; incorporating case management as required; more training resources to support complex cases and diverse groups; scalable training solutions; additional funding to respond to increased demand and complexity; and building a better data set, including unmet demand, turn-away rates and wait lists.

# OVERSEAS PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia continues to support fellow Vincentians in our partnered countries in the Asia-Pacific region to undertake good works helping people in need through its Overseas Partnerships Program (OPP) comprising Twinning, Project Support, Assist-A-Student and Emergency Relief.

The OPP is overseen and facilitated by National Council of Australia's Overseas Partnerships Advisory Committee and Secretariate on behalf of its State and Territory Councils and Conferences.

Conference to Conference and Council to Council relationships are supported through partnerships between

the National Council of Australia and the Superior Councils of our overseas partner countries in Cambodia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The formation of emerging Societies is also supported by Vincentians in Australia through the Papua New Guinea Advisory Committee and the Timor-Leste Working Group.

In our region, the OPP is overseen by Council General International's (CGI) International Territorial Vice Presidents (ITVPs) for Oceania and Asia and its Twinning Commission representatives for Oceania and Asia.

## Oceania Meeting and Partnerships



*Vincentians from across Oceania came together in Sydney in April 2023*

In April 2023, the National Council of Australia supported the Oceania Meeting – a coming together of National Presidents and leaders from across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. A key outcome of the meeting was that Superior Councils in the Oceania region are working together to establish a collaborative partnership that will be known as the Society of St Vincent de Paul Oceania Program.

The aim of the partnership is to move the National Councils in Oceania towards sustainable and self-sustaining futures by increasing their capabilities through building on current knowledge, expertise and partnership arrangements across multiple domains.

Both the National Councils of Australia and New Zealand committed to act together to provide leadership during the implementation of the plan of action and to collaborate with CGI personnel throughout. In June 2023, the National

Council of Australia committed to a long-term structured plan of support and assistance and to set out a plan of action that would cover a timeframe of 10 years.

The parties below will be the initial Members of the St Vincent de Paul Society Oceania Program:

- CGI through its ITVP-Oceania Team, Twinning and CIAD representatives;
- Superior Councils of the Societies in Australia and New Zealand; and
- Superior Councils of the Societies in the Pacific including Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia - CHUUK and Timor Leste.

Updates will be provided as the Society of St Vincent de Paul Oceania Program is established.

# OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## ◀ Twinning

Twining is the direct link between an Australian and an overseas Conference or Council. Promoting spirituality, friendship and an understanding between cultures, Twinning consists of prayer, regular communication and financial support via quarterly remittances for twinning, optional twice-yearly grants and occasional projects.

At the end of the financial year (FY) 2022-2023, there were a total of 1,874 twinning relationships between Australian and Overseas Conferences and Councils. This year the Society was able to recommence Twinning with Fiji, with 15 Conference to Conference twinning relationships established. In addition, financial support to many more twins in India was able to be resumed.

The table below summarises the Twinning relationships with the Society's overseas partner countries through the OPP in 2022-2023 financial year.

There were a total of 1,874 Conferences/Councils twinned with Australia's partner countries. The breakdown by country was: Cambodia (24), Federated States of Micronesia (1), Fiji (15), India (1145), Indonesia (205), Kiribati (1), Lao PDR (1), Myanmar (114), Philippines (229), Solomon Islands (6), Sri Lanka (7) and Thailand (126).

The State and Territory breakdown of relationships with the overseas twins was: Canberra/Goulburn (58), New South Wales (691), Queensland (301), South Australia (131), Tasmania (27), Victoria (542), Western Australia (112) and National Council (12).

The importance of the non-financial aspects of Twinning continued to be highlighted in FY 2022-2023 as the political situation in Myanmar prevented the sending of remittances. These funds have been held at National Council according to its Funds Held policy approved by its Overseas Partnership Advisory Committee and will be sent as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Myanmar National President requests that Australian Conferences and Councils continue to communicate with their twins and that all Vincentians continue to pray for the country and its people.

### Twining relationships supported through Overseas Partnerships Program in 2022-2023

	Conference to Conference twins	Council to Council twins	Total Twins	% Twins by Country	No. Grants Given	% Grants Given
Cambodia	24	0	24	1	20	2
Federated States of Micronesia	1	0	1	0	1	0
Fiji	15	1	16	1	9	1
India	1,010	24	1,034	55	585	69
India (non-financial)	108	3	111	6	0	0
Indonesia	200	5	205	11	104	12
Kiribati	1	0	1	0	1	0
Laos	1	0	1	0	0	0
Myanmar (non-financial)	102	12	114	6	0	0
Philippines	222	7	229	12	94	11
Solomon Islands	6	0	6	0	3	0
Sri Lanka	4	3	7	0	5	1
Thailand	122	4	126	7	26	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,816</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Project Support

The OPP also facilitates support for projects identified by Conferences and Councils in our overseas partner countries according to specific criteria. These requests are supported through generous contributions by Conferences and Councils in Australia.

**Community Development** projects improve the circumstances of people and communities in need in a local area. They can be requested by overseas Conferences and Councils through their National Council. In Financial Year 2022/2023, Community Development projects in India (17) (\$23,898) and Solomon Islands (2) (\$1,239) were supported. These included:

- Projects in India that provided for the purchase of milk cows or buffalo. The beneficiaries sell their milk to receive income. They can also use it for their families, improving their health and nutrition.
- Project in Solomon Islands that provided educational scholarships to students in Takwa village.

**Special Vincentian Support** projects support the efficient and effective operations of an overseas National Council. They can only be requested by our partner overseas National Councils. In Financial Year 2022/2023, 3 Special Vincentian Support projects to the total value of \$25,022 were supported.

This included funding for:

- The Solomon Islands Superior Council to visit its conferences in outer islands.
- The National Council of Indonesia to hold its National Congress to elect a new National President and office bearers.

## Emergency Relief

No Emergency Relief funds were sent overseas in FY 2022-2023 as the need for COVID-19 support diminished and no emergency relief was requested for our region.

However, in an important development for the OPP, National Council has approved a new funding mechanism for Emergency Relief for the FY 2022-2023 onwards. Each year an agreed amount for Emergency Relief will be included in the OPP budget. The funds will be held and available for immediate allocation upon receipt of an Emergency Relief Application from our overseas partner countries and approval by National Council's Overseas Partnerships Advisory Committee (OPAC). Any funds not allocated in the financial year will be remitted to Council General International's Commission for International Aid and Development (CIAD) for use as needed for Emergency Relief around the world.

# OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## Assist-A-Student Program

Unique to Australia, the Assist-A-Student Program recognises the importance of education as a key plank to help break the cycle of poverty. The program relies on kind donations from Vincentians, members of the public and other groups and organisations.

The AAS Program currently runs over a calendar year. In addition, the countries engaged in the program run different school years so payments are made at different times in the year. This makes financial year reporting a challenge.

Over calendar year 2022, 1,450 students were supported, with \$100 allocated for each student for a total amount of \$145,300. These students were from Cambodia (230)\*, Indonesia (330)\*, Kiribati (100)\*, Philippines (330)\*, Sri Lanka (200) and Thailand (260)\*.

Over calendar year 2023, 1,620 students will be supported with \$100 allocated for each student for a total amount of \$162,000. These students will come

from Cambodia (270)\*\*, Indonesia (380)\*\*, Kiribati (100)\*\*, Philippines (370)\*\*, Sri Lanka (200)\*\* and Thailand (300)\*\*.

(\*supported in the 2022-2023 financial year) (\*\*to be supported in the 2023-2024 financial year).

While fundraising for distribution in 2024 calendar year will continue until the end of December, \$78,245 has been raised as at the end of June 2023.

Assistance to other partner countries is reviewed each calendar year. Unfortunately, Assist A Student funds were unable to be sent to Myanmar in either 2022 or 2023 due to the political situation.

### Total Funds Provided by Country

The table below summarises the Twinning, Council to Council, Grants, Project and Assist-A-Student funds provided to, or held on behalf of, overseas National Councils through the Overseas Partnerships Program in FY 2022-2023.

### Funds remitted (and held) by Overseas Partnerships Program in 2022-2023

	Twinning (\$)	Grants Christmas / Easter / COVID (\$)	Council- to- Council (\$)	Projects, Emergency & COVID support (\$)	Assist-a-Student (\$)	Total (\$)
Cambodia	7,280	4,250	0	200	23,000	34,730
Fiji	2,511	1,530	0	0	0	4,041
FSM (Chuuk)	320	200	0	0	0	520
India	376,960	129,474	15,245	23,898	0	545,577
Indonesia	64,000	17,617	3,645	24,000	33,000	142,262
Kiribati	320	200	0	0	10,300	10,820
Lao PDR	320	200	0	0	0	520
Myanmar	0	0	0	0	0	0
Philippines	70,720	30,585	7,480	200	33,000	141,985
Solomon Islands	1,920	600	0	2,261	0	4,781
Sri Lanka	1,280	1,000	2,400	0	20,000	24,680
Thailand	38,240	6,265	4,820	0	26,000	75,325
<b>Total remitted</b>	<b>563,871</b>	<b>191,921</b>	<b>33,590</b>	<b>50,559</b>	<b>145,300</b>	<b>985,241</b>



National Council's communications engagement during the financial year began soon after the period started, with a media release on 4 July 2022 to mark the NAIDOC Week theme of Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up! and to support equality and opportunity for First Nations people.

Twelve months and 64 media releases later, the Society would again be recognising NAIDOC Week (themed For Our Elders), declaring it a "time to learn about and celebrate the continued history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia".

This release noted that later would come a historic referendum on an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, adding, "The Society urges all Australians to vote 'yes' on referendum day."

The Society's position on this issue was explained on the basis of our Catholic faith, Catholic Social Teaching, the inspiration of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and the words of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, the peak advisory body to the Australian Catholic Bishops: 'Catholics have a responsibility to listen to the voices of First Australians and to work towards a more just and equitable society'.

During the year National Council paid special attention to communicating policy in five key areas, dubbed our "asks". These were Poverty and Inequity, Housing and Homelessness, People Seeking Asylum, Secure Work, and First Nations people. The Communications team worked closely with our Policy analysts to ensure our submissions to government and other inquiries were in turn explained

to the media and, so to the broader community, in concise and convincing ways.

Strategies to achieve this included the widespread distribution of media releases to metropolitan, regional and Catholic organisations (print and electronic), and the targeted placement of editorial opinion pieces in leading periodicals. The take-up of our material was highly encouraging, reflecting the regard in which the Society is held.

The election of a new Government shortly before the start of F/Y 2022-23 heralded opportunities for a number of positive announcements by the Society, for example welcoming in early February 2023 the doubling of concessional tax rates for superannuation accounts of more than \$3.0 million, and some months later, the \$2.0 billion social housing investment.

Social media engagement was again a vital communications tool and we expanded the use of the most popular platforms, working collaboratively with the communications and media teams in the Society's State and Territory jurisdictions.

The functioning of the Secretariate-led National Communications Network was again a valuable mechanism for information sharing and fostering consistency of messaging across the vastness of the Society and the country at large. The contracted media clipping service was again used to distribute a daily summary of published articles of both specific and broadly newsworthy interest across the Society.

The National Council website [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au) is one of the main ways the community interacts with the Society and our services, and learns about our advocacy work. The Society's website was launched in May 2023 following extensive stakeholder engagement within and outside of the Society.

With all states and territories represented on the one site the Society can provide a better experience for website visitors. At any one time around 260 people across the country are looking for help, shop locations, or information on our website. The new website is made up of a central page that promotes the Society as a whole and highlights current campaigns and activities.

Our quarterly magazine *The Record* continued to have a central role in the national communications strategy, sharing insights and activities of the Society's elected and executive leadership as well as the many achievements of its Members and Volunteers. Along with articles generated by the National Council Secretariate, many interesting contributions were received from the media and membership teams in the States and Territories.

*The Record* continued to be well received in its electronic format, although an expansion of the subscription list would be welcomed and is a priority for the coming year.

Acknowledging that a key role of *The Record* is to reflect the advocacy role of National Council, the magazine was printed in sufficient numbers for personalised distribution to all Federal parliamentary Members and Senators, a number of whom have appeared in its stories.

An undoubted highlight of our communications year was the [announcement](#), on 7 November 2022, of the electing of Mark Gaetani, then-President of the Society's Tasmanian State Council, as the next National President of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia.

The news that Mr Gaetani would succeed Claire Victory for the ensuing four years was disseminated widely to the media, and posted to social media, and received excellent coverage.

Mr Gaetani's appointment, confirmed at his Commissioning Mass in Canberra on 5 March 2023, was featured as the cover story of *The Record*, Autumn 2023 issue, accompanied by his first 'From the National President' column in the magazine. Noting that the Society faced challenges and opportunities regarding membership, he flagged the Society's milestone National Congress scheduled to take place in Sydney in October 2023.

*The Record* will continue to showcase the Society's Good Works and be a vehicle for sharing important news with Members, Volunteers, supporters and the wider Australian community.

The overall communications initiative plays a vital role in helping maintain and foster the already strong reputation of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia.



# NATIONAL STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME 2022-23

The Society's financial accounting is done primarily at the State and Territory level, where the various incorporated entities function. This statement presents an amalgamated financial view of these entities.

	Revenue \$	Operating Expenses \$	Net surplus/(deficit) \$
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>			
Aged Care	245,680,016	238,073,329	7,606,687
Community Housing	168,366,118	120,623,132	47,742,986
Disability Services	25,971,626	31,352,856	(5,381,230)
Financial Assistance Services	4,170,514	3,945,771	224,743
Help for People in Crisis	22,119,331	78,376,650	(56,257,319)
Home assist services	127,728	369,654	(241,926)
Homeless Services	80,523,683	91,141,137	(10,617,454)
Accommodation and Support Services	34,224,534	28,913,218	5,311,316
Migrants and Refugees	395,482	1,384,676	(989,194)
Drought Disaster Recovery and Relief	-	376,000	(376,000)
Other Natural Disaster Recovery and Relief	2,033,715	4,454,044	(2,420,329)
Overseas Development	7,970	1,715,457	(1,707,487)
Youth Services	523,194	2,765,262	(2,242,068)
Misc Programs	1,207,589	1,419,861	(212,272)
<b>Total Community Services</b>	<b>585,351,500</b>	<b>604,911,047</b>	<b>(19,559,547)</b>
<b>SUPPORTING SERVICES</b>			
Fundraising	58,086,722	12,410,494	45,676,228
Operational Support Services	18,962,942	41,010,541	(22,047,599)
Retail Operations	244,365,545	154,634,711	89,730,834
<b>Total Supporting Services</b>	<b>321,415,209</b>	<b>208,055,746</b>	<b>113,359,463</b>
<b>SHARED SERVICES</b>			
Management and Administration Services	7,488,530	18,329,674	(10,841,144)
Finance Services	26,549,426	22,455,251	4,094,175
Human Resource Services	345	12,172,304	(12,171,959)
Information Communication Telecommunication Services	510,012	26,853,097	(26,343,085)
Property Services	510,898	6,572,240	(6,061,342)
Legal and Compliance Services	8,823	5,413,748	(5,404,925)
<b>Total Shared Services</b>	<b>35,068,034</b>	<b>91,796,314</b>	<b>(56,728,280)</b>
<b>OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>			
Reclassification adjustment on sale of available for sale financial assets	105,774	-	105,774
Reclassification adjustment on impairment of available for sale financial assets	-	-	-
Net changes in fair value of available for sale financial assets	27,129,253	-	27,129,253
<b>Total other comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>27,235,027</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>27,235,027</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>969,069,770</b>	<b>904,763,107</b>	<b>64,306,663</b>
<b>INTERSOCIETY TRANSACTIONS</b>			
Drought	-	-	-
Disaster	-	-	-
Levies (incl National, O/S & Marketing)	3,339,659	1,886,032	1,453,627
Payroll	-	89,840	(89,840)
Insurance	-	113,900	(113,900)
Other	-	389,415	(389,415)
Overseas Development	1,069,204	42,894	1,026,310
<b>Total Intersociety</b>	<b>4,408,863</b>	<b>2,522,081</b>	<b>1,886,782</b>
<b>Total Surplus/ (Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>973,478,633</b>	<b>907,285,188</b>	<b>66,193,445</b>



**St Vincent de Paul Society**

NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc.

*good works*

Responsibility for this document rests with the  
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#### **PRIVACY STATEMENT**

The St Vincent de Paul Society of Australia respects the privacy of the people it assists, our Members, Volunteers and employees. As a result, the names of clients, members, volunteers or employees featured in this report may have been changed and pictorial models used.

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