Three stylized yellow leaves with black outlines and internal hatching, arranged in a cluster in the upper right quadrant.

Young
Vinnies

Secondary School
Starter Kit

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect. May Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured. May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith, and reconciliation.

1. Introduction

What is Young Vinnies?

Young Vinnies is a group of passionate students who want to make a difference in their community by addressing injustice.

Young Vinnies structure

You can tailor your Young Vinnies group to suit your school and students' strengths and passions. Young Vinnies typically has members ranging from years 7 to 12 and meets weekly or fortnightly. This group typically has a teacher to help guide its students and a captain (or equivalent) to lead meetings.

Why start a Young Vinnies group?

There are many benefits of starting a Young Vinnies group.

As a student, you have an amazing opportunity to:

- Make a real difference to the lives of people in your community,
- Develop leadership skills which will prepare you for life after school,
- Meet like-minded people,
- Participate in fun and meaningful activities,
- Be a role model for others,
- Challenge yourself and expand your comfort zone.



History of the St Vincent de Paul Society

The St Vincent de Paul Society, also known as Vinnies, is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting those affected by disadvantage. In striving to achieve our purpose, we employ the ambitions and actions of our founder, Frederic Ozanam.

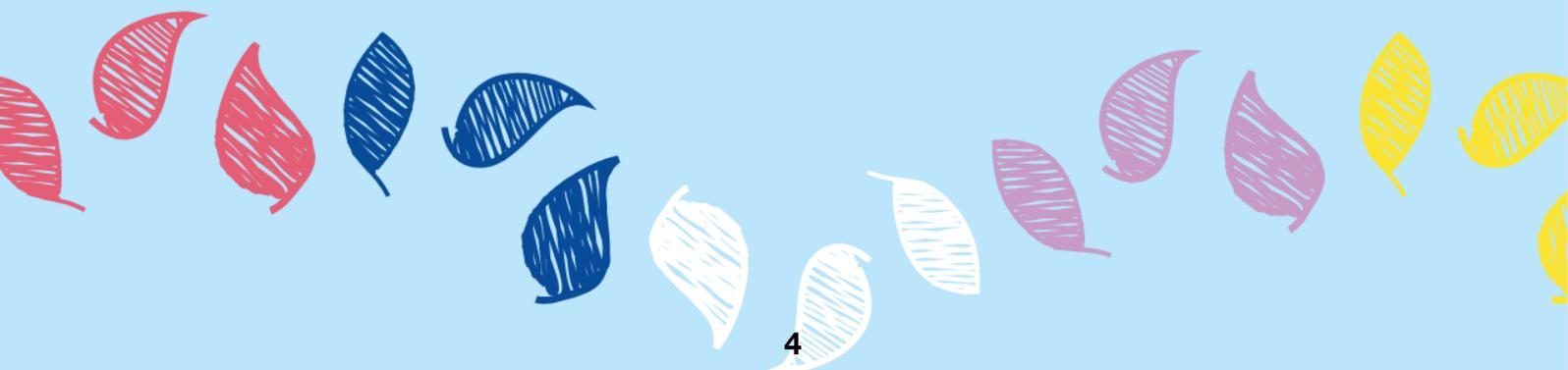
Frederic was born in Italy and went to university in France. He's well-known for his work beginning when he was a 20 year old university student. Frederic felt the desire to alleviate the suffering around him in war torn France in 1833.

Responding to the great poverty in the Paris of his day, he and a group of friends began visiting the homes of those in need, bringing practical assistance of food and firewood, as well as something less tangible - empathy and love. Frederic and his friends began meeting regularly and formed the first conference. They decided to adopt the name of the St Vincent de Paul Society after the patron saint of charities.

Conference is a French word meaning "coming together". A Conference is a group of people who get together on a regular basis to meet and discuss ways to address particular needs in their community.

Today Vinnies stills focuses on empathy, love, and connection, like Frederic and the first conference.

**"In my life I want to become better, and do a little good,"
Blessed Frederic Ozanam**



About the St Vincent de Paul Society



Our Mission

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that 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 St Vincent de Paul 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 Values

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.

Our Logo

The St Vincent de Paul Society logo was designed by Australian sculptor, Tom Bass. It represents the hand of Christ that blesses the cup, the hand of love that offers the cup and the hand of suffering that receives the cup.



The upper hand,
the hand of Christ,
blesses the Cup



The centre hand,
the hand of love,
offers the Cup



The lower hand,
the hand of suffering,
receives the Cup



2. What we do

Vinnies around the world

Vinnies has grown since its beginnings in nineteenth century France, now being present in 153 countries helping over 30 million people daily. In the heart of all that we do is connection; we support a range of people including families, young people, the elderly, people who are sick, people experiencing homelessness and people from a refugee or asylum seeker background. We also work to care for our common home through sustainability and recycling initiatives.

Vinnies in Western Australia

In addition to our Vinnies Shops, which are often seen as the ‘front door’ to our organisation, Vinnies provides a number of community support programs across Western Australia.

At the very core of Vinnies is our Emergency Assistance and Support Program, in which conference members provide support to people experiencing hardships through assistance with food, clothing, furniture and more. In this work, our members also maintain community pantries which can be supported by local schools through non-perishable food drives and donations.

Vinnies also facilitates programs that aim to service a need identified within the community, these include:

- Accommodation services (including emergency, short and long-term),
- Christmas gifts and hampers,
- Advocacy initiatives,
- Vinnies Youth Engagement programs,
- Community Food Centre,
- Financial Counselling,
- Homelessness services,
- Drop-in support for vulnerable youth,
- Community Support Centres,
- Mental Health services.

For more info visit the ‘Get Involved’ page at www.vinnies.org.au/wa

“ Vincentians should never forget that giving love, talents and time is more important than giving money. Nevertheless, the Society uses money and property to help relieve the suffering of those in need. ”

The Rule, National Council of Australia, 7th edition, Canberra, 2012, page 22.

3. Starting a Young Vinnies group

Starting a Young Vinnies group is an exciting way to learn about and take action on social justice issues in your community. By taking these first steps to get your group up and running you will be setting yourself up for a successful and enjoyable year ahead.

Here are some simple steps to kick start your Young Vinnies group



1

Make a list of all the people interested in joining your group.



2

Talk to a teacher about starting a Young Vinnies group in your school.



3

Choose a teacher who has an interest in social justice, who has the time and who would be willing to support the group. A good person to talk to is your Head of Religious Education or similar role.



4

Have a proposal ready for why you want to start a Young Vinnies group (Hint: The list of interested students will show the teacher that you have support).



5

Contact your local Vinnies Youth staff member located at the back of this guide. They will be able to support you and your peers in setting up your conference.



6

Seek approval from your Principal or Head of Religious Education. Writing a letter or arranging to meet with the Principal during lunch is a great idea.

4. Setting up a Young Vinnies group

Now that you have approval from your school to start a Young Vinnies group you can begin to bring in new members and launch the group.

Recruit new members

- Ask people directly to join your conference, everyone likes a chat and a personal invitation.
- Advertise your new group; create posters, make announcements, present at assemblies, and ask about putting information in school newsletters or notices. Make sure people know what your group does.
- Stay visible throughout the school year, not just at the start. Make sure everyone knows when and where Vinnies meetings are held. Every time you do an event or a Vinnies activity, advertise it through every way possible.
- Welcome all visitors to your meetings, ensuring a friendly space for new members.

Commissioning ceremony

One way to launch your Young Vinnies group is with a commissioning ceremony. At a commissioning ceremony, new members (including new Office Bearers) are officially inducted into your group. At the ceremony, it is recommended that someone speak about the St Vincent de Paul Society mission and vision, and congratulate the members for getting involved. Remember to invite your local Youth Engagement Coordinator.

The purpose of a commissioning ceremony is a public acknowledgement for the people involved in your group and a 'sending forth' of the members of the conference to help others. You may have a commissioning ceremony at the start of each year, to welcome members who have joined the conference and to launch the group's activities for another year. Your commissioning ceremony may take place during school assembly or simply in a classroom during lunch time.

Organise your first meeting

- Arrange a time, date and room for your meeting. Try to avoid changing this once the conference is set up to ensure continuity.
- Advertise the details throughout the school at assemblies, in the daily notices and on posters throughout the school.
- Plan the agenda of the first meeting. Use the agenda sheet attached to this kit as a template (Appendix). Make sure you have a reflection ready and a clear list of agenda items.
- Give copies of the office bearers' role descriptions to interested students to read through before the meeting.



Choosing group leaders

Elect Office Bearers

Office bearers are members of a Young Vinnies group who hold positions of leadership. Taking on the role of an office bearer is a great way to develop life skills that will help you post-Secondary School while spending quality time with friends and working towards making a difference in your community. If you are a member of the group and are willing to take on some responsibility, then you are eligible to be an Office Bearer.

It is recommended that Office Bearers are rotated every year to provide other members the opportunity to give it their best in a new role. Office Bearers can also take the opportunity to mentor younger members so when the time comes they feel ready to step into an Office Bearer role.

Office Bearers include:

President

The President is the leader of the Young Vinnies group and is responsible for its smooth running. The President should act like the captain of the team, encouraging all members to contribute to the best of their ability

Duties:

- Plans the agenda for each meeting with the secretary
- Runs the meeting
- Helps to resolve conference related issues or concerns
- Organises activities to help members get to know each other (ice-breakers)
- Talks with the Bailly (teacher) and/or other school staff as necessary
- Delegates; encourages members to accept action items that are suited to their skills and talents.

Vice President

The Vice President is supportive of the President and takes on the role of President if they are ever absent from the conference meeting. They also take lead on recruiting new members.

Secretary

The Secretary keeps the records of the group and acts as an ambassador; communicating the good works with the wider community.

Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for all the money raised and distributed by the conference.

All Members

If you are not an Office Bearer, you still play an important role in doing 'good works' in your Young Vinnies group.

All members share the following duties:

- Raise awareness about social injustices with the group
- Suggest activities that will make a difference in your community
- Take turns to choose a reflection for each meeting
- Spread the word about your Young Vinnies group, and encourage interested students to attend a meeting
- Recruit new members to the group
- Attends meetings as an observer and offers advice when called upon
- Assists the President with resolving issues or concerns if required
- Links the group with the school administration
- Builds and maintains a relationship with the Vinnies Youth staff member or local conference assists members with choosing and focusing on one activity at a time

Emmanuel Bailly was the mentor of the first conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

When establishing the Society, Frederic sought advice and guidance from Bailly as the more senior and experienced member in the conference.

Teacher Bailly

Today we call the teacher who assists a school conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society the Bailly, in recognition of the wisdom and guidance they bring to the conference.

A good Bailly:

- Offers advice to the conference members
- Does not run the meetings or events, rather empowers and supports the students
- Has knowledge of/interest in social justice and the St Vincent de Paul Society
- Has knowledge of school policies and procedures
- Is passionate about Young Vinnies
- Listens well
- Maintains a positive working relationship with Vinnies youth staff and local conference

Duties:

- Attends meetings as an observer and offers advice when called upon
- Assists the President with resolving issues or concerns if required
- Links the group with the school
- Administration
- Builds and maintains a relationship with the Vinnies Youth staff member or local conference
- Assists members with choosing and focusing on one activity at a time



5. Running a Young Vinnies meeting

Remember you can tailor your Young Vinnies meetings to the strengths, interests, and time constraints of your group.

Running a meeting

- Start the meeting with the Acknowledgement of Country.
- Say the Young Vinnies pledge or prayer together (these can be found at the end of this booklet).
- Take a moment to go through reflection as a group. This might be reading and discussing a poem, an article, a bible verse, a video, or something that made you think.
- In the first couple of meetings you may choose to play 'get to know you' games (icebreakers). You can also choose to run icebreakers when you have new members join the conference.
- Take an attendance of all students and record.
- Type up the minutes as the meeting progresses to save time. This task is usually assigned to the Secretary.
- Have a positive attitude and be respectful of other members' contributions.
- Stick to the agenda, talk through each agenda item as they come up. This will help the conference stay on track within the allocated meeting time.
- Make sure action items that have been completed are marked off the action sheet. Also use this to record action item progress and time lines of when they are due. This will help the conference ensure smooth planning and organisation is in place (see the action sheet template in the Appendix).
- If necessary, decide on new action items and add them to the action sheet.
- Provide time for questions or new ideas but save chit-chat until after the meeting.
- Close meeting. Once the meeting has finished the minutes will be finalised and sent to all the members to confirm who attended, what was covered and any new ideas or questions raised.
- The best time to run your Young Vinnies group meeting is once a fortnight during lunch. As time is limited, start on time, keep your meetings short and sharp, but remember to still have fun.

Tip:

Consider creating a Teams group for your Young Vinnies group. This will allow you to share information and keep in contact between meetings.

6. Running a Young Vinnies group

The actions of a Young Vinnies group generally involve a three step process*:

See

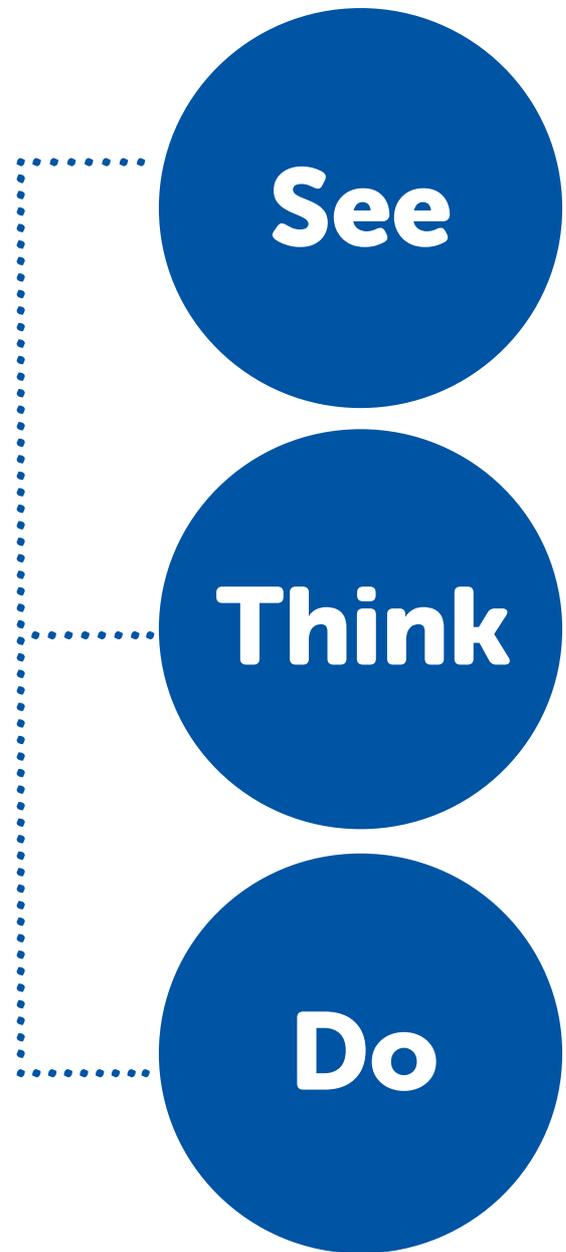
Make your Young Vinnies group aware of a social injustice.

Think

Reflect on what can be done about this issue.

Do

Put your faith into action by helping people experiencing this injustice.



**Joseph Cardijn was the founder of Young Christian Workers. He developed the "See Judge Act" method during his work with the YCW movement.*

The "See Think Do" method outlined above has been derived from the "See Judge Act" method and we would like to acknowledge that the idea was based on Cardijn's method.

Step 1: See

To provide a 'hand up' to those in need requires us to become aware of issues of social injustice. It is true that we cannot influence what we cannot see.

Here are some simple steps to kick start your Young Vinnies group

1

Learn about social injustices in your community. A good place to start is to visit our website at www.vinnies.org.au and go to 'Our Impact'.

2

Research specific issues that draw your attention such as homelessness, domestic violence, poverty, the stolen generation or housing affordability.

3

Talk to your friends about what inspires them to make a difference and share in stories that you have witnessed or heard.

4

Read an article or listen to a podcast about a social justice issue that you don't know much about, and share your topic with the group.

5

Look into different local and international social media activists to see what topics they are taking on and why they are passionate about them.

6

Attend a cultural event to learn about different experiences and perspectives.

7

Make a list of all the people interested in your conference and what they are passionate about.

Step 2: Think

Meetings are an opportunity for your Young Vinnies group to come together to ‘think’ about the social injustices in the world and how they might be alleviated. Through engaging discussions, brainstorming, and debate, you and your peers can reflect on how to help people facing hardships in your communities.

You will also need to think about how your Young Vinnies group will operate in order to achieve your Vinnies goals - such as how you will meet, record data and reflect on your work.

Here are some ideas for how to think about issues in your community and how to address them:

Assign group members to research further into a social justice topic and discuss together as a group. Questions to get you started can be:

1

- How does this issue affect individuals/families?
- How does this issue affect the community/communities involved?
- Does the issue impact on health, wellbeing and/or financial stability of the affected group?
- How is the community currently responding to this issue?

Discuss needs that you may have seen within your school or local to your community.

2

For example, are there members of the community who may be struggling to connect socially with others? Are there students that may be attending class hungry, or perhaps struggling to purchase hygiene products for themselves? Are there initiatives to recycle and care for the environment running?

3

Consider speaking directly to the staff at your local aged care homes, hospitals, or primary schools to see how you might support their work. Ask if they may have time to meet with you and discuss the current hardships faced by their residents, patients and/or students.

4

Explore the websites of advocacy services that support people in different communities - for example, are there youth or disability advocacy networks for your region? What type of support to they provide?

5

Think about ideas to support that are achievable, will have a positive impact, and are realistic. If you are stuck for ideas, connect with your local Vinnies Youth Engagement Coordinator.

6

Consider the unique skills and talents of your group, and use those to come up with ideas to support your community.

Step 3: Do

This is your opportunity to put the 'Seeing' and 'Thinking' into action. 'Doing' means undertaking a project that will make a difference in the lives of people who are facing challenging times.

Ideas for action in your Young Vinnies group

Hold a social justice forum during lunch.

Let your community know about social justice topics and educate them on why they are unjust. Topics to consider include the stolen generation, homelessness, domestic violence, poverty, bullying, and the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees.

Hold a fundraising event such as a trivia or quiz night at the school.

You may like to invite other schools to participate for an inter-school challenge.

Hold a Vinnies School Sleepout during winter.

Running this event can encourage your school community to build empathy for those experiencing hardship, while raising awareness and funds towards reducing homelessness. Your local Vinnies Youth team can support with activities and learning opportunities for this event.

Hold a Christmas Appeal to donate gifts and/or non-perishable food during the festive season.

Host a back-to-school day to collect items like pencil cases, pens, pencils, books and back packs for children in your community who may need a hand up.

Host a bake sale or a baking competition during lunch.

Explore a partnership with a local aged care or retirement home and create opportunities to reduce social isolation.

Talk to the home staff about what their residents are in need of, for example this could be running a monthly craft group or a 'cafe' in which students engage in conversations with residents.

Run an educational campaign around important weeks, like NAIDOC week, Anti-Poverty Week, or Refugee Week.

This could be structured in ways to suit your group and school needs - for example you may organize different events for days of the week, such as an assembly on the Monday, a fundraiser on the Tuesday and an art show on the Wednesday.

Set up pop-up shops during winter and Christmas to collect much needed clothing for people who are experiencing homelessness.

Make a fact sheet and put it in your school's newsletter.

And lastly, don't forget to thank the people who support the work that you do. Acknowledging everyone's hard work will help greatly to strengthen relationships and ensure all involved feel appreciated for their efforts. If you fundraised or collected donations, you can also update the school community of the total funds and/or how the donations will be helping the wider community.

Key dates and contact details

Social justice and awareness-raising

20 February:	World Day of Social Justice
8 March:	International Women's Day
21 March:	Harmony Day
April:	National Youth Week
June:	Refugee Week
27 May-3 June:	National Reconciliation Week
20 June:	World Refugee Day
First week of July:	NAIDOC Week
First Sunday in July:	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday
4 August:	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day
Second week of August:	Homelessness Week
Last Sunday of August:	Social Justice Sunday
September:	RUOK Day
October:	Anti-Poverty Week
10 October:	World Mental Health Day
17 October:	International Day for Eradication of Poverty
3 December:	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
10 December:	Human Rights Day

Get in touch with the Vinnies Youth team!

Youth Engagement Coordinator

youth@sudpwa.org.au

Your local Vinnies Youth Team can connect your Young Vinnies group with the local Vinnies Conference to offer support and assistance with your social justice projects.

Appendix



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect.

May Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured.

May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith, and reconciliation.

While this Acknowledgement of Country has been widely adopted by Vinnies groups, you may adapt it to suit your school's needs.



Young Vinnies Pledge

**As a member of Young Vinnies I will
make an impact on my community by:**

Respecting and loving myself.

Caring for my school through respect, consideration,
and kindness for my peers and teachers.

Supporting my wider community by learning about
social justice issues and taking action on them.

Tending to, appreciating, enjoying,
and nurturing the environment.

Treating others the way I would like to be treated.

While this pledge has been widely adopted by
Young Vinnies groups, you may adapt it to suit
your school's needs.

Young Vinnies Prayer



Lord we pray that we may always be aware of our friends in need and that we approach them with respect and compassion, always recognising their dignity.

Please help them with their innermost needs as we do our best to walk alongside them.

May we all become a living sign of Your love.

We ask for Your help and guidance as we attempt to walk in the footsteps of Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

AMEN.



While this prayer has been widely adopted by Young Vinnies groups, you may adapt it to suit your school's needs.

Young Vinnies group

Agenda

Conference:

Meeting date:

Agenda item 1:

Agenda item 2:

Agenda item 3:

General business:

Past action items:

Office Bearer's reports:

Young Vinnies group

Minutes

Meeting date:	
Meeting commenced at:	
Present:	
Apologies:	

Meeting opened by:		
Reflection:	Title	
	Author	

Agenda item 1:

Agenda item 2:

Agenda item 3:

General business:

Action items:

Office Bearer's reports:

Meeting closure led by:	
Next meeting date, time and location:	
Meeting closed at:	

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St Vincent de Paul Society
(WA) INC
good works

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