



Vision



**MEETING THE
GROWING NEED
FOR ASSISTANCE**

**BARGAIN BUYS
AT BRIDAL EXPO**

**RECONCILIATION AFTER
THE REFERENDUM**

**COMBATTING COST
OF LIVING PRESSURES**



4



8



10



13



18



21



24



26

CONTENTS

4 NEWS

10 ACROSS THE STATE

17 FUNDRAISING AND PARTNERSHIPS

21 VINNIES SERVICES

23 SOCIAL JUSTICE

26 MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

28 YOUTH

29 SHOPS

30 IN MEMORIAM

31 SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

Vision is produced by the Communications and Marketing department, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, and is distributed through the Society to Catholic parishes, schools and relevant entities in NSW.

Supervising Editor: Thomas Morgan

Contributors: Kate Pascoe, Robert Crosby, Leo Tucker

Designed by: Claudia Williams, Claire Hutchinson

All correspondence can be sent to:

Director, Communications & Marketing
St Vincent de Paul Society
PO Box 5, Petersham NSW 2049
Email: media.nsw@vinnies.org.au

© St Vincent de Paul Society NSW 2023
ABN: 91 161 127 340

We'd love to hear what the Society is doing in your area. Send us an email, or call with an idea or a story or news piece:
media.nsw@vinnies.org.au.

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all who have, in any way, been involved in supporting the work and mission of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW over the past year.

At this present time, more than ever, the involvement and dedication of our members, volunteers and staff is needed and, indeed, priceless, as they go

about assisting those facing hardship and disadvantage.

The heart of our work requires a Vincentian presence and empathy with marginalised people throughout their personal experience of distress, uncertainty and vulnerability. The experience of the Vincentian vocation opens for our members, a pathway to the same non-judgmental compassion demonstrated by Vincent, Louise, Rosalie, and Frederic.

Also, in the light of the analysis of the recent national

referendum, the Society's advocacy will continue to remain strong, innovative and consistent as we look forward to more comprehensive and inclusive outcomes with our First Nations brothers and sisters.

My hopes and prayers are that this Christmas season enables you to enjoy the love and peace bestowed on each one of us by the infant Christ child. Please take the time to reflect on the blessings you have received and extended during the past year, as you have lived out your Vincentian vocations.

In the spirit of Vincentian solidarity with the marginalised and in the words of Father Greg Boyle S.J. "No kinship, no peace. No kinship, no justice. No kinship, no equality."

Wishing you a joyous Christmas season

God bless,

Paul Burton
State President, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

CEO'S MESSAGE



The strength of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW exists in the compassion and understanding we share as Vincentians.

It is this sense of identity in living out our mission that allows us to make an impact on the lives of thousands of people each year. We have many shared strengths and

a belief that every person has the right to live a life of dignity and opportunity.

One of the great achievements of the past year has been the launch of our new strategic plan. Strengthening Communities, Transforming Lives is about making lasting impact in the community. I am pleased to see the energy and focus on collaboration, planning, and scoping for the strategy in its first quarter. All of our strategic priorities are well placed to help us

deliver more meaningful impact in accompaniment with the people we assist.

Importantly, we need to continue to share stories of the impact of our work and make more time to celebrate success stories of our people – members, employees and volunteers.

It is an exciting time for the Society as we take on today's challenges whilst remaining true to the mission of the Society.

Thank you to everyone who has played a part in the work of the Society over the past year. Amid so much conflict at home and abroad, I remain heartened that as a Society, we can all play a part in shaping a more just and compassionate world.

Yolanda Saiz
Chief Executive Officer, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

Wedding wonders at Waverley



Brides lined the streets of Sydney's Eastern Suburbs over the final weekend in October in anticipation of the first Vinnies Bridal Expo held at Waverley.

The concept for the bridal expo emerged after the Society received a large donation of wedding dresses following the closure of boutique brand Oleg Cassini earlier this year.

Over 100 new and 125 pre-loved dresses were the headline attractions of the event, along with footwear, accessories and bric-a-brac, formal gowns for bridesmaids, suiting for grooms and groomsmen plus reception dresses for brides wanting to swap into a second dress for their big day.

New bridal gowns, which regularly retail from \$1,700 up to \$4,500 each, were priced at a bargain rate of \$300 across the board, while pre-loved dresses were available from a starting price of \$50.

"With wedding season just around the corner, we thought it was a really great idea and a good time to do an expo here at our Waverley store," said Gemma Presley, Vinnies Acting Regional Manager.

"We had a line out the door with people lining up from 6:00 am.

"We had the changerooms full and people trying wedding dresses on at the back of the store and under the staircase. It was a really fantastic response."

Customers were delighted to discover their dream dresses at a fraction of the regular price after hearing about the event through the Society's social media channels and strong coverage in television and print outlets.

"There was one couple who flew down from the Gold Coast," said Julian Workman, Vinnies Waverley Shop Manager.

"There were a few people coming from Dubbo, a lot of people drove up from places like Wollongong – they came from far and wide. It was chaos, but it was a lot of fun."

The bridal expo was a resounding success with Waverley achieving the biggest ever sales day at a Vinnies shop in NSW on the opening day and an overall total of \$68,000 across the entire three-day weekend. The strong sales will enable the Society to meet the increasing demand for assistance present throughout the community.

"The money goes to our Vinnies services, and it helps us support marginalised communities and give a hand up to those that need it the most. It's great to be able to keep the cost of your wedding down, but you're also giving back to the community and those that are disadvantaged," said Gemma.

Plans are underway to deliver another bridal expo in the near future along with similar themed events to give customers the best value for impact shopping experience.



Giving in the name of **Art for Goodness Sake**

Leading businesses from the corporate world all donated works from their personal collections in the name of 'Art for Goodness Sake'.

The inspiration behind the fundraising initiative was based on the 19th century French philosopher Victor Cousin's supposed "l'art pour l'art," (art for art's sake), which expressed the idea that art has an inherent value independent of its subject-matter, or of any political, or ethical significance.

The Society aimed to adapt this, giving the art a social value in the form of 'Art for Goodness Sake'.

The inaugural exhibition featuring 26 works of Australian Contemporary Art was hosted at Leonard Joel's gallery in Woollahra and curated by Catherin Asquith.

Funds raised from the auction of artworks will support the Society's homelessness and housing services.

"We're always thinking of new ways of supporting our mission in the community," said Yolanda Saiz, St Vincent

de Paul Society NSW CEO.

"Many large corporates have curated art collections and we're really grateful that many of these corporates have jumped on board and donated their artworks for us to auction off.

"This is a tangible way for corporations and art collectors to give back, with 100% of proceeds from the auction being donated towards our homelessness programs.

"There's no buyer's premium, so all of the funds raised will go directly back into the community to meet increasing demand."

Donors included BresicWhitney, ANZ, King & Wood Mallesons, Westpac, MinterEllison, Australian Galleries and many more. We thank all the corporates who donated works in the name of 'Art for Goodness Sake', which will enable the Society to assist people in times of need.

A year of good works

Did you know that St Vincent de Paul Society members in NSW supported more than 87,000 people over the past year?

That's one of the many key stats featured in our latest Annual Report, highlighting the various good works of the Society throughout 2022/23.

The Society has achieved many successes over the past 12 months, including the launch of our new Strategic Plan – “Supporting Communities, Transforming Lives” – which will guide the long-term direction of the Society over the next five years to grow our capacity and best meet the needs of the people we assist.

Our members and volunteers play an essential role in the work that we do in communities across the state every day.

Through their efforts and dedication, members responded to people experiencing hardship with more than 124,500 interactions and provided \$13.7 million in financial and material aid.

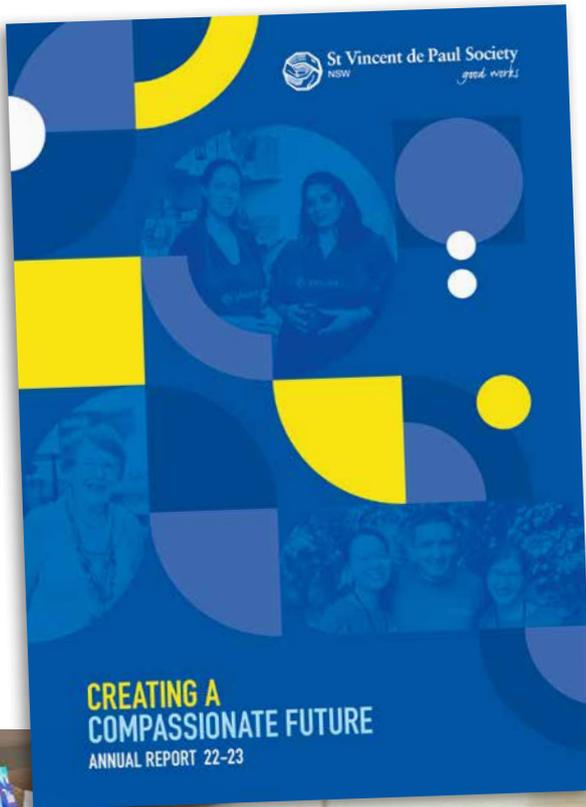
Close to 5,000 retail volunteers helped raise \$78 million through our 221 Vinnies Shops which will support the vital work of our programs and services.

Other highlights from the past year include:

- \$3 million was raised through Vinnies CEO Sleepout events in NSW
- 100% of funds raised through the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal were spent or committed to support communities impacted by the Black Summer bushfires
- We celebrated 100 years of Vinnies Shops in NSW; the first shop was opened on King Street in Newtown.
- We advocated for action on housing during the NSW State Election, drawing attention to the need for greater investment in social housing, renters rights and funding for Specialist Homelessness Services

“To all who have facilitated the good works of the Society this past year – our members, volunteers, staff, donors and supporters – I extend my deepest thanks and gratitude for your efforts,” said Paul Burton, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW State Council President.

Printed copies of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW 2022/23 Year In Review will be mailed out to Conferences throughout Summer. View the full version of the annual report online at: <https://www.vinnies.org.au/nsw/news-and-stories/nsw-annual-reports>





Path to Healing and Reconciliation

The Society will continue to walk together with First Nations people towards reconciliation.

In October, Australians voted on whether to recognise First Nations people in our Constitution through a Voice to Parliament. The referendum gave us the right to participate in a historic moment to shape a more just and compassionate Australia. The negative outcome of the referendum, which would have enabled First Nations peoples to have a greater say in decisions impacting their families and communities, is disappointing for many, particularly for First Nations people. It is now time for a period of national reflection about how we can continue the path towards reconciliation with First Nations peoples.

The Society's longstanding and continued support for the Uluru Statement of the Heart, is a matter of social justice. First Nations people comprise about one-quarter of the people the Society works with and assists. Their disadvantage is a result of years of injustice suffered since colonisation. The Society's support derives from, and is informed by, our Good Works of charity and justice. As The Rule states, *"The Society helps the poor and disadvantaged speak for themselves. When they cannot, the Society must speak on behalf of those who are ignored."* (I #7.5)

Over the campaign, our leaders joined with other faith-based organisations to meet with key First Nations leaders. We provided trusted resources amidst the misinformation campaigns and our members showed solidarity, including by 'Walking for Yes' and organising

information gatherings. We are proud to have walked together with First Nations people and many others during this time.

Given the referendum result, and the difficult and divisive campaign leading up to it, we must acknowledge and heal the deep divisions that were exposed so we can move forward as a nation. We will work with our members and lead communities to raise awareness and build a shared understanding about Indigenous disadvantage and past years of injustice.

The Society will continue to work with First Nations people towards reconciliation and recognition. We will listen to, and be guided by, them as to how we can move towards a better future – a future based on understanding, respect, and social justice. This future can be one of *"a just, equitable and reconciled Australia, (where) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will have the same life chances and choices as non-Indigenous children, and the length and quality of a person's life, will not be determined by their racial background."*¹

Finally, the words of our CEO Yolanda Saiz sum up our commitment, "It's our mission to speak up for communities experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation. While this (referendum) result is disheartening for many of you, the intrinsic value of our work every day goes on. We will continue working to improve the lives of all the people we can reach, in relationship and accompaniment."

¹ Reconciliation Website, <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/what-is-reconciliation/> As at 23 October 2023.

Grill'd gives back through City Support Dinners

On the first Tuesday of every month, a Grill'd restaurant in the centre of Sydney halts its regular service to give back to people doing it tough.

These City Support Dinners, run in partnership with the Society, can be measured by the number of burgers and chips served, but also as a vital opportunity for people to come together and connect.

"It's giving people dignity – giving people hope – hope that they can follow and chase tomorrow's challenges but understand that they're loved for and cared for," explains Josie Charbel, Vinnies Vans Manager.

Many of the people who attend the monthly dinners are familiar faces to our van services, which have experienced a significant surge with twice as many people seeking support compared with pre-Covid times.

"Originally, we were having a lot of rough sleepers but now we're definitely getting couch surfers. Furthermore, we're getting the working poor and they're coming here because of the cost of living and we're now their safety net," says Josie.

"You can see by the sheer numbers that there are a lot of people that need to be met as a human being – not as a problem."

The Society's partnership with Grill'd commenced in 2019 prior to the onset of the pandemic. The first NSW City Support Dinner was held in May 2022 and has grown in demand and success ever since.

A Current Affair came along to the City Support Dinner in September to hear from

people supported through the initiative.

"It's good to catch up with your mates and have a lovely feed," says Kel.

"You get to talk to people who actually care about you – so getting a free burger now and again is very nice to have," says Stephen.

With approximately 2,500 people accessing our van services each week in Sydney over the past year, events such as our partnership with Grill'd play an important role in bringing greater awareness to growing hardship present in the community.

"It's the little things. It's two hours out of Grill'd's month, but [the people we assist] wait every day for it," says Josie.

Our Vinnies Vans services provided more than 70,000 instances of assistance over the past year.

New vans are being rolled out over the coming year to meet the demand in areas such as Greater Western Sydney, Campbelltown and Coffs Harbour, along with increasing the number of stoppages on existing services.





Members of all ages come together

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW members from far and wide came together for a weekend of connection and collaboration as part of the combined Activate Youth and Member Leaders' Forums.

Held at the Mercure in Sydney on the first weekend of November, the event was held in two stages with Youth and Member Leaders participating in targeted sessions on the Saturday before coming together on the Sunday for a series of workshops and discussions.

Yolanda Saiz (CEO) and Paul Burton (State Council President) highlighted the important work performed by members in living out the Society's mission, along with discussing the events of the National Congress, which took place the previous weekend with members from all over Australia meeting in-person for the first time since COVID to discuss the future of membership in the Society.

Both sets of attendees began the second day with Corinne Lindsell (Mission and Spirituality partner) delivering an address on the Society's mission before breaking off into a series of workshops.

Workshops included packing Christmas Hampers for people supported by Vinnies Vans, engaging with MPs, membership promotion and recruitment, cultivating local networks for advocacy, storytelling and living out the Gospel message.

Jodi Denehy from the Policy and Advocacy team facilitated a panel following on from the Voice to Parliament referendum with Paul Burton affirming the Society's commitment to reconciliation and working alongside First Nations communities.

Attendees were treated to a performance by the Forbes Street Band, comprised of people supported by the Ozanam Learning Centre, to bring the weekend to a close.

The event was well-received with attendees praising the opportunity to connect and learn about new innovations to engage members and deliver support on a local level.

"I've met up with a number of country people who have indicated the areas of concern that they have, and we were able to talk together about commonalities, but also differences – they have floods and other sorts of situations – but we all have the common problem of cost of living," said Geoff Barrett, Liberty Plains Regional President.

"The main takeaway from this weekend has been how valuable it is for the youth and traditional conferences to collaborate and share ideas. Something really valuable that we heard this weekend was that the youth are not the future, the youth are the present," said Jacinta McGrath, Social Justice Youth Representative.

"It's really strengthened the fire in me about giving back and new ways to do it," said Shannon Carey, St Sebastian Youth Conference President Wagga Wagga.

"There's a lot of connections in getting to meet members – older members, current members, new members from unis or from regional towns or throughout New South Wales. It does make you feel part of a really strong community."

See highlights from the day by scanning the QR code.





Giving dignity in a time of crisis

Women who arrive at our domestic and family violence services routinely do so with little more than the clothes on their backs.

Thanks to the generous support of CiCi Underwear, our services are able to help restore much-needed stability in these times of crisis.

As part of a corporate partnership with the Society, CiCi Underwear have generously donated 650 pairs of underwear as part of their 'Pair for Pair' policy. This ensures that for every pair of underwear purchased, CiCi donate a pair in return to women who require it the most.

"All our clients present in crisis, so they'll be leaving with the bare minimum," said Carmel Mussap, Manager of Inner West Housing and Homelessness.

"Underwear is what we would consider one of those essential items needed when people first present as homeless."

The demand for our Homelessness and Housing services has increased by 4.49% over the past year, rising from 8,299 to 8,672 people; Domestic and Family Violence was the leading reason cited by people accessing support at 29%.

"Thank you, CiCi, you're providing an essential item for women in crisis."

Hear from Carmel about the impact of Pair for Pair by scanning the QR code



Schools bring music to Western Sydney

Schools across Greater Western Sydney brought music to the streets of Parramatta as part of the 2023 Busking for Vinnies fundraiser.

The Winston Hills Conference coordinated the latest instalment of the long-running fundraiser, with the support of Vinnies Youth volunteers, which saw Our Lady of Mercy College (Parramatta), Mt Saint Benedict College (Pennant Hills), St Edmund's College (Wahroonga), and Oakhill College (Castle Hill) all perform at Church Street Mall.

With the number of people seeking assistance from members across Greater Western Sydney increasing by 29% over the past year, the funds raised from the event – totaling over \$5,400 – will play a vital role in allowing the Society to respond to the need that exists in the community.





OLC Music Collective takes centre stage

A night of sonic spirit and community was had by all when the OLC Music Collective launched their latest album 'Alternate Voices' at Marrickville's Factory Theatre.

Following sets from support acts the Sydney Street Choir and GroovePilot, the OLC Music Collective took centre stage at the Inner West venue with a setlist of covers and original music.

The night was the realised dream for Omar Abidin, Ozanam Learning Centre Activities Coordinator, who conceived of giving participants involved in music programs at the OLC the opportunity to take to the stage and share their love of music with the community.

"We work really hard to engage people and try to find what it is that ignites that passion," said Omar, during an interview with 2SER prior to the event.

Delivering a range of musical programs including songwriting and performing at the OLC for the past three years, Omar's group-based approach has provided participants with much more than an appreciation for music.

"It's an opportunity for learning and development, it's an opportunity to build social skills. A large percentage of our community live fairly isolated lives, so it's a chance for them to come together with people," explains Omar.

For many of the performers on the night, the camaraderie of playing music together has created enduring impacts in their personal lives:

- "That's what I look forward to – I have these people that I come to the music program every week and I like them, and they like me." – Gaby
- "I was a bit lost when I came to Sydney, so I dropped in to the OLC one day and talked to Omar, he suggested I come in and record a few songs. I did that and that was a good experience." – Ion
- "I am so thankful to be here at OLC. Having my own album with the band, I feel so good now." – Jimm

The Ozanam Learning Centre is a community inclusion centre in Woolloomooloo providing a welcoming and safe environment for people to connect, learn, participate in activities, and access support.

"We're fortunate to be extremely well-resourced here at the Ozanam Learning Centre, we've got a professional grade studio, it provides an opportunity for people who've never recorded before to come in and work with me... towards writing a song, performing and getting their song on an album," said Omar.

Listen to 'Alternate Voices' online at:
<https://theolcmusiccollective.bandcamp.com/>



Making milestones through Return and Earn

More than 109 million containers were processed through Return and Earn sites operated by the Society during the past year.

Since 2018, the Society has partnered with the NSW Government’s Return and Earn scheme and TOMRA Cleanaway to reduce the amount of waste ending up in landfill, while supporting local communities and raising funds to support our programs and services.

The environmental benefits of processing 109 million containers at our depots located across the state can be seen through:

- 6.58 million kilograms of waste diverted from landfill
- 645 million litres of water saved – enough water to fill 258 Olympic swimming pools
- 144,328 gigajoules of energy saved
- 13.226 million kilograms of CO2 emissions avoided from the atmosphere

	Approximate yearly total	Highest weekly total	Average weekly total
Shoalhaven	10.5 million	306,000	202,000
Unanderra	18.7 million	494,500	360,500
Cardiff	23.15 million	813,000	445,000
Nepean	14.8 million	500,000	284,000
Wagga Wagga	16.0 million	421,000	308,000
Dubbo	17.3 million	630,000	333,000
Tweed Heads	5.0 million	143,000	96,000
Tamworth	4.15 million	240,000	197,500

Learn more about the Return and Earn program and measure your own personal impact at: www.returnandearn.org.au/impact-calculator.

Bishop Fox Meal Centre celebrates 50 years of service

The Bishop Fox Meal Centre in Broken Hill has served thousands of meals over the past 50 years, yet according to those working at the coalface it offers much more for people in need.

"It's not only the meals we serve, it's a place for people to come and talk to each other," said Leo Woodman, former Wilcannia/Forbes Central Council President.

Society leaders and members marked the celebrations by officially unveiling refurbishments to the service that were enabled through equal funding provided by the Society and the Australian Government.

"The Bishop Fox Meal Centre has been one of the longest running services operated by the Society and we are delighted to see how far it has come over the past 50 years," said Yolanda Saiz, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW CEO.

The origins of the meal centre date back to 1972 when a group of Society members, led by then Central Council President Pat Leonard, sought to meet the needs of the community and contacted the Society's State Council for assistance.

Working with an initial cheque of \$1,500 provided to the Broken Hill Central Council, a special committee comprised of members from Conferences in the region was formed. An old Vinnies Shop became the first site of the service with a group of women who volunteered with the welfare shop beginning the provision of meals the following year.

In 1977, the Centre moved to a location on Argent Street where it remains to this day.

The centre served approximately 5,400 meals over the past year, while demand for assistance from the Broken Hill Conferences has grown by 44% from 12 months earlier with more than 500 people supported with food, clothing, household bills, accommodation and other expenses.

"Around one in three people are seeking assistance from our members for the first time, so having the increased capacity of the refurbished meal centre will be invaluable to meeting the growing need that exists in the community," said Paul Burton, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW State President.

Congratulations to all involved with the Bishop Fox Meal Centres over the past 50 years. We look forward to seeing the difference the service makes over the next 50!



Going strong a century on

Annie Kersten can be found for half a day each fortnight arranging items and pricing donations on the floor of the Vinnies Shop in Corrimal.

As one of more than 5,000 retail volunteers giving of their time in Vinnies Shops across the state, Annie's contribution to the St Vincent de Paul Society is an inspiration proving that age is no barrier to making an impact.

Beginning as a volunteer in 1976, Annie recently celebrated a huge milestone – turning 100!

Celebrating her centenary alongside volunteers and staff she has come to know closely over nearly five decades of service, Annie has found great pleasure in remaining active through her work as a volunteer.

"I like it very much – I like the company and to do things for the poor," reflects Annie.

Emigrating to Australia from the Netherlands in 1950



in pursuit of a better life in the aftermath of the Second World War, Annie, accompanied by her husband and young children, initially lived out of a camping ground in Wollongong before moving onto a home in Corrimal, where she has lived ever since.

Despite her rarefied centenarian status as the oldest volunteer in the region, Annie remains committed to arriving on time every second Wednesday to give back to the community that has given her so much.

"I hope that I still can keep going."

Mini Vinnies gather together



Our Metropolitan schools team held their first Mini Vinnies Gathering since the on-set of the pandemic earlier this year at Australian Catholic University's Strathfield campus.

Hundreds of primary school students used the day to put their faith into action by choosing to be a helper and learning how school communities can advocate for change.

In addition to bringing together students from across the region, staff from the Society, including the Vinnies Van Services, Mission and Spirituality, Vinnies Support Centres, Disability and Inclusion, and Youth teams gave greater understanding to the breadth of the Society's good works throughout the community.

There are also over 280 'Mini Vinnies' programs active in NSW schools, instilling children with social justice values that will last a lifetime. Engagement with schools has increased by 20% from the previous year, rising to 305 schools throughout the state.

We look forward to seeing the next generation of Vincentians make a difference!

Maitland turns out for Boots and Ballgowns

Vincentians from across the Hunter put on a night to remember as part of a Boots and Ballgowns event held at the Maitland Showground.

The family-friendly event attracted a host of locals, including Upper Hunter MP Dave Layzell, with funds raised going towards the new community hub set to open in Maitland in the new year.

"The night was a bit of fun to fundraise and also celebrate our wonderful members, volunteers and people in the community that we support," said Clare Van Doorn, Vinnies North East Regional Director.

Members in the Maitland/Newcastle Central Council have supported over 14,000 people in the past year with \$1.7 million in financial and material assistance. Demand for assistance has grown by 17% over the past twelve months with three in five people reportedly in housing stress.



A welcoming space to create

"We all deserve to feel connected in our community."

This sentiment has been at the heart of Creative Space, a welcoming place for people to express themselves through art since opening in 2017.

"People often say it's about more than making art and connecting, 'I can be myself when I come here'," said Tania McInnes, Creative Space team leader.

"Those kinds of statements are really important to us and it's exactly the reason that we do the work that we do."

The service, based in the Southern Highlands of NSW, works collaboratively with local government and community groups to give participants – referred to as makers by the services – a variety of ways to express themselves. Recent initiatives include singing and ukelele groups, along with workshops delivered by the local TAFE to increase the skillset of participants.

"TAFE NSW providing workshops here is a vital piece of the Creative Space puzzle," says Tania.

"It can lead to creative small business ideas, education and employment pathways which are an important part of what we do."

Creative Space was one of more than 40 locations featured in the annual ARTS Trail held across the Southern Highlands at the start of November with makers showcasing their works as part of the event.

Anti-Poverty Week 2023

"If we want to help address poverty, we need to ensure that everyone has a stable start in life through housing."

This message was at the core of our advocacy during this year's Anti-Poverty Week, calling for a renewed push to #EndChildPoverty.

The annual event took place between 15 – 27 October highlighting the hardship and disadvantage faced by one in six children currently growing up in poverty, according to research conducted by ACOSS and UNSW.

Figures released from the latest Census found that one in four people without homes are children under 18 years. Homelessness among the national population increased by 5% from the previous Census – the number of homeless children alarmingly increased by 12% during the same period.

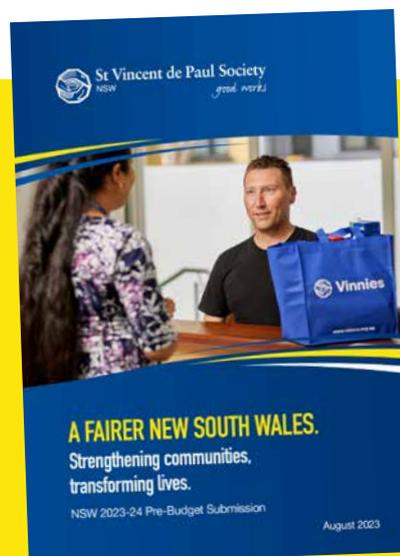
The Society supported Anti-Poverty Week through several events, including a Family Financial Wellbeing Day in Cumberland Council with staff providing residents with information on services to address cost of living pressures available in the region.

Anna Scott, Acting Director of Housing and Homelessness, was featured in the Newcastle Herald with an opinion piece highlighting the increasing demand for assistance from our services and challenges in delivering housing outcomes.

"Housing must be affordable for people - we cannot accept a world where paying the rent inhibits the rest of a person's wellbeing and life."

"We should not accept the trajectory that forces families to move from one tenancy to another while struggling to get by each week without any hope of ever being able to afford a home."

Our Policy and Advocacy team also delivered another outstanding Rosalie Rendu Forum, which you can read about in full on page 24.



NSW Government sets budget priorities

The newly elected Labor Government delivered its first State Budget in September.

In advance of the budget handed down by Treasurer Daniel Mookhey, the Society produced a Pre-Budget Submission – 'A Fairer NSW' – with a series of recommendations across seven key pillars, highlighting areas of government investment that had the ability to make a real difference to the lives of people doing it tough in the community:

1. **Affordable, healthy and accessible homes**
2. **A fair go for renters**
3. **Support for people experiencing homelessness**
4. **Address the energy affordability crisis**
5. **Transport affordability and access**
6. **Education and digital inclusion**
7. **Consistent and evidence-based indexation for service delivery funding**

While the budget fell short of meeting our asks in entirety, we were pleased to see the government's recognition of the need to build more social and affordable homes, along with commitments towards rental reform by introducing a portable rental bonds scheme, legislating reasonable grounds to end a lease, and making it easier for renters to have pets.

See all our submissions and research online at: <https://www.vinnies.org.au/nsw/advocacy/policy-and-research>



Communities exceed expectations in statewide sleepout

The NSW Vinnies Community Sleepout achieved another outstanding result with more than \$230,000 raised in support of local programs and services operated by the Society.

Close to 300 people slept out in Albury, Armidale, Tweed Heads, Wagga Wagga and Western Sydney on 25 August as part of an experience that provided greater understanding of hardship and homelessness occurring locally, along with highlighting the valuable work of the Society in supporting locals in need.

With cost-of-living pressures driving a growing number of people to reach out for assistance – including many

doing so for the very first time – the generosity and goodwill of participants allowed all five locations to exceed their target goals.

“Our members and staff do remarkable work meeting the individual needs of people facing hardship each day,” said Paul Burton, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW State President.

“The funds raised through the NSW Vinnies Community Sleepout will be essential in allowing the Society to respond to the growing demand for support so that people aren’t burdened by a daily struggle to survive.”

Thanks to the fundraising and efforts of our participants, donors, supporters and sponsors, we were able to record a total of \$230,078 which will help to restore hope to people in need.

	Participants	Goal	Total	Goal Exceeded
Wagga Wagga	24	\$25,000	\$26,167	4.7%
Armidale	23	\$30,000	\$31,814	6.0%
Albury	72	\$30,000	\$35,939	19.8%
Western Sydney	88	\$50,000	\$63,246	26.5%
Fred’s Place – Tweed Heads	86	\$50,000	\$72,912	45.8%
Total	293	\$185,000	\$230,078	24.4%

Saying thank you to our donors

The Society paid tribute to the generosity and goodwill of our many donors – who helped contribute close to \$24 million in funds raised over the past financial year – at the annual Vinnies Thank You Event.

The event, sponsored and held at the Hilton in Sydney, was an opportunity to thank those who have supported our fundraising works over the past year including Corporate Partners, Bequests, Vinnies CEO Sleepout participants and ambassadors, Regular Givers and Major Donors.

Richard Stewart (Chair of the Board) and Yolanda Saiz (Chief Executive Officer) thanked our guests and highlighted the Society’s varied achievements over the past 12 months.

Donors were moved by the story of Keith, a man who

spoke of his experience of homelessness before being supported by the Society with household items, such as a washing machine, fridge, chairs and a kettle, after securing a home to call his own.

“If Vinnies weren’t able to help me, I’d be living in an empty flat. I couldn’t be more grateful for what they’ve done for me.”

As demand for assistance from the Society continues to grow year on year, the support of our donors remains invaluable in ensuring we are able to meet the need that exists throughout the community.





How much more can we take? – Vinnies Christmas Appeal 2023

For more than a year, the effects of three seemingly innocuous words have been felt across the board:

Cost. Of. Living.

Three words that tell a story that is regularly dominated by the economic implications of 'cost' while, all too often, overlooking the human reality of 'living'.

While everyone is being hit by higher prices, the most vulnerable in our society are bearing the brunt and have the least capacity to weather the financial hits that keep coming.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has witnessed this play out in real time.

Demand for assistance was already high last Christmas when one in four people were turning to the Society for the first time. Fast forward to now, and that figure has tragically grown to one in three.

Through our Christmas Appeal, we are highlighting how far people are being pushed by the on-going cost of living crisis.

As the cost of everything goes up, except her income, Anna faces an uphill battle that she can never get ahead of each week.

"It's been debilitating," laments Anna.

Raising two children as a single mother receiving a disability support pension, the struggle to stay on top of her rent, household bills, groceries and unexpected expenses on an income below the poverty line led Anna to reach out to the Society for support.

Hoping to gain assistance to purchase a school uniform for her son, Anna received much more when she met Grace, a staff member at one of the Society's support centres located throughout the state.

Receiving immediate assistance with a school uniform, food vouchers and groceries, Anna felt seen, heard and treated with dignity at her most vulnerable time of reaching out.

"[Grace] said, 'how can we help you?'"

"I walked out feeling so grateful and touched that there was just such kindness in the world."



close to half have felt the strain of housing stress due to rent increases and rising interest rates.

Grace regards the current crisis as the worst she has experienced in her time with the Society, regularly encountering stories of people trying to stay afloat by taking on debt and drawing on superannuation.

"In the past, you might give someone some help with food or pay a bill for them, and they sort of moved on and that was it."

"Now it's so much more."

For as difficult as the current moment is – and will continue to be in the lead up to Christmas and beyond – she finds comfort in knowing that the Society has the ability to provide support.

"When people make the connection with Vinnies, they realise that we're not just there for the immediate problem."

"[With Anna], we were able to do so much more and lighten the load for her in more ways than one.

"We're there for the long term... we look at the bigger picture so that we can make a real difference."

As cost of living pressures continue to mount, Anna has remained in contact with the St Vincent de Paul Society where she has received support with food and housing expenses from our staff, who work alongside a network of dedicated members giving their time to support the most vulnerable in local communities.



For Grace, who has spent the past 15 years supporting people in need as part of the Society, stories like Anna's are becoming commonplace and occurring across all walks of life.

"It's not just one group of people that are doing it tough – we're talking about age pensioners and older people and single mums and families and single men and older single women – it is everyone," explains Grace.

"It is everyone coming at us from all angles for all different reasons.

"Food is a big thing – if someone's paying their rent, their utilities, maybe some school fees, clothes – there's not enough left to do the fortnightly shop."

In the past year alone, four-in-five people have sought assistance from members of the Society with food, while

For all the material support Anna has received since reaching out to the Society, the greatest comfort has been the reassurance to know that she won't be alone during hard times.

"I know that I will never have to reach rock-bottom again. I know Vinnies will be there for me."

The St Vincent de Paul Society has been able to make a difference in the lives of Anna and her family, but so many more still need support in their time of need.

You can make a difference to people in your community by making a donation to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal at www.vinnies.org.au or calling 13 18 12.

Corporates give back in Christmas season



Each year, our Corporate Partners give generously to enable the good works the Society is able to make in communities throughout the state.

We are very thankful for the support our partners have shown over the past year and look forward to working with them for many more to come.

IGA Christmas Appeal

Vinnies is delighted to be partnering with IGA for the 12th consecutive year this Christmas to support Australians struggling with the current cost-of-living crisis.

Thanks to customers who purchased a \$2 Christmas Bauble in November and December, along with specially marked Community Chest product in December, from participating IGA supermarkets across Australia, all funds raised from the appeal – running annually since 2012 – will enable the Society to support households feeling the on-going pinch of cost-of-living pressures.



Gravox

The Society partnered with Kraft Heinz during the festive season on a national fundraising initiative which will see 20 cents from every targeted Gravox products sold donated to the Society.

Gravox Traditional and Gravox Roast canisters with limited-edition Christmas themed labels were available for four weeks from late November, while Kraft also donated a range of products to be distributed to those in need during the Christmas season.

Kraft Heinz also partnered with artist Shelby Sherrit to transform second-hand gravy boats from Vinnies Shops into one-off collectible pieces. The unique art pieces were auctioned online in December to raise funds to support those in need.



ABC Gives

ABC Radio supported the Vinnies Christmas Appeal in New South Wales, Canberra/Goulburn and Western Australia as part of this year's ABC Gives Appeal.

ABC Radio held a Giving Day on 30 November highlighting the rising cost of living and increased demand for assistance from the Society. Society leaders, members and staff, as well as people we assist were featured during the all-day broadcast which raised vital funds to support people experiencing homelessness, poverty and disadvantage.

Helia (formerly Genworth)

Our friends at Helia – formerly known as Genworth – have extended their financial support of our Vinnies Vans Services and the Our Lady of the Way domestic and family violence refuge.

As long-term supporters of the Society dating back to 2011, we are grateful for Helia's commitment and ongoing support of the Society.

COS/Lyone Foundation

We are pleased to announce that the Lyone Foundation, the Philanthropic arm of COS®, have renewed a three-year partnership to support our Vinnies Van Services.

Through funding that has increased from \$30,000 to \$100,000 annually for the next three years, our Van Services will be able to provide food and companionship to people experiencing poverty and homelessness within the inner city of Sydney. We thank Lyone Foundation and look forward to working with COS® and their staff in years to come.





Breaking the Cycle of Violence

Breaking the Cycle of Violence is a program made possible thanks to a generous benefactor, assisting women and children experiencing domestic and family violence with the tailored support needed to rebuild their lives.

The program has operated across NSW over the past five years with a targeted focus on delivering:

- Emergency response: including hotel accommodation in cases where refuges are full; security measures for the family home, for those staying at home; meeting urgent medical needs, food supplies, relocation fees, transport.
- Rapid rehousing: including accommodation, provision of furniture, white goods and home starter packages.
- Ongoing support for women and children: through the provision of safe accommodation, meeting transport requirements, educational supplies, food and utility bills assistance.
- Targeted support for children: a child-centric approach is embedded into all casework through the employment of two child specialist caseworkers.

Findings from the program have enabled our services to become more flexible in offering brokerage to best meet the individual needs of people seeking assistance, along with equipping our members, volunteers and staff with the skills to respond to instances of domestic and family violence.

The program has also enabled our services to fund Child Advocate positions, offering women unable to access government assistance an allowance to regain their financial independence, and funding to pay for household items upon securing longer-term housing.

In addition to enhancing the work of the Society's specialist Homelessness and Housing services in the Metropolitan region, the funding has enabled members based in regional areas to provide direct and immediate support.

"Breaking the Cycle of Violence was a great freedom to help people. It worked brilliantly for us, and we felt so good about everything we were able to do to help," explains Frances Scurfield, Holy Family Conference President – Parkes.

"We usually have to put in a request for everything we spend and then wait for approval before the funds are available, but with BCV we had the freedom to help as needed – straight away. It was absolutely wonderful because we could just say yes, yes, yes!"

"We helped a lady who was trying to get to South Australia and she arrived in Parkes but couldn't go any further because she had run out of money - she had a vehicle but no money to get any further. She came to us for help, but she then needed to get to South Australia. We made calls along her journey to get her to her destination, we were able to get her fuel to get to Wilcannia and a motel at Broken Hill. When she arrived in South Australia, we put her in touch with an agency there who were going to help her with ongoing assistance in her new location."

"It's given us an awareness of the different circumstances that different people are in and how difficult it is for people experiencing domestic violence. No situation is the same, but they are all vulnerable, trying to get away from a problem but becoming totally isolated and needing so much support," said Frances.

Breaking the Cycle of Violence funding, totalling \$4.3 million, has enabled:

- **4,165 interventions**
- **6,375 lives changed**
 - **2,765 women assisted**
 - **3,610 children assisted**
- **1,530 instances of accommodation facilitated**
- **2,138 children assisted with specialist case management**
- **1,175 emergency starter packages issued**



Moving forward and giving back

Peter can be found several nights each week assisting people in need as a volunteer with the Vinnies Vans.

"You just want to do as much as you can to help them," he explains.

This sense of compassion as a volunteer with the service is something he knows better than most due to his history.

Experiencing the heartbreak of losing his father as a young man, Peter sought to shut out his pain by moving interstate away from his family.

"I didn't know how to talk about things or show any kind of feelings about it."

Becoming caught in a self-destructive cycle resulting in a prison sentence for drug-related offences, Peter returned home upon release only to fall in with a similar crowd and the prospect of more time behind bars.

In his self-described lowest moment, Peter's solace came in the form of the Vinnies Vans which helped him get back on track.

It was during this time that he received support with food, but – more significantly – began to feel the trust needed to open up about his own struggles.

Gaining support to turn his life around and reconnect with family, Peter has gone on to gain employment working at a hotel and volunteers with the Vinnies Vans as part of a routine that offers invaluable stability.

Regularly putting in a full day of work before heading into the city for an evening shift on the Vinnies Vans, Peter feels a strong connection to the people he serves, having received support in his own time of need.

"It brings a lot of memories back you don't want to be at, so you do whatever you can to help that person."

"Everyone has something in the past... everyone needs and deserves help as well."

Peter hopes that his story can be an example for others who are struggling to reach out.

"You should always let people know how you are and what's going on in your life."

"Speak up, don't be embarrassed."

The support of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has helped Peter get back on his feet. Now, he is determined to walk towards a brighter future with his family.

"I've got two beautiful kids now and a beautiful wife to look after. I love it!"

"I've got a great job now and I try to help out here as much as I can.

"I just keep myself good, make sure my family's healthy and that's all you can hope for."

Get involved with the Social Justice Network

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW members perform vital work assisting people facing hardship in times of need.

Many of these hardships are as a result of structural injustices that require the strength of collective voices speaking as one.

This is what our Social Justice Network aspires to do in raising awareness and advocacy to bring about change.

Over the past few years, the Society’s Social Justice Network has campaigned in support of action on housing, including gathering thousands of signatures for a petition debated in NSW Parliament calling for more social housing, along with putting the issue on the agenda during this year’s State Election.

“Through social justice, our aim is to alleviate poverty by tackling things that are trapping people,” explains Brooke Simmons, Vice President for Social Justice & Committee Chair.

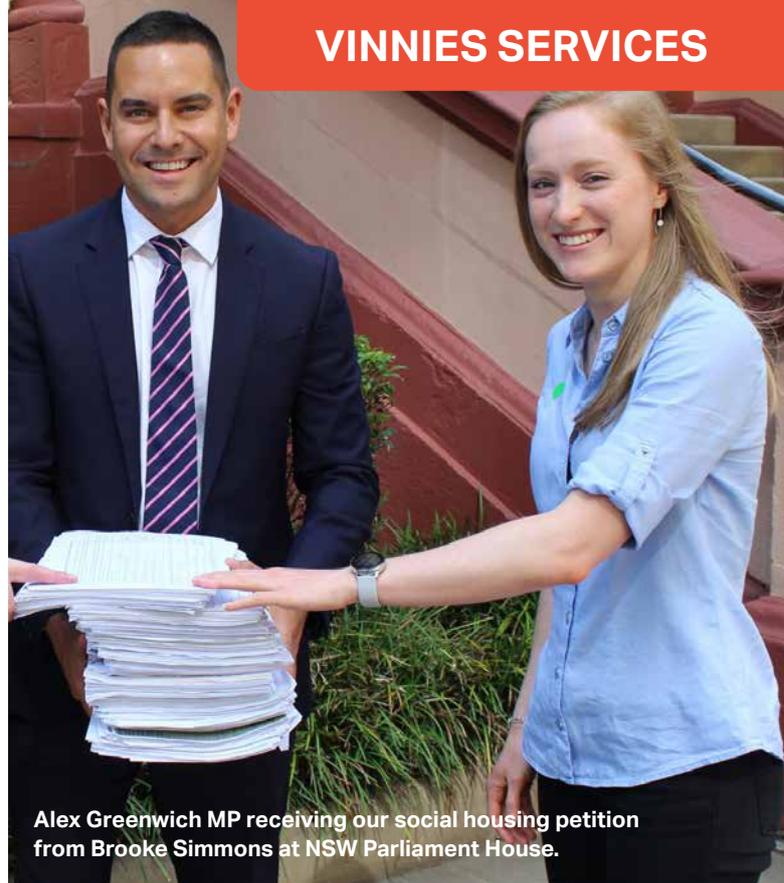
“Whether it’s raising the rate of JobSeeker payments, so that people can get themselves into a position to get a job. Advocating for more social housing so that people have a roof over their head and understand where they are going to be living – in a week, a month, six months, 12 months’ time – so they can plan and build their life around that certainty.”

The Social Justice Network is represented by a committee comprised of members from each Central Council, who collaborate closely with the policy and advocacy team on resources to support members to engage with their local community and MPs.

Being part of the Social Justice Network doesn’t require a huge time commitment but can make a big difference through actions such as signing petitions, writing letters and meeting with MPs to highlight issues requiring attention from all levels of government.

The Social Justice Network will continue to advocate on decent and affordable housing for all over the next year, as part of our mission to shape a more just and compassionate society.

“{We want] a society where people have a sense of safety – a roof over their head, feel engaged with the people around them, a sense of community and everyone is able to contribute to society in their own way,” says Brooke.



Alex Greenwich MP receiving our social housing petition from Brooke Simmons at NSW Parliament House.

Central Council	Representative
Armidale	Giana Saccon
Bathurst	Brian McCarney
Broken Bay	Denis O’Rourke
Lismore	Lawrence (Laurie) Eakin
Maitland / Newcastle	Sister Carmel Hanson
Western Sydney	On leave - Mavie dela Cruz
Sydney	Michelle Fonti
Wagga Wagga	Sharon Townsend
Wilcannia / Forbes	Kim Colbourne (Acting)
Wollongong	Tom Gersbach
Social Justice representative – State Youth Team	Jacinta McGrath
Vice President for Social Justice & Committee Chair	Brooke Simmons

To learn more about the Social Justice Network and to get involved in your local area, contact social.justice@vinnies.org.au.



Hear from members of the Society’s Social Justice Committee by scanning the QR code:

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY NSW

ROSALIE RENDU
FORUM 2023

Who pays the price for a society divided? – Rosalie Rendu Forum 2023

In the past year alone, the number of people reaching out to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW for the first time has risen from one in four to one in three.

This stark surge in calls for assistance has been felt by people already doing it tough and others who have never needed to seek the support of charities prior to the current moment.

With interest rates hitting levels not seen for decades and inflation doing likewise, the increasing cost of living has been felt by everyone – however those with the least are being the hardest hit and have the least capacity to weather the blows.

As many people consider this crisis purely in economic terms, the 2023 Rosalie Rendu Forum sought to look further at the impact of the rising cost of living and its consequences on vulnerable members of the community – and on society as a whole – with the theme “Cost of Living: who pays the price for a society divided?”.

Taking place during Anti-Poverty Week, the annual event, named in recognition of Sister Rosalie Rendu, saw an acclaimed group of women come together at the University of Notre Dame’s Broadway Campus for the first in-person Rosalie Rendu Forum since 2019.

Following a Welcome to Country from Yvonne Weldon, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, in recognition of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and introduction from Yolanda Saiz, CEO St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, host Ashvini Ambihaipahar (Regional Director St Vincent de Paul Society NSW) spoke on the theme before introducing a panel of five expert speakers.

Sister Carmel Hanson RSJ; Joanna Quilty (CEO NSW Council for Social Service); Dr Lisa Buxton (EO Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney); Yumi Lee (CEO NSW Older Women’s Network); and Verity Firth (UTS Pro Vice-Chancellor for Social Justice and Inclusion) comprised the esteemed panel.

Sister Hanson delivered a spiritual reflection on the history of Sister Rosalie Rendu, who played an integral role in teaching Frederic Ozanam, who would go on to establish the Society of St Vincent de Paul, during the 18th century, "behind every great man is a greater woman."

Issues raised during the course of the 90-minute discussion included the changing demographics of economic hardship, the ongoing disadvantage and poorer outcomes faced by First Nations, rates of older women experiencing homelessness, and the understanding of collective action as a means of addressing inequality.

INSIGHTS FROM THE NIGHT:

"We still have parts of Sydney and regional NSW where there are poverty rates for kids up around 40%. That is a shocking and astounding figure when we know that the lifetime impacts of growing up in poverty are real and that the life chances of these kids are going to be seriously curtailed because of that experience."

– Joanna Quilty

"There is a need to move away from the continual deficit model of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander funding but also the approaches to our education, housing, health and wellbeing. [We need] to recognise Aboriginal ways of knowing and being, and develop place-based, strength-based approaches that encourage a strong sense of cultural identity and a sense of belonging."

– Dr Lisa Buxton

"The demonisation of the poor continues to this day in how we talk about poverty."

"The homeless are homeless, let's be clear about it, because there are not enough safe, accessible, affordable homes built to accommodate all of us in all our income brackets. The poor are also poor because the income support system is not fit for purpose and purposely keeps payment below the poverty line."

– Yumi Lee

"In our society a lack of money means a lack of power; and the life experience of those facing disadvantage is often one that constantly reiterates to them that they do not have the agency to create change."

"Inequality forces disengagement and disengagement leads to social isolation. Social isolation worsens education outcomes and so the cycle continues."

– Verity Firth



The St Vincent de Paul Society is here to support people experiencing hardship and disadvantage during the current cost of living crisis.

Contact 13 18 12 for assistance or visit www.vinnies.org.au/nsw/find-help.

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW would like to thank Sr Hanson, Ms Quilty, Dr Buxton, Ms Lee, Ms Firth, Ms Ambihapahar and the University of Notre Dame for their involvement in another tremendous Rosalie Rendu Forum.

To watch the 2023 Rosalie Rendu Forum, scan the QR code or contact social.justice@vinnies.org.au.



Davidson members receive recognition after a lifetime of service

Three members of the Davidson Conference were recognised with Life Membership awards earlier this year.

Doris Vander Straaten and Tony and Carmel Smith were humbly surprised to receive the honours from Northern Beaches Regional Council President Mick O'Farrell.

"As Vincentians we don't seek any thanks or rewards for the work we do. We aim to live out the Gospel message without any fanfare."

"We have all been Vincentians for many years and have received more from the people we have been privileged to visit and serve, than we have given.



"Our lives have been shaped in such positive ways and as Vincentians we have become better people hopefully treating those we strive to serve with compassion, respect and dignity."

NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards



Mid North Coast volunteers earn recognition

Helen Hull and Jenny Shepherd were recognised for their contributions to the Mid North Coast community as part of the 2023 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

As manager and coordinator of the Vinnies Shop in Coffs Harbour respectively, Helen and Jenny were among a group of deserving recipients recognised for making a valuable contribution to the local community.

Learn more about volunteering opportunities with St Vincent de Paul Society NSW





Conferences making an impact in Clarence

Members of the St James' Conference in Yamba supported more than 280 people and dependents over the past year.

The vast majority of assistance was in response to requests for food, but as Conference President Alan Schofield explains, "[some] really need more than just food vouchers to assist them."

Drawing on a generous donation to be used to give extra support to local families in need, the Conference changed the circumstances of a family with three teenagers that were having to "make do" in the face of financial hardship.

"We ensured that all the children received two sets of new school uniforms, two new pairs of sports shoes, swimming lessons, orthodontic work, and covered the cost of school excursions."

For the mother, who works as a casual, and father, living with disability and no longer able to work, the extra support was gratefully received.

In addition to providing assistance, Conference members from St James' in Yamba meet bi-monthly with members from the neighbouring St Mary's Conference in Maclean to visit retired Vincentians at the local Uniting Caroonia Yamba aged care facility.

The visits have been encouraging for past and present Vincentians to reflect on the good works of the Society and to grow spiritually.

NAIDOC Week celebrations on Gumbaynggirr Country

Members of the St Augustine Conference combined with the services team at Pete's Place as part of a barbecue celebrating NAIDOC Week in Coffs Harbour.

The Society shared the occasion alongside local First Nations groups on Gumbaynggirr Country to reflect on the NAIDOC theme, "For Our Elders".

Celebrations included a traditional smoking ceremony and performance from the Giingana Yilliwiyay dance group, along with enabling the Society to strengthen ties with the local community.

A quarter of the people supported by our members over the past year identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; one-in-three received support from members in the Orara Regional Council.



Metropolitan schools pilot Vinnies Service Medallion

Our schools and youth team have been hard at work in recent months on a new initiative designed to enhance opportunities for secondary school students to engage with the Society.

The Vinnies Service Medallion is a social justice program for students in years seven to twelve, available free-of-charge, aimed to enhance knowledge of key social justice issues, increase civic participation and provide practical volunteering opportunities.

"It's identifying a need among young people to get involved with the Society – we've got Mini Vinnies in primary school – then we've got a gap in high school – and we've got the Young Adult Conferences," explains Maggie Lipu, Vinnies Service Medallion Project Coordinator.

"The essence of the program is to give young people a better understanding of social justice issues and what's happening in the world."

Reception to the program has been warmly welcomed with students in years seven and eight at six schools throughout the Metropolitan region participating in the pilot:

- Nagle College, Blacktown South
- Bede Polding, South Windsor
- De La Salle Catholic College, Caringbah
- Marist College, Kogarah
- Mackillop Catholic College, Warnervale
- St Leo's College, Wahroonga

The structure of the Vinnies Service Medallion sees students focus on a specific social justice topic each term along with a practical element to put what they've learnt into practice.

In Term 3, students learnt about poverty, such as its causes and impacts for individuals and wider society, and raising funds by participating in the Vinnies School Sleepout.

Most recently, students gained a greater understanding of the current cost of living crisis, including how people

Join the Vinnies Service Medallion Program!
 Enhance your knowledge on key social justice issues while giving back to your community!

As a Vinnies Service Medallion participant you will:

- ✓ Make a difference
- ✓ Meet like-minded people
- ✓ Put your values into action
- ✓ Participate in fun activities
- ✓ Develop leadership skills
- ✓ Be recognised for your achievements

For more information go to:
vinnies.org.au/nsw/get-involved/vinnies-service-medallion
 or scan the QR Code

with limited incomes are worse off due to higher prices, while supporting the Vinnies Christmas Appeal by collecting items to be donated to local Conferences and support centres.

"A lot of the schools and dioceses that we've spoken to have praised the program as something that they've wanted for years.

"We've drawn on the Catholic social teachings and putting our faith into action. It's also values-based, because even if students don't identify as being Catholic, a lot of our values already align with people and what they believe."

As a long-term project, it is hoped that the Vinnies Service Medallion will provide a pathway for students to receive recognition towards tertiary study.

"I really believe that young people aren't the futures of tomorrow — they're the changemakers of today."

The Society plans to roll out the Vinnies Service Medallion across the state during the new year.

To register your school's interest in the program or for more information, contact vsm@vinnies.org.au.



Shops hit fever pitch for Matildas

The Matildas made history at the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup and Vinnies Shops were right with our women's team during the celebrations.

Vinnies Shops across the state got behind our national women's team with green and gold displays, which even caught the eye of The Guardian who highlighted the display at Newtown in their widely-read live blog.

In a landmark moment for women's sport and sport in Australia in its own right, the Matildas became the first Australian team to reach the semi finals at a FIFA World Cup and attracted the largest free-to-air television audience in recorded history for the semi final against England.

For context, the average audience of more than 7 million for the final four clash was more than double the audience for State of Origin or the NRL and AFL grand final.

Well done, Matildas!

Today Show discovers a bargain at Vinnies Greystanes

Viewers around the nation woke up to news of treasures to be found at their local Vinnies when the Today Show visited our Greystanes shop in Western Sydney.

Effie Zahos, Today Show money expert, highlighted the benefits of making second-hand your first choice by shopping at Vinnies, with customers able to discover fantastic items at value for money prices amid the cost of living crisis.

With funds raised from items sold in our shops used to support programs and services operated by the Society statewide, the Today Show's national audience enabled the Society to educate the community on the importance of donating responsibly.

"[Vinnies have] got to honour the donators, so they can't just sell these items at rock bottom prices, you've also got to price it properly for consumers, but, more importantly, they have seen an increase in the number of working Aussies wanting assistance," explained Effie.

"So, they've got to balance this all."

The Society operates more than 220 Vinnies Shops across the state which raised \$78 million in the past financial year thanks to the efforts of volunteers and staff who perform a variety of roles from sorting donations, pricing items to be placed on the shop floor and serving customers.

"There's always a need to donate... I feel like more people understand there is that need, so we do still get some really great donations," explained Tanya Vella, Vinnies Retail Area Manager.

"We're seeing way more people that didn't come to us before shop with us, which is great!"

Today Show co-host Karl Stefanovic noted his appreciation for the multiple benefits of our shops, "I remember shopping at Vinnies exclusively when I was at uni – it's such a terrific service if you're really struggling."

See the full story by scanning the QR code





*Vale
Michael
Tansey*

14/12/51 – 31/01/22

In the weeks before his passing, Michael Tansey was among friends celebrating his 70th birthday.

While his eighth decade on earth may have lasted only a matter of weeks, the preceding years were filled with warmth and generosity.

Michael was born in Darlinghurst shortly before Christmas in 1951. He was the only child of Jack and Kathleen Tansey, and he grew up in Earlwood prior to the family relocating to Bexley North during the mid-1970s.

Michael was educated at Christian Brothers in Lewisham and after leaving school operated a number of small businesses before taking on a role with the Sydney Archdiocese as Office Services Manager until his retirement.

A career highlight during this period was his involvement in World Youth Day 2008 – the first time the Catholic Youth festival took place in Australia.

As a committed Christian, faith played an integral role in Michael's life, this was reflected through his work and his support of charities that he felt made a positive contribution towards helping those in need.

Regarded as a quiet individual with a broad and infectious laugh, friends admired his loyalty and commitment towards his family, particularly to his mother Kathleen in her later years.

Like his father Jack, Michael was a passionate supporter for the South Sydney Rabbitohs from an early age. Michael also enjoyed musicals and stage shows and travelling be it locally, interstate or overseas.

Michael was a positive and warm man who was generous with his time in supporting those in need.

Michael passed away peacefully at Calvary Hospital, Kogarah, on 31 January 2022. May he rest in peace.

Michael leaves behind a generous bequest to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW which will be used to enable programs and services providing a variety of assistance to people experiencing hardship and disadvantage.

We thank Michael for his generosity, and extend our sympathy to his loved ones for their loss.

In the past year, our bequests team received more than 100 generous estates to enable the good works of the Society in NSW. Funds provided through bequests have allowed services such as the Matthew Talbot Hostel to support men experiencing or at risk of homelessness with accommodation and case management.

To learn more, including how to leave a bequest to Vinnies please contact our Gifts in Wills & Estates Team on (02) 8622 0387 or bequests@vinnies.org.au.



Advent: the heart of Vincentian Visitation

A brief reading from the gospel of Luke... "For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy..."

As we lead into Advent and the time of Christmas, the birth of the Christ-child, I think a reflection on the first moments of Mary's journey is important to ponder. The Visitation was a *kairos* moment where Mary, with Child, made a hard journey into the hill country of Judea to be with her older cousin, Elizabeth, to assist her in the final stage of her pregnancy giving birth to her son John. Elizabeth's pregnancy, like Mary's, was beyond the realms of probability so they had much to share.

In the Society, I have heard it said that the grassroots of the works of the Society is home visitations. It is an important time where Vincentians visit the homes of those they serve, offering support and assistance. It is a time where the Vincentian can understand the environment, culture, social life and situations of those seeking need. Frederic Ozanam expressed this "Knowledge of the poor and needy is...visiting the slums where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel and learning from their lips the causes of their woes."

Today, home visitations have become challenging and difficult for many reasons. On occasions, Vincentians meet people outside of the home, in hubs or parish rooms, on the street, or Conference rooms in the back of retail shops. So, have we lost our grassroots approach to compassionate care?

Two aspects of the visitation may assist our reflection for I sense that Elizabeth offered visitation to Mary as much, if not more, than Mary did for Elizabeth.

Firstly, is Elizabeth's joy at seeing face to face her younger cousin. We may not always perceive this joyful

moment when we have a visitation moment to offer assistance, but I remember perceiving a sense of joy in relief and simply being listened to especially during the floods in Lismore. People knew that they could merely come to us, and we were there in "visitation" for them. They could pause and feel a deep sense of dignity given to them, we listened to their story, and we offered our hearts in hospitality. This visitation is the grassroots of our pastoral and compassionate care. This "visitation" needs to be nurtured as our way to serving divinity or the sacred in the poor.

The other is that when Mary visited her cousin, she had only just learnt of her own pregnancy outside of a married union. I could only imagine the rumours around this event at home. There would have been disbelief and accusations of infidelity to her betrothed. I am sure she was fearful of being stoned by the elders of the Jewish law and the loss of any shred of dignity. But in the arms of her cousin, celebrating the gift that each carried, it seemed that she was fully accepted, without any form of judgement and fully celebrated, understood and loved.

The Vincentian Rule reminds us that our service is without judgment and that in reverence Vincentians serve, "listening to them, respecting their needs and recover dignity." Wherever we meet those in need, whether in the homes or on the streets, Vincentians are visiting. We continue this wonderful tradition in our actions, our conversations and our prayers.

Through the insights of the Visitation, I believe the well-known anthem of the Rule of "No work of charity is foreign to the Society", is given a deeper meaning. These charitable works are not purely transactions of a duty but visitations of hope. The visitation is not just core to Vincentian action but core to our Vincentian spirit.

Hungry, anxious and desperate.

**THIS CHRISTMAS, HELP FAMILIES
MOST IMPACTED BY THE ESCALATING
COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS.**

**Donate today
to the Vinnies
Christmas Appeal.**

SCAN THE
QR CODE
TO DONATE.



Please give today.
Visit vinnies.org.au call 13 18 12
or scan the **QR code to donate.**

 **Vinnies Christmas Appeal**
 St Vincent de Paul Society
good works