



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

WINTER 2024
ISSUE NO. 95

Vision



**REMEMBERING
PAUL BURTON**

**RISING DEMAND
FOR ASSISTANCE**

**NEW SHOPS
AND SERVICES**

**CEO SLEEPOUT
RAISES MORE
THAN FUNDS**



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is made up of so many wonderful people who give of themselves individually as part of a greater whole.

Paul Burton was one such individual who lived this example through all the years he devoted to the Society.

He understood those who came before him and the impact they were able to make in shaping the Society. With this perspective, Paul sought to renew and adapt the Society to the changing conditions of the world, involving himself as a member of the Spirituality Committee and advancing the Society's Reconciliation Action Plan and Diversity and Inclusion initiatives in his tenure as President.

Paul's passing is a reminder to us all of what we value and how we choose to live. He understood Vincentian spirituality as a constant work in progress and the work we perform as being grounded in the example set by Christ.

As a Vincentian, he recognised the innate dignity of every person, so that they may flourish and know that they are loved.

We were blessed to have Paul as part of our lives and mourn the absence he leaves behind.

God bless,

John Adams
Acting State Council President
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

CEO'S MESSAGE

Welcome



I would like to start by taking a moment to reflect on the recent passing of State Council President, Paul Burton which has come as a great sadness to all of us who encountered him in his many Vincentian roles.

Paul dedicated more than four decades of his life in service of the Society, culminating in his election as State Council President two years ago.

In his last Vision message, Paul spoke of "the heart of our work requires a Vincentian presence and empathy with marginalised people throughout their personal experience of distress, uncertainty and vulnerability."

We will continue to honour that call through our good works and send our thoughts and prayers to Paul's loved ones, notably his wife, Jennifer, and four children.

Indeed, in reflecting on Paul's call for our presence with the marginalised, demand for assistance has been on the increase across NSW. I am so grateful for all your efforts in meeting this growing need in the community.

Recently we held the 2024 Vinnies CEO Sleepout which raised \$2.5 million in NSW as part of an \$8 million national total. This will allow the Society NSW to transform thousands of lives in the years to come at a time when so many are facing hardship they have never previously known.

As you read through these pages, I hope that you see the tremendous impact all our members, volunteers and employees have made in recent times in pursuit of a more just and compassionate society.

Yolanda Saiz
Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW



The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is deeply saddened by the passing of State Council President Paul Burton. Paul passed on Sunday 12 May, surrounded by his loved ones, aged 74.

"A more just and compassionate society will not materialise out of a vacuum of indifference; such a society requires the active work of individuals, willing to apply a particular focus of compassion according to personal circumstances, but, nonetheless, be united in coming together collectively."

These words from Paul Burton came from an annual report message penned in his capacity as State President.

They speak to his belief in the mission and vision of the St Vincent de Paul Society – a cause he dedicated more than 40 years of his life in service of as a member.

Crediting his grandfather's legacy as a Vincentian for inspiration to join in the 1980s while living in southwestern Sydney, Paul collaborated with another Vincentian, Eddie Solarz, where the two men established the momentum for the founding of the Conference of St Thomas More at Ruse in Campbelltown.

As a Vincentian, his roles included Regional Centres President in Campbelltown before moving to the Armidale Central Council, where he took on numerous leadership positions, including Central Council President.

In his professional career, Paul specialised in road, rail, sea, and air logistics, providing transport, warehousing and distribution services to the food, agricultural and pharmaceutical sectors.

Paul was elected as State Council President in February 2022 and was immediately thrust into a time of crisis as floods devastated the Northern Rivers. He provided support to members and employees working on the ground in the immediate aftermath and during the ensuing months as the Society responded to thousands of people in need of assistance.

Having served in many different capacities throughout his time as a Vincentian, Paul understood the importance of recognising those who selflessly gave of themselves in the name of the Society's good works. Under his leadership, he established the Regional President's Forum to empower members in positions of leadership, who he viewed as taking on roles requiring trust and character, to support members working on the front line of their communities.

He was also the first Vice President of Spirituality for the State Council and urged the Society to act with increased momentum regarding Reconciliation Action Plan and Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.

Paul recognised the Society, at its best, as a living, vibrant example of the Commandment to love one another as God has loved us. For Paul, this call was at the heart of Vincentian good works.

It was important to Paul to be conscious of the diligence and consistent commitment displayed every day by members, volunteers and employees as they performed their roles in assisting those they seek to serve. His belief was that gratitude and appreciation should be constantly evident as part of the Vincentian culture.

The Franciscan priest Richard Rohr, who wrote on matters of theology and spirituality, was a favourite of Paul's during the latter years of his life.

Leo Tucker, Executive Director of Mission and Spirituality, recalls a quote of Rohr's that resonated with Paul.

"As I approach death, the best way to describe what's coming next is not "I'm dying," but "I'm finally going home." I don't know what it's like yet, but in my older age I can really trust that it is home."

He served with humility, respect and a true sense of Vincentian spirit. He never forgot the vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged. He was selfless in his service of others, often putting the people the Society assists before his own wellbeing.

Paul will be greatly missed by everyone across the Society, leaving behind a wonderful legacy of prayerfulness, healing, kindness, compassion, and companionship. The Society hold Paul's wife, Jennifer, and his four children – Alicia, Joanne, Rachael and Sean and extended family in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time.



Strategic Plan hits one year milestone

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW is progressing our Strategic Plan with a continued focus on the people we assist.

As we mark the completion of the first year of our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan – *Strengthening Communities, Transforming Lives* – concerted efforts from all our people have resulted in increased outreach and expansion of existing services, as well as an improvement in income-generating activities to increase financial capacity, to fund the mission of the Society.

Some of the key achievements of the past year include:

- Applying the Vinnies Theory of Change against our services to articulate how we deliver support and establishing a baseline that we can be accountable to in years to come.
- Developing place-based care principles for community engagement. These principles have been applied to our work at the Nagle Centre in Campbelltown with a view to being defined and rolled out across the state.
- We have expanded our retail presence with new shops and container deposit scheme sites opening over the past 12 months. You can read more about these openings on page 13.
- A new e-commerce project is in development to build upon our existing retail operations and reach new customers through an online marketplace.

- By revising our Property Framework, we will be able to make decisions that yield long-term benefits and utilise our property resources in ways that bring about the greatest impact for the people we assist.
- The new Members and Volunteers (MAVS) website will provide our people with an easy-to-use system so that they can support people facing hardship and maintain safety standards.
An untapped youth market, filling the space between Mini Vinnies and university groups, has been targeted with the Vinnies Service Medallion program sharing the values of the Society with high school students.
- Youth membership is increasing with O Week events at university campuses generating over 4,500 membership leads.

There has been strong demand for assistance from our services with our member-led Conferences surpassing the number of people supported from last year. Our specialised Vinnies Services have experienced similar levels of demand, however, the lack of available and affordable housing options has resulted in people requiring support for longer periods of time due to capacity constraints. In response, our advocacy work has played an important role in calling on all levels of government to deliver increased support for our services and large-scale housing investment.

Society leadership will be advising on the progress of the Strategic Plan and upcoming initiatives during the Society Insight Forums to be held across the state throughout Winter.

You can learn more about our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan – *Strengthening Communities, Transforming Lives* – at www.vinnies.org.au/NSWStrategicPlan.

Recommencing our involvement in EAPA

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has once again become a registered provider of the NSW Government's Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) digital voucher program, which can offer assistance with current electricity or natural gas bills in times of emergency or financial crisis.

After an internal review of the Society's withdrawal from the EAPA scheme, involving consultation meetings with key members and employees across all regions to gather feedback and discuss possible courses of action, a recommendation was made to State Council to recommence our involvement.

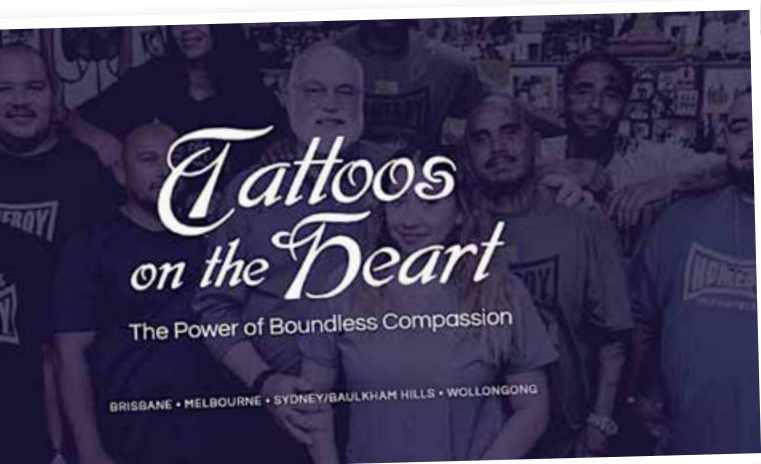
The results of the consultation survey showed there was an overall willingness to return to the EAPA scheme, with some Regional and Sydney Metro areas having a keen interest in returning as a provider. The rise in the cost of living, specifically in relation to utility accounts and how this is impacting the people we assist who are already

in crisis, was listed as a key reason for becoming an EAPA provider once again.

The scheme offers short-term support to pay for current energy bills and prevents energy providers from charging late fees and disconnecting households. If successful, eligible applicants can receive up to \$1,600 per financial year (supplied in \$50 digital vouchers) to be redeemed for their electricity or gas bills.

Workshops and training will be required for all members, volunteers and employees who provide EAPA support. Comprehensive EAPA Provider Guidelines that cover all FAQs and compliance requirements are available for members and volunteers, as well as support from dedicated Central Council EAPA administrators.

Our reinstatement as a registered EAPA provider may attract customers to the Society who have not reached out for support before. Members and volunteers can use each enquiry as a discussion about EAPA and of other assistance that may be available to them.



Father Greg Boyle brings Radical Kinship to Australia

"Kinship is what happens to us. We can decide to enter into it, embrace it, and fall in love with it or we can resist it, avoid it and resent it."

Father Greg Boyle, SJ has dedicated his life to working alongside gangs in Los Angeles as part of his Homeboy Industries ministry. His work and series of books have been highly acclaimed, and earlier this year he received the Medal of Honour from US President Joe Biden.

Fr Boyle will be touring Australia later this year, including a weekend national conference in Sydney on 12-13 October and a schools ministry conference in Wollongong on 16-17 October.

'Radical Kinship' will explore how to create a greater culture of invitation and welcome, what 'boundless compassion' looks like and feels like in the context of lay ecclesial ministry, and learn from the challenges of those working 'on the margins'.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW encourages everyone to hear Fr Boyle's inspiring ministry work and how we can all play a part in responding with courage to the need of our local communities.

"Father Greg Boyle's Homeboy Industries ministry is an inspirational example of the power of kinship and walking alongside people facing hardship. His work and the aspiration of the Society share much in common and I encourage everyone to take advantage of this opportunity to hear from a towering figure of contemporary advocacy and service to the marginalised," said Yolanda Saiz, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW CEO.

Learn more about the Father Greg Boyle's tour at www.gpbs.com.au or scan the QR code.



Getting results through grants

Members and volunteers of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW are able to make a difference every day through a diverse range of programs and services delivered across the state.

In order to achieve this impact each year, we rely on a variety of revenue streams, including our network of Vinnies Shops, commercial enterprise operations and fundraising activities.

Playing an important role within the fundraising directorate, the work performed by the grants team helps the Society deliver results for locally-based Conferences all the way up to statewide-run programs.

The grants team recorded 76 successful applications in the last year, contributing close to \$1.5 million to support the good works of the Society. Approximately 20% of funding sourced from grants went towards supporting membership projects.

"To maximise the impact of our work, we look at the services and programs that we currently provide and find grants that are aligned," explains Pearl Lee, Major Gifts and Philanthropy Manager.

"One of the most exciting projects that we've worked on recently is a multi-million dollar Alcohol and Other Drugs Hub in Armidale that was funded through NSW Health. We've partnered with a local First Nations community organisation to expand the services that we currently offer in that space, such as Freeman House, and meet the demand that is present."

Some of the grants that have been successful over the past year include funding for Christmas hampers, installing solar panels at Vinnies Shops, refurbishing refuges and homeless accommodation, and educational programs for the people we assist.

"Building relationships with organisations in your local community is a great way for members to support the work of the grants team. Businesses will often have funding that needs to be distributed and having those relationships can bring awareness to grants that are available. The key to successful grants is applying for funds that directly impact people we assist and using the funds for the purpose for which we applied for."

For more information, contact the grants team at:

nswgrants@vinnies.org.au



Vinnies partners with Scanline/Cleanaway to launch used cooking oil recycling scheme

Vinnies has recently launched VUCOR (Vinnies Used Cooking Oil Recycling) in partnership with Scanline/Cleanaway as a new source of funding for the Society.

Early adopters of the scheme include major names in Sydney's hospitality scene including Mary's (the first to sign up), King Clarence of Bentley Group, Club Five Dock RSL, Toppi, and Pilu. "So far the uptake from venues has been really great," says Phil Coyte, Executive Director of Commercial Enterprise, Retail, and Fundraising at St Vincent de Paul Society NSW. "We've found that many restaurant owners are interested in a cooking oil recycling scheme that also supports good causes in their community".

Aiden Stevens, Group Executive Chef of Bentley Group, says that the partnership between Vinnies and Scanline/Cleanaway made VUCOR the top choice for their used cooking oil collection when the group opened a new venue. "For us it was an easy decision to go with Vinnies' recycling scheme when we opened King Clarence. It's such a simple way to support their good work. The service has been great and everything's run smoothly right from day one."

Scanline contributes a charitable rebate to Vinnies for every litre of oil that is collected through the VUCOR scheme, which comes out of Scanline's own operating profits. Ryan Knights, the National Development Manager at Scanline, says that they were delighted to become the operational partner. "Vinnies are able to bring us new customers who are motivated by their desire to support Vinnies' work in the community. We are happy to work with such a pro-active and innovative organisation. It really is a positive scheme for everyone—the venue, us, the environment, and most of all the people whose Vinnies' work helps."

Product collected through VUCOR is processed and turned into renewable fuel and animal stock feed in NSW.

Working towards First Nations justice

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW has been working diligently to ensure we continue to reach and achieve our shared aspirations for impact in the First Nations space. We have been able to translate the principles of reconciliation into tangible actions. We have continued to demonstrate a genuine commitment to embedding reconciliation into the fabric of our workplace culture, in alignment, not only to our aspirations and goals in our upcoming refreshed Reconciliation Action Plan, but also to our broader mission and strategy. We are creating space for genuine connection, understanding and collaboration between First Nations people and communities and non-First Nations members of our workforce.

In the past few months, we have completed and launched the refresh of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness training, now titled “*Djurali*”, which means ‘to learn and grow’ in the Dharug language. This new and improved program hopes to increase knowledge and foster safe spaces for our First Nations brothers and sisters.

We have also successfully received an exemption from the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board which allows us to designate, advertise and recruit up to ten positions per year for a total of five years, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our pursuance of our goal to increase workforce participation rates.

Working alongside community Elders, we were able to host an emotive and captivating panel discussion at the beginning of Reconciliation Week. Our distinguished guests, Uncle Kelvin

Brown and Uncle Raymon Dennison yarned alongside staff members Paige Williams (Case Worker – Vinnies Services) and Samantha McGuire (Manager, First Nations Engagement) on this year’s theme “Now more than ever” and more deeply, our reconciliation journey. We yarned about coming together to walk a shared path towards reconciliation, and Paige beautifully said “Reconciliation needs to be in our hearts, not just our words.”

Roughly one in four people we assist identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. We continue to advocate and strive for better outcomes to support the First Nations community, in a culturally safe way, by engaging directly with community members. The Society strives to meet the needs of our First Nations brothers and sisters and we will continue to tailor our resources to empower the community. We appreciate the ongoing commitment of our members to continue to walk alongside the community and strive for the causes raised in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

In the words of Uncle Kelvin Brown, Tribal Elder of the Gamilaraay Nation, “No is only no if you allow it to be no. No is just for now and then later on it might become yes.”

Learn more about the Society’s commitment to reconciliation by scanning the QR code:



Remembering Bill Fitzgerald (1925-2023)

William (Bill) Fitzgerald, former St Vincent de Paul Society NSW State President, passed away late last year, aged 98.

We extend our condolences to Bill's family and remember his contribution to the Society.

Bill's long life was one dedicated to service - service to his family, his faith and to others, especially those in need. An extraordinary storyteller, who could bring a sense of humour to the darkest of topics, his influence and impact were felt by all those whom he encountered.

Born in the inner city of Sydney on 3 April 1925, Bill spent much of his childhood in Darlinghurst, attending the local Christian Brothers school, before joining the Sydney City Council. This began a lifelong career on Council leading to him being Director of Health and Community Services.

Serving in the RAAF towards the end of WWII as a radio operator in far North Queensland, he met and married Shirley in 1947, who was his lifelong partner and with whom he raised three children until her death 2008.

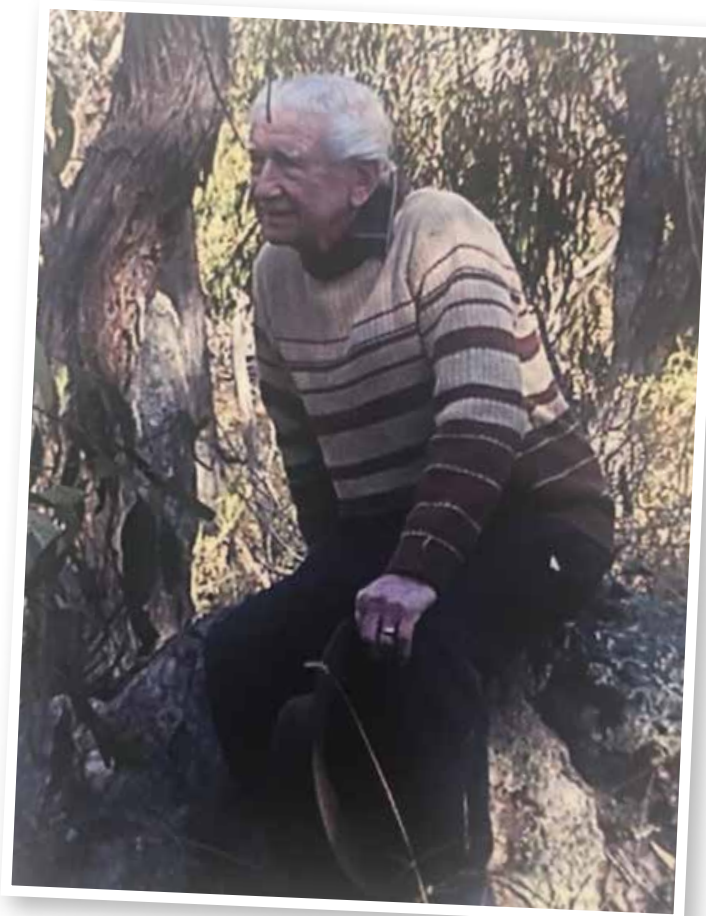
For his contribution to the community, Bill was recognised by being made a Member of the British Empire in the mid-1970s.

As a true believer who sought to put his faith into practice, Bill's dedication saw him awarded the 'Cross of Honour' Medal in 2007 by Pope John Paul II, one of the highest Medals that can be given to a lay member of the Church.

Bill's involvement with the St Vincent de Paul Society began in his teens and spanned 75 years of membership and service.

Starting out as a youth member, he went on to be President of the Maternal Heart of Mary Conference operating out of the Society's head office at Circular Quay, President of the Stella Maris Club for Seafarers, NSW State President and National Council Vice President for Overseas Twining. He remained connected to local conferences at Dulwich Hill, Forestville and Portland and later supported the Bathurst Diocesan Council in the development of their Centres.

He was a committed supporter of the Society's Social Justice Advocacy, never being timid in its defence of



the poor. During his term as State President, he was especially proud of the Society's expansion of Aged Care and Homeless Persons Special Works and the growth in female membership. He was proud of the Society's work with women escaping domestic violence.

He believed the Society could be the best of Church - faithful, compassionate and relevant especially to those in need. For Bill, the work of charity was his greatest love.

For those who were present upon Bill's passing on 7 December 2023, they spoke of his gratitude for a life well lived.

Gratitude for his love of his wife, children and grandchildren. Gratitude for the acceptance of the many parish communities in which he lived and engaged. Gratitude for his legacy of good works. Gratitude for the wit and wisdom he brought to all.

Gratitude is said to be the doorway to abundance. Bill lived an abundant life - dedicated to faith, family and others.

OLC Stories of Significant Change

The Ozanam Learning Centre acts as a place of acceptance and inclusion for hundreds of people each year. Offering a range of activities for people to express themselves and gain valuable life skills, the support provided at the community inclusion service is varied to bring about the greatest impact for each of the people we assist.



Gerard

Gerard is a regular at the community cook-up session held each Thursday at the OLC.

Attending with their NDIS support worker, the routine of participating in the cook-up has had social benefits as well as leading them to develop an interest in exploring new flavours and vegetables. This has seen them take the skills and recipes learned from the OLC and apply them at home.

Apart from the enjoyment of digging into a prepared meal at the end of a cook-up, they find fulfillment in serving other members of the session and seeing many happy faces.

Gerard feels part of the community at the OLC and will often stop by to say hello to staff while enjoying a coffee.

Luke

Luke became homeless following a relationship breakdown at the start of last year. As he tried to maintain his job while couch surfing during a turbulent period of five months, the lack of stability took a toll, resulting in him losing his job and sleeping rough.

Connecting with the Matthew Talbot Hostel, where he stayed and received case management, he attended the neighbouring OLC and took part in a range of activities.

Gaining new skills in the gardening and cooking classes, which also allowed him to clear debts accrued through a Work Development Order, Luke enjoyed the social aspect of playing touch football and had some of his poetry included in the Words on Walls Woolloomooloo public art project.

Luke now has housing in Western Sydney and continues to visit the OLC when he can connect with people over a game of basketball.

"This place was like a second home to me. The support from both the Mathew Talbot Hostel and the OLC have been out of this world. I feel forever indebted to everyone here."

Vijay

Vijay's first interaction with the Society began with nothing more than the clothes on his back.

Fleeing an abusive situation and in need of support, he was supported by the Matthew Talbot Hostel where staff helped him to open up and offered encouragement to make use of the services provided at the OLC.

Growing in confidence and with dreams of making a better life for himself in Australia, he was able to use the centre's computers to look for work. Vijay credits the staff at the OLC – 'the family that he doesn't have in Australia' – for writing a character reference that helped him gain employment.

Vijay remains in contact with the OLC on his days off work where he enjoys going on the morning 'Walk and Talk' alongside staff.

New refuge in Western Sydney supports older women affected by domestic and family violence

On average, three women ask for help from our domestic and family violence services every eight hours. Domestic and family violence was cited as the leading reason for people seeking assistance from our Homelessness and Housing services in the past year.

These chilling statistics speak to the growing demand for services like Our Lady of the Way – a newly refurbished refuge in Western Sydney. Established to provide independent living for five single women over 45 in self-contained accommodation, it also offers access to on-site support services to help residents rebuild their lives. It is one of the only services in NSW that is specifically targeted for older females.

The refuge has five individual units, each with a bedroom, kitchenette and living space, plus a courtyard with facilities to house pets. A spacious communal kitchen and garden offers residents a place to relax and socialise. The common hallway features an overflowing wardrobe filled with fresh, unworn clothing provided by fashion brands and retailers in partnership with Thread Together. The shelves and hanging racks are kept stocked with a variety of garments to which residents of the refuge have free access.

"A lot of women come in with absolutely nothing" says Suzy Pace, an area manager in the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Homelessness and Housing team as she considers the contents of the wardrobe. "When women arrive, we don't know what size they're going to be, we don't know their style culturally... It's just making sure we've got the basics right, and then they can come in and really choose what they want."

Access to new clothing may seem like a small thing, but to women arriving at the refuge, this opportunity can bring about feelings of empowerment and independence. "Something like this, you know, it means so much," says Suzy. "It's the start of a new beginning feeling valued and like they're worthy. And that's what it gives - it gives them that dignity."



Case Worker Anupa Shrestha says that some ladies who arrive at the refuge have never had new clothes. "They've been going to the Vinnies store, they've been wearing second-hand clothes all their life. So they were very emotional when they get the new ones." When submitting orders from Thread Together, Anupa ensures the items are suitable for the residents of this particular refuge. "Loose pants, you know like really comfortable pants, comfortable shoes ... they love to have shirts, so last time when I ordered there was lots of shirts - they loved it. Each of them grabbed one."

The Society works closely with Specialist Homelessness Services who refer and support women escaping DFV in the Western Suburbs including Cumberland Women's Health and DV Line. For the women who end up in crisis accommodation at Our Lady of the Way, wrap-around services will include individual support plans coordinated by a caseworker, with the goal of meeting specific health, education, employment, social and legal needs to ensure the women can achieve and sustain housing security.

Over the past year, the Society assisted more than 2,200 people through our domestic and family violence services. This demand has grown considerably in recent times - since the start of COVID it has increased by 42% annually.



New regional office opens in Lismore

A new office in Lismore will serve as the Society's base of operations in the region and provide support to communities experiencing hardship.

Opening its doors to the public in February, the new regional office in Conway Street replaces the former Magellan Street site which was devastated by flooding in early 2022.

Members in the region had been using the nearby distribution centre in Goonellabah as a temporary site in the wake of the flooding and are now thriving in the new fit-for-purpose space which features a food pantry and meeting rooms to deliver assistance.

In addition to the regional office, a new Vinnies Van service has been launched, which will extend the reach of our services to meet the needs of surrounding communities.

"It will be for all our services that we provide throughout the Lismore Central Council – [going] from Grafton up to Tweed Heads and out to Kyogle," said Clare Van Doorn, North East Regional Director.

Society members in the Lismore Central Council have supported 14,600 people over the last 12 months – surpassing the total of the previous year by 9%.

The Society has also opened a new service in the North East – the Maitland Hub – which will act as a one-stop shop, complementing existing services in the Lower Hunter and giving people the support they need without having to jump through hoops during times of hardship.

The Hub was made a reality following a donation from the Cootes Family Foundation. John Cootes OAM was born in Maitland and has been a long-time member of the Society's Swansea Conference.

Local MP meets with workshop volunteers

Dr Gordon Reid, Federal Member for Robertson, paid a visit to St Joseph's Workshop to see one of the most impressive services operated by the Society in action.

Serving as much more than a men's shed, the volunteer-led workshop, based in Gosford, has been producing thousands of items of furniture each year for more than three decades.

Thanks to funding provided through the Australian Government's National Shed Development Programme, the workshop was recently able to purchase a new thicknesser which has improved the efficiency of operations and allowed our volunteers to construct more items for people in need.

In addition to an impressive output of goods, the workshop serves as a welcoming and supportive environment for our volunteers to connect and make an impact in the community.

As part of his visit Dr Reid presented Daniel Garcia with a special award, recognising 20 years of service at the workshop.





New openings across the state

2024 has already been a momentous year for our shop network with three new sites now trading.

In February, Vinnies launched a sizeable store in Taminda–South Tamworth, which is the first and only shop in the region equipped to receive and resell furniture items. The location is also a recycling hub for donations, promoting a cycle of reuse and reducing waste within local communities. Vinnies efforts to save usable items from ending up in landfill will reach far beyond Taminda, as the donations received at the recycling hub will also stock shops in surrounding areas including Narrabri, Moree and Barraba.

Newport also has a new boutique-style op shop catering for the affluent clientele of Sydney's Northern Beaches. Open since late December, the shop celebrated its official launch in March to coincide with Clean Up Australia Day and the store hosted a beach clean up to mark the occasion. Vinnies Newport features a coastal aesthetic with premium finishes which will appeal to customers looking for high end fashion brands and earthy homewares.

Our newest Vinnies shop is located in Campbelltown along the busy thoroughfare of Queen Street near Campbelltown train station. This is our second shop location in this well-populated southern Sydney suburb. Opening its doors in March, the store facade is adorned with the updated Vinnies retail branding and the interior has been carefully designed for modern shoppers looking for a practical and enjoyable retail experience.

Vinnies shops remain an integral part of our fundraising efforts with our retail network raising \$78 million to support the Society's programs and services last financial year. Our Retail Growth Strategy aims to support new retail sites, so these new shops represent a step towards increasing our market share and positioning Vinnies as the best op shop network in Australia.

Retail is not the only sector that has acquired new locations in 2024. After a record year for our Return and Earn depots in 2023 with over 122 million containers processed, Vinnies is hoping that the addition of two new container deposit sites will encourage even more people to utilise the service in their local area. Return and Earn network operator TOMRA Cleanaway has partnered with St Vincent de Paul Society NSW since the scheme launched six years ago.

Griffith locals can now cash in their bottles and cans at their new depot on Lenehan Road, which opened to the public in March. The bulk-processing facility has an impressive capacity which is designed to quickly process up to 100,000 containers each day.

A new depot in Maitland, located in Rutherford, also began processing containers in May. The site can accept any number of containers but the large-format counting and sorting machines at the facility make it particularly useful for people returning 500 containers or more. It received a whopping 100,000 containers in its first week of operation.





Pet Day helps relieve cost of living pressures

Pets (and their human companions) enjoyed a day to remember at our annual Pet Day held in Redfern.

In an effort to meet the needs of the people we assist, our Vinnies Support Centre servicing Redfern and surrounding communities offered a range of pet treatments, food and supplies for all creatures great and small, including dogs, cats, rabbits and even a parrot!

"We know with the rising cost of living, people's situations are very difficult at the moment and they are financially challenged," said Donna Boyd, Vinnies Support Centre Team Leader.

"So this eases some of the load for them, for their fur babies – who are really family to them!"

The event was well attended and also attracted the attention of Federal MP Tanya Plibersek and Social Services Minister Amanda Rishworth, who took time during a visit to hear from some of the people we assist.

**See more of the Redfern Pet Day
by scanning the QR code:**



Online shop coming soon to entice new Vinnies retail customers

In an effort to build on our current retail offering and serve new and existing customers in the thriving online market for pre-loved goods, a new e-commerce project is being developed with an online shop set to launch later this year.

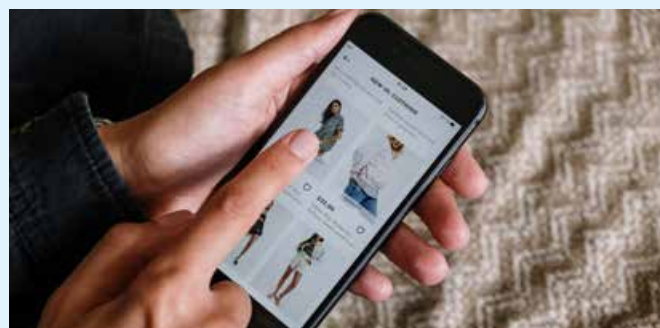
Vinnies is embracing the opportunity to expand into e-commerce to allow customers to browse and buy products online as well as in our 220+ physical shops across the state. The online shop is designed to attract new customers and donors, as well as provide customers in areas not served by a physical shop with 24/7 digital access to Vinnies' products.

Thomas Morgan, Director of Communications and Marketing, says that the web shop will allow Vinnies to tap into a whole new market. "This is an opportunity to appeal to customers who don't go into op shops, but are more inclined to shop online ... we're hoping that it will attract a whole new generation of customers that are currently shopping at Facebook Marketplace and DePop, bringing them into the Vinnies ecosystem".

Featuring the Vinnies retail branding, the website will display a curated inventory of the pre-loved items that are associated with Vinnies shops. Customers will be able to search through a larger range of products, including men's and women's fashion, books, vinyl records and homewares, and will have the ability to filter their search to find specific sizes or items of a certain brand.

The initial launch of the e-commerce store is set for late 2024. Revenue from online sales will be added to the funding raised by Vinnies stores to support our vital services in the community.

**Are you a regular online shopper?
We'd love to hear from you, scan the
QR code to sign up for a focus group
and gain early access to the platform.**



NSW Governor visits Freeman House

We were honoured to host the Honourable Margaret Beazley, Governor of New South Wales, at Freeman House where she gained a valuable insight into the largest residential rehabilitation service located in Northern NSW.

Freeman House has been operating in Armidale for close to five decades. Initially established as a Special Works Conference – St Augustine's – led by members to support people struggling with addiction, the service, named in recognition of Cardinal James Freeman, transitioned into rehabilitation service overseen by specialist staff in the 2000s.

Members continue to play a role at Freeman House with the historic St Augustine's Conference supporting residents with activities in the community and building connections.



Services offered include long-term drug and alcohol rehabilitation, crisis accommodation, inpatient treatment, aftercare support and programs to accommodate patients with young children.

Her Excellency met with members, leadership from Vinnies Services and staff as part of her visit to the North West, along with Jarrod – a man supported by Freeman House for substance use.

You can read more about Jarrod's personal story of resilience and recovery on page 22.

Multicultural playgroup brings community connections

Newly arrived families are finding their feet in the Riverina with the support of a multicultural playgroup run by the Society.

As one of the primary regions for refugees and migrants to resettle in NSW, the decision to establish a multicultural playgroup in Wagga Wagga has provided young children with a safe place to play while allowing newly arrived families to become part of the local community in a welcoming environment.

"For families who have come from their country to Australia, they [often] haven't met anyone, don't speak the language or know about local services. What we hope to do is make them feel comfortable about setting in Australia," said Ana Suarez, Schools and Youth Engagement Officer.

"We have families from Iraq, Afghanistan and Myanmar who can come together to speak their language and also improve their English."

The multicultural playgroup commenced in March 2023 and accommodates up to 15 families in a child-friendly space provided through Wagga Wagga City Council.

Transport is provided for families to and from the playgroup, which operates five times during each school term, along with representatives from Service NSW and Centrelink attending periodically to help families access government support.

"Seeing families grow and feel comfortable in this environment has been really rewarding – we've had families that didn't want to engage at first and now it's completely different."





The hardship of working while homeless

"I work five days, so I'm managing work at the same time as all this."

The past few years have been tough for so many people. From natural disasters and a global pandemic to cost of living pressures and overseas conflicts.

So many people have struggled to get by with respite appearing out of reach.

For as difficult as things are right now, the reality facing a growing number of people is a cause for great concern.

As housing across the country becomes less secure, it's people like Luke who are becoming the new face of disadvantage and homelessness in Australia.

Luke works hard five days a week at a bakery and supports his elderly father, Colin, who suffers from a variety of health issues, including acute chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) that causes difficulty breathing and walking.

"I've got to do just about 95% of all the basic things that someone would need to do or get done with [my father] being on disability," explains Luke.

"It's a matter of I've got to do it or nothing's going to happen."

Luke's outlook on life is pragmatic however his living situation is anything but.

"I've been on the streets for two years without finding any place while I'm holding down a full-time job."

"It's not easy. It's very hard."

Luke is among a growing number of people who are employed yet find themselves unable to secure a place to live and spend their nights – in the best of cases – in cars, tents or relying on the goodwill of others.

Luke found himself facing homelessness when the owner of the home he lived in opted to sell, leaving him and his father having to stay with a family member in a shed.

What was meant to be a temporary stay while he looked for a new home became a dispiriting cycle of rejection made worse by a living situation that became untenable.

"I found that I struggled [with the private rental market]... I would be on Facebook and Gumtree messaging ad after ad but they don't meet our requirements or we're not eligible for it."

"Some of the landlords were strict on having no pets, so this is where we possibly could have gotten a place, but I just didn't want to give up my dog at that time."

Moving into a boarding house and subsequently sleeping in a vacant building, the pair were abruptly moved on by an owner, who threatened to call the police, before finally having no other choice but to brave the elements in a tent.

The circumstances faced by Luke are tough and sadly increasingly familiar to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.

In the past two years, the number of people seeking assistance from the Society who are experiencing homelessness or in temporary accommodation in NSW has risen from 19% to 30%.



Similarly, the median weekly cost of rent in NSW has increased by 38% over the past five years, while the number of people waiting for social housing across the state stands at more than 120,000.

While Luke and his father continue their search for permanent and secure housing, there has been a change for the better thanks to support provided by the Society.

Our members have helped by providing food, assistance to get Colin admitted to hospital for treatment and paying for Luke to stay in a motel.

Currently staying in crisis accommodation delivered by the Society, Luke has seen immediate improvements from having more stable housing.

"Getting all the food and eating healthy – I was losing a lot of weight and now I'm starting to bulk up a bit, eating healthy, which I'm happy about."

Colin is also doing well with the support of the Society who are working to secure priority housing due to his health status.

The Society is continuing to support Luke, including paying for a service to look after his dog, as he continues to look for a secure place to call home.

"I'm doing a bit better at the moment, I've got the right people around us."

"What I'm hoping for is long-term housing after this."

The St Vincent de Paul Society has been able to make a difference in the lives of Luke and his father, 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 Winter Appeal at www.vinnies.org.au or calling 13 18 12.

One Night Continues to Make a Difference

For close to two decades, leaders from the worlds of business, industry and community have gone without the comforts they take for granted for one night.

In return, they have gained a greater understanding of the hardship of homelessness as part of the Vinnies CEO Sleepout and contributed to enabling the vital support services delivered by the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Over 1,500 registered participants braved the elements across Australia on the night of 20 June, resulting in a national fundraising total in excess of \$8 million which will allow the Society to provide crisis accommodation, specialist healthcare, case management, Vinnies Vans and much more to people in need.

In New South Wales, \$2.5 million was raised through the efforts of participants sleeping out in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Deborah Knight, 2GB and Channel 9 Presenter, acted as Master of Ceremonies for the fifth time, while journalist Joe Hildebrand hosted the pre-event live-stream.

With New South Wales making up more than a quarter of the 122,000 people identified as homeless according to the latest census figures, the funds raised through the Vinnies CEO Sleepout will allow our support services to meet the growing demand, while also presenting the human face of the issue to people in positions of influence.

"The Vinnies CEO Sleepout is only one night for the participants who brave the cold, but it has the ability to make a lasting impact for the people we assist every day in communities throughout the state," said Yolanda Saiz, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW CEO.

"Our services are seeing surging levels of demand, including many people who have never needed support previously, and this result will ensure that we can meet this need now and going forward," said Ms Saiz.

The White Bay Cruise Terminal set the scene in Sydney where participants heard from people assisted by the Society prior to formalities, along with a stirring performance from the Forbes Street Band, comprised of people supported by the Ozanam Learning Centre. Robert Kelly, Steadfast Group Managing Director and CEO, finished as the highest national fundraiser with \$156,000.

Daniel Munk, Aster Group CEO, topped the fundraising total in Wollongong where participants spent the night at the Society's Coniston Hub, while Newcastle business leaders braved the cold at our Central Council offices with Derek Weatherley, Indue CEO, leading the local tally.





"It is heartwarming to see such an outpouring of generosity to support our services given ongoing cost of living pressures over recent years," said Ms Saiz.

"Thank you to all our participants, donors and supporters who have played a role in allowing us to achieve an outstanding result with our 19th Vinnies CEO Sleepout."

New South Wales participants made up half of the top ten fundraisers nationally with Robert Kelly (Steadfast Group), Grant Steward (Consep), Paul Nicolaou (Business Sydney), Tom Brady (Brefni) and Mark Bruzzone (Abergeldie) all raising over \$60,000 each.

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout has restored hope to thousands of lives for the past 19 years. We could not make this impact without the compassion and generosity of our members, volunteers, employees, sponsors, and participants – we extend our thanks to all of you.

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2025. Eligible leaders from business and the community can sign up now to be part of this special event at: www.ceosleepout.org.au.

Hotels Have Hearts Returns

Hotels Have Hearts returned after a six-year hiatus with a collective of hotel and hospitality leaders generously raising a record \$857,000 in support of the Society's specialist homelessness services.

Close to 600 people attended the Hotels Have Hearts Gala Dinner, supported by the Australian Hotels Association (AHA), at the Grand Ballroom of the Hilston Sydney on 6 June, including members of the Laundry family, who have more than 90 pubs to their name, as well as Minister for Gaming and Racing, David Harris, Shadow Minister for Gaming and Racing, Kevin Anderson, Councillor HY William Chan and Councillor (Waskam) Emelda Davis.

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



raised will continue to go towards the critical work that Vinnies undertakes to encourage personal and community resilience by giving the homeless a hand up rather than a hand out," said Kim Maloney OAM, Chairman, Hotels Have Hearts Committee.

The event, which took place for the first time in 2001, has raised \$5.5 million over the past two decades with funds used to upgrade facilities at the Matthew Talbot Hostel, Vincentian House and expand the capacity of our services.

Partners lend a hand in the name of good works

The support of Corporate Partners allows the Society to meet the needs of thousands of people each year and extend the capacity of our members and services.

We are delighted to recognise some of our partners who have stepped up in recent times in the name of our good works.

Corporate Volunteering

Businesses traded their offices for our services during a host of corporate volunteering days in the lead up to Christmas and throughout the new year.

COS, Amazon and Metcash prepared sandwiches and snack packs to be distributed through our van services; Claude Outdoor and Abergeldie hosted barbeques for the people we assist.

Channel 9 volunteered at our Vinnies Support Centre in Crows Nest while Helia and Hilton Sydney did likewise in Redfern.



2GB Radiothon

2GB stepped up once again by hosting an all-day Vinnies Christmas Radiothon. More than \$184,000 was raised – increasing by 52% on last year's efforts – to support the 2023 Vinnies Christmas Appeal. Listeners heard from a range of people working across the Society in membership and services, along with people we have been able to assist.

Christmas
RADIOTHON

IGA Christmas Appeal

The long-term support of IGA has once again made a difference to households impacted by on-going cost of living pressures.

Through the sale of \$2 Christmas Baubles and specially marked Community Chest products, the IGA Christmas Appeal, which has run each year since 2012, raised \$379,000 nationally to enable the Society to ensure households weren't forced to go without during the festive season.



Gravox

Close to \$118,000 was raised across the country thanks to the support of Kraft Heinz, who also donated a variety of Gravox and Kraft products provided as part of Christmas hampers distributed to families in need.

As part of the funds raised through the campaign, a selection of second-hand gravy boats, donated to Vinnies Shops, were transformed by artist Shelby Sheritt into one-of-a-kind collectible items.



Christmas Donations & Gift Drives

Our partners rose to the challenge during the season of giving with a series of donations and gift drives in support of local Conferences and services.

Donations were made by Birthday In A Box (St George Sutherland), Johnson Winter Slattery (Vincentian House and Marian Centre) and Ripen (Marian Centre)

Staff from the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, Rydges Norwest and Dooleys Lidcombe Catholic Club held gift drives in support of the Vinnies Support Centre at Redfern, Norwest Conference and Lidcombe Conference.

Putting the Fun in Fundraising!

The Community Fundraising team has been working on a variety of initiatives to help Conferences make a difference in their communities.

Smart Minis

One hundred Smart Mini units have been rolled out across the state, in collaboration with CommBank, to help Conferences collect donations in real-time.

Smart Minis are an easy-to-use alternative to eftpos machines; Conferences can simply scan a donor's credit card using the Smart Mini and follow the prompts on the linked app to complete the donation.

Smart Minis are a permanent addition to our fundraising resources, which Conferences can utilise at any time as part of Appeals, Sleepouts or individually-tailored fundraisers.

Learn more about accessing a Smart Mini for your Conference or fundraiser by contacting: events@vinnies.org.au.

Customise Your Fundraising

If the URL of your fundraising page extends longer than your arm, then worry no more!

The Community Fundraising Portal on the Fundraise Your Way website features a range of features that can be used to simplify and make the most of your fundraising.

You can update and personalise your page at any time, including the fundraising URL and QR code, while all donors will receive an automatic receipt via email to cut down on the time spent handling cash payments and paperwork.

Visit the Fundraise Your Way page – fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au – or contact the Community Fundraising team for more information: events@vinnies.org.au.



NSW Vinnies Community Sleepout

The NSW Vinnies Community Sleepout is back for another year with five locations set to bring awareness to disadvantage occurring locally all the while raising funds for local services and programs run by the Society.

Close to 300 participants raised \$230,000 for Conference work and services operated by the Society last year.

In 2023, every location surpassed its fundraising goal and we need your support to make an even greater impact in 2024.

Everyone can participate as a team or individually to make a difference for those facing hardship. To register as a participant or to make a donation, go to www.vinnies.org.au/communitysleepout

Events will take place on Friday 30 August 2024, in the following locations:

- Albury
- Armidale
- Fred's Place, Tweed Heads
- Wagga Wagga
- Western Sydney

How funds raised will be used

Albury	Split evenly between the Nagle Centre and MVRO youth programs in the region.
Armidale	St Augustine's Conference will deliver the Start Fresh Community Connections program
Tweed Heads	Enable the work of the Fred's Place drop-in centre
Wagga Wagga	Koorinal Wagga Conference (Edel Quinn) and Micah Hub
Greater Western Sydney	Vinnies Metro Van Services



Jarrold's story of recovery

Jarrold is one of the many people supported by Freeman House, a drug and alcohol service operated by the St Vincent de Paul Society in north-western NSW.

This is his story of recovery, hope and gratitude for the support that was made possible thanks to supporters like you.

Hello out there to whoever may find this helpful.

I'm writing from my new home overlooking the beautiful scenery of Armidale.

My story of recovery, near death and life began last year after an outreach worker from Freeman House encouraged me to seek treatment. I was unwell from drinking to excess, resulting in liver sorosis.

When I started in detox, I didn't last a night and had to be hospitalised. It felt as though I was dying and for a time, I lost the use of my legs from the waist down.

After recovering in hospital, I was able to complete detox and moved into the residential program where I set about



regaining my mind and putting into practice what I was taking from the group sessions.

Along with the group sessions where I learnt to make clear focussed decisions, I was able to make use of facilities such rooms for art, music, pool and the gym to improve my health and mind.

I got to know a lot about myself through the other residents. We had a wide variety of experiences, levels of trauma and barriers. We had motivations and goals we wanted to achieve in our lives.

I was progressing through the program but continued to be sick. It culminated in a seizure which saw me hospitalised, ultimately leading to a diagnosis of type one diabetes.

The diagnosis was a shock but thanks to specialists who taught me how to deal with this chronic incurable illness I now inject insulin daily, check my glucose levels and have more energy and am more active than I've been in a long time.

I met so many inspiring people during my time at Freeman – nurses, case workers, support staff and management – all of them brilliant and filled with compassion.

I feel whole again with purpose and meaning – I'm working, have a place of my own, enrolled in an alcohol and other drugs course and have a support system in place.

I'd like to thank St Vincent de Paul and my new friends at Freeman House for helping me to see clearly – I feel whole and happy in harmony with myself.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

When I reflect on how far I've come since being supported by Freeman House, I'm reminded of a moment from when I was in primary school that speaks to who I am. There was a girl with a disability who was treated like an outcast. It would have been easy to go along with everyone else ignoring her. But I chose to sit with her. It was the right thing to do to show that someone cared: "me".

If anyone needs help, reach out to Freeman House. I'm just like you, it is possible to be your true self again. Find the spark and don't look back.

Increased rough sleeping highlights demand for assistance

Rough sleeping has increased by 26% across the state according to the latest NSW Statewide Street Count.

Figures released by the Department of Communities and Justice days before the Federal Budget revealed 2,037 people were sleeping rough across the state, increasing by 414 people over the last 12 months.

Byron Shire (348) recorded the highest number of rough sleepers in NSW, while regional cities such as Coffs Harbour (147), Wollongong (83) and Newcastle (49) experienced increases brought on by a culmination of factors such as housing costs and availability, as well as people shifting away from Sydney.

The findings of the Street Count affirmed the increased demand for support placed on the Society's support services during the last year.

"These figures only relate to rough sleepers; there are many other forms of homelessness, such as couch surfing and people sleeping in cars. So I suggest the true figure is likely much higher," said Duncan Grosse, Edel Quinn Manager.

"The factors of cost of living – rents are going up, food's going up, petrol's going up – all these things contribute to people coming into crisis or reaching out for help."

Local Government Area	2023	2024	
Byron Shire	300	348	16% increase
City of Sydney	277	280	1% increase
Tweed Valley	145	174	20% increase
Coffs Harbour	82	147	79% increase
Northern Beaches	45	88	96% increase
Wollongong	59	83	41% increase
Lismore	40	64	60% increase
Ballina	30	63	110% increase
Port Macquarie-Hastings	43	53	23% increase
Mid Coast	15	49	227% increase
Newcastle	6	49	717% increase
Central Coast	31	48	55% increase
Lake Macquarie	31	40	29% increase
Liverpool	6	40	567% increase
Inner West	7	33	371% increase

**Source: NSW Statewide Street Count (2024)*

Homelessness leads to lower life expectancy

People experiencing homelessness are dying more than 30 years earlier than the general population.

As part of an investigative series produced by Guardian Australia, the average age of death for people experiencing homelessness in Australia is 44.5 years compared with the general population (77).

The shocking statistics featured data from patients supported by the specialist health clinic at the Matthew Talbot Hostel. Research published by Dr Olav Nielssen, who works as a psychiatrist at the clinic, found that of the approximately 4,000 people supported by psychiatric clinics over the course of a decade, the average age of death for people experiencing homelessness was less than 56 years.

Concerningly, the average age of death for people diagnosed with schizophrenia was 52 years.

Julie Smith, Matthew Talbot Clinic Manager, told Guardian Australia, "I remain shocked at the amount of people with serious illness, particularly serious mental illness, who

remain on the streets, that it's so difficult to get housing and healthcare for these people."

The Matthew Talbot Clinic provides specialist treatment every day to men who don't fit into the traditional healthcare system.

The service assists close to 600 men each year through more than 10,000 appointments offering services such as dispensing medication, treatment from nurses, vaccinations and referrals to other services.



Social housing investment a long-earned win

After years of campaigning and advocacy, the largest investment in social housing in NSW history was announced as part of the State Budget with \$5.1 billion to build 8,400 new and redeveloped public homes over the next four years.

The road to achieving this result has been long won by our members, volunteers and employees over many years. The Society launched the 'Build Homes, Build Hope' social housing campaign in 2019, calling on the NSW Government to invest in social housing to address the waiting list and to strengthen our overall housing system. Many actions were taken during the campaign including a petition, attracting over 15,000 signatures, which was



subsequently debated in NSW Parliament. Members wrote and met with MPs consistently to advocate for housing while stories on social housing waiting lists and the benefits of ensuring everyone has a safe place to call home were placed in the media to generate public interest.

Social housing comprises just 3.8% of all housing nationally and 4.5% in NSW. This result shows the power of the Society and our people to bring about progress for the people we assist through long-term action. Thank you to everyone who played a part in this win!

The Budget also included \$527 million for Specialist Homelessness Services, including \$260 million for crisis accommodation and \$250 million to support people at risk of homelessness, along with \$245 million to support domestic violence initiatives which will place the Society in a better position to respond to increasing need.

Shaping our social justice agenda

The Society's biennial Social Justice Forum brought together members from all over the state for an enlightening day of advocacy and discussion.

Held once again at Mary MacKillop Place in North Sydney, the forum focused heavily on housing with the main plenary session discussing the role of increased density in addressing the current crisis.

John Engler (Shelter NSW), Sue Weatherley (Planning Institute Australia) and Graham West (Amelie Housing) presented as part of a discussion facilitated by Solange Frost (Manager, Policy and Advocacy).

Participants also heard from Maeve, a Mini Vinnies member, who spoke in support of housing: "I am not blind

to what is unjust... Many people my age think that they can go on with life and homelessness will just magically evaporate – but unless we take action, it will eventually fall down on us."

A series of workshops were held throughout the day on subjects including First Nations Justice, fair treatment for people who use alcohol and other drugs, and making private rental housing work for renters on low-incomes.

Attendees learned a range of skills from the Government Relations and Policy team about engaging with MPs and councillors to advocate for change, the role of drawing upon the stories of people we assist in our advocacy work, along with engaging with communities and other organisations in pursuit of common causes.

An afternoon plenary session saw members identify issues present in their regions and draw upon their newly developed skills to develop social justice priorities to be actioned in the lead up to local government and Federal elections.

If you would like to receive the latest information on the Society's campaigns for a more equitable NSW, sign up to our monthly Social Justice e-Newsletter by scanning the QR code, visiting socialjustice.vinnies.org.au/join or contacting social.justice@vinnies.org.au.





Social housing offers Mick much more than a home

"It's a really good place to live and I feel very secure here."

Twenty minutes down the road from the CBD of Newcastle sits Cardiff.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW's presence in the community includes a return and earn depot, retail distribution centre and a social housing complex that has changed the lives of many tenants who call it home.

Mick is just one of those lives positively impacted by social housing.

Living in nearby Charlestown prior to the on-set of COVID, Mick's health took a turn for the worse.

Drawing down on his superannuation to keep a roof over his head, he turned to the Society's Matthew Talbot Homelessness Service, where he was offered a three-month stay at the on-site accommodation.

Three weeks later, Mick received the breakthrough he was after when a home at the Society's social housing complex in Cardiff became available for him and his son.

"It was a big 'wow' factor when we walked in. It's a brand new two-bedroom apartment with an open plan kitchen and living area," recalls Mick.

"It blew me away, it was just fantastic!"

This connection between Matthew Talbot Newcastle and the Cardiff social housing demonstrates the difference the Society is able to make according to Mark Weber, who manages the tailored support offered as part of the Society's Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) properties.

"Vinnies, as a whole, is quite a big organisation and, as such, we have access to a lot of different services within the one organisation," explains Mark.

"Matthew Talbot being another arm of Vinnies and then contacting us – we let them know that we've got properties here."

The SAHF model, delivered in partnership with the NSW Government, combines housing with wraparound support to help tenants maintain and sustain tenancies. Support is tailored to the specific needs of tenants as part of a Housing First approach, while the location of the housing is close to public transport and services to connect people to the community.

"I think this illustrates the way that the system can work when it works properly," says Mark.

Life has improved greatly for Mick ever since he moved into his new home.

Where he used to worry about where he would live in a crushing cycle of submitting rental applications only to be rejected, he now feels part of a community where he can enjoy a barbeque or coffee alongside his neighbours.

The Cardiff apartments are even pet-friendly – a rare thing to find in the current rental market – so he's always with the company of his dog and cat.

"In this day and age, where rents are through the roof, it's affordable housing. It's a community, it's everything that you want in a place to live," says Mick.

Living out Vincentian good works in Liverpool

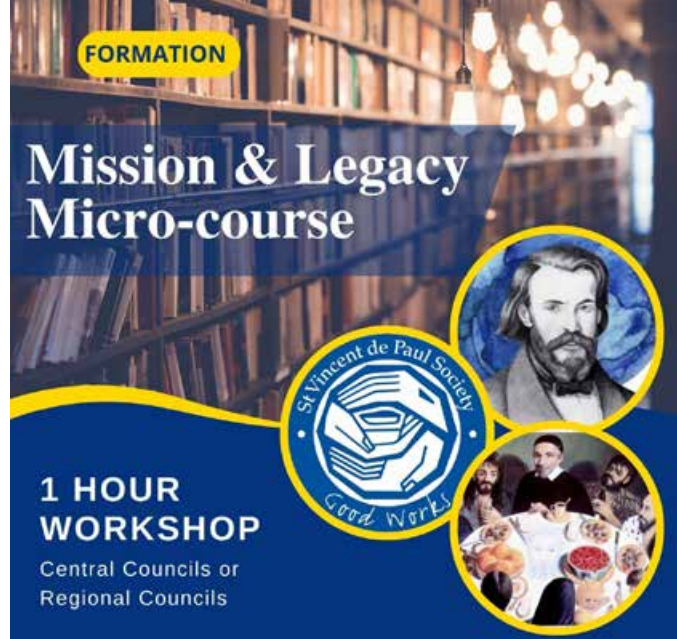
Demand for assistance has been high in the Liverpool region and our members have been meeting the need with enthusiasm.

In response to the increasing need present throughout the region, a new Conference – All Saints, Liverpool – has formed with 13 new members, while the Good Shepherd Conference in Hoxton Park has been renewed with 15 new members servicing the local community. A special task force has also been established in collaboration with members from Penshurst and Kingsgrove/Bankstown to perform rostered home visitations.

More than 3,700 people have been supported by our members across the Liverpool Regional Council, increasing by 64% over the past year. One in two people have sought assistance from our members in the region for the first time and two-thirds have requested assistance with food.

The region has also welcomed a new Vinnies Van which currently operates two days a week. Father Paul Monkerud and the Parish staff from All Saints have supported the work of the new van which has allowed our members and parishioners to provide lunch and company to people facing hardship in the local region.

Chris Davis, Liverpool local and All Saints parishioner, is among the new members of the new Conference and van volunteers. We are thankful to the many members like him who give of themselves to shape a more just and compassionate society.



Introducing "Mission & Legacy", a Micro Course for Mission Formation

The Mission & Formation team have developed a micro-course for our members. This one-hour session details the mission and values of the Society, Vincentian Spirituality, and Catholic Social Teaching.

The National Council's strategic plan highlights increasing Vincentian Spirituality as a core objective, stating "The Society is a Catholic lay organisation that embeds Catholic Social Teaching within all our good works and responses to poverty in the modern world".

Our local response in accordance with the NSW Strategic Plan is to live out our mission, "We are committed to those people who live on the margins of our community and are guided by Catholic social principles of dignity of the human person and solidarity".

This is one way the Society is supporting our members, as articulated in the Rule "It is essential that the Society continually promote the formation and training of its members... in order to deepen their knowledge of the Society and their spirituality, improve the sensitivity, quality and efficiency of their service" (The Rule 3.12)

"The mission and legacy workshop allowed us to dive more deeply into what we say and do in our roles. [It] allowed each of us to ponder the gift we are to each other and those we serve," said Pat Cudmore, Sutherland Regional President.

Our Mission & Legacy Micro Course is designed for Central Councils and Regional Councils as part of our suite of formation programs for all members. Regional and Central Council Presidents can contact the Mission Team for further information at mission@vinnies.org.au.

Empowering Youth: Addressing Homelessness and Housing in Western Sydney

Our Metropolitan Schools & Youth Team took a proactive stance during NSW Youth Week, inviting high school students and young adults from Western Sydney to participate in an enlightening workshop focused on homelessness and housing.

The overarching message from the interactive session, designed to inspire action and empathy among young people, was clear: see the needs, think about community assets, and take meaningful steps to make a difference.

One of the central themes of the workshop was to sensitise attendees to the needs of people experiencing homelessness. More than 9,000 people have been supported by our members in Greater Western Sydney this past year, with one in five experiencing homelessness or living in temporary accommodation.

Through various activities and discussions, the youth were encouraged to empathise with the challenges faced by those without stable housing. Equally important was the emphasis on leveraging community resources and assets to address homelessness and housing insecurity.

The most recent census revealed 9,000 people were homeless across Western Sydney along with over 16,000 applicants on the waiting list for social housing in the region.

Keynote speaker Kiana from AIESEC added another layer of inspiration to the event. Her message resonated strongly with the audience, highlighting that age should



never be a barrier to civic engagement and social impact. By sharing her own experiences and insights, Kiana underscored the importance of youth involvement in addressing societal challenges.

The collaboration with the City of Parramatta Council was instrumental in bringing the workshop to fruition. Grant funding provided by the council through Vinnies Youth enabled the event to reach its full potential. It's partnerships like these that demonstrate the collective effort required to address complex issues such as homelessness and housing insecurity.

Green Team launched by Wagga Wagga youth

Members of our St Sebastian Youth Conference are putting their gardening skills to good use as part of a newly launched Green Team in Wagga Wagga.



As part of our good works to meet the needs of the people we assist, youth members and volunteers undertook training at a local community garden to learn skills such as pruning, weeding and tending to plants.

The Green Team has gone on to put these skills into action, supporting households referred by Micah Hub who are unable to maintain their gardens due to mobility issues or access equipment, such as mowers.

While the primary focus of the Green Team is planted in the garden, the extent of the support provided by members flourishes much further.

"Some of [the people we assist] are really isolated, lonely, and need that social connection as well," said Ana Suarez, Schools and Youth Engagement Officer.

"While we do all the gardening work, we can talk to them and see if they need extra support, such as referring them to our services or to other agencies."



Latest 'Got it at Vinnies' retail campaign a hit, with lucky customers receiving designer prizes

After huge success in previous years, the 'Got it at Vinnies' retail campaign was reinvigorated for a third time with fresh photography, styling designed to catch the eye of a youthful audience, and a punchy tagline to increase awareness for both buying and donating at Vinnies shops.

Renowned Photographer and Director Pierre Toussaint shot bold and high impact creative for the campaign, showcasing Vinnies' curated and diverse catalogue of quality clothing and goods.

"Got it at Vinnies is aimed at the next generation of Vinnies shoppers. They are regular thrifters who are always looking for more sustainable and economical clothing options," said Virginia Boyd, Director Retail and Logistics. "This time around, Got it at Vinnies encouraged the younger demographic of shoppers to join the circular economy, by not only purchasing but also donating their pre-loved items to Vinnies."

Splashed across billboards and buses, JCDecaux's out-of-home network was utilised for the marketing campaign, targeted to locations within a 5km radius of a Vinnies shop. Sydney's Central Station, which is the busiest train station in Australia serving over 250,000 people daily, displayed a large-scale Got it at Vinnies advertisement aimed at commuters using the heavily trafficked platforms. Social media was also abuzz with paid ads promoted across Meta (Facebook and Instagram) and TikTok.

Running through March, an in-store competition tempted fashion-savvy customers to visit Vinnies to gain entries into a prize draw. Two designer label accessories were up for grabs - a Chanel purse and a Louis Vuitton travel bag.

Our retail sector experienced an impressive 7% uplift in sales during the campaign period. The prizes proved to be a major drawcard with over 8300 entries submitted into the giveaway, with 10% saying that they had donated to Vinnies. The lucky winners were Ellie from Willoughby, who took home the Chanel purse, and Lani from Tweed Heads who bagged the Louis Vuitton.

Competition entrants consented to having their email addresses added to our retail marketing database. Subscribers will be delivered Vinnies retail news and offers straight to their inbox and will be the first to hear about the launch of our upcoming e-commerce project later this year.



Gift cards are now available in Vinnies stores

It's now even easier for customers to shop at Vinnies, with gift cards now available in stores.

Anyone can purchase a gift card from our 220+ shops across the state, which can be redeemed for clothing, books, bric-a-brac, or other household items. Denominations of \$20, \$30, \$50, or \$100 are available.

Decorated with Vinnies retail branding, the new gift cards offer customers more flexibility in their purchasing options plus the ability to give their friends and family a Vinnies shopping experience for birthdays or holidays.

Gift cards are also being distributed to the people we assist. Nearly \$3 million of assistance was provided for clothing and household items throughout NSW over the past 12 months. With a Vinnies gift card, individuals can purchase essential items from a Vinnies store while maintaining anonymity and dignity.



GO TO
THE POOR:
YOU WILL
FIND GOD

Practice: Solidarity with Suffering

For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. — Mark 14:7

This verse is often used as an excuse to do nothing about poverty. In fact, Jesus is calling us to live in solidarity with suffering!

Jim Wallis, founder of Sojourners, explains beautifully the context and meaning of this verse within Mark's Gospel:

They are at the dinner table with a leper, and Jesus is making an assumption about his disciples' continuing proximity to the poor. He is saying, in effect, "Look, you will always have the poor with you" because you are my disciples. You know who we spend our time with, who we share meals with, who listens to our message, who we focus our attention on. You've been watching me, and you know what my priorities are. You know who comes first in the kingdom of God. So, you will always be near the poor, you'll always be with them, and you will always have the opportunity to share with them...The critical difference between Jesus's disciples and society is precisely this: our lack of proximity to the poor...Society doesn't know the poor and they don't know us...So we merely speculate on the reasons for their condition, often placing the blame on the poor themselves.

Pope Francis goes on to explain that "Jesus was reminding, those present, that he is the first of the poor, the poorest of the poor, because he represents all of them."

These words alone should not be lost on followers of our spiritual patron St Vincent de Paul for he shared often that "*In serving the poor you are serving Jesus. That is as true a fact as you are standing here*" and "*Go to the poor: you will find God.*" Frederic Ozanam, expressed it this way "*drawing close to those in poverty, we draw closer to God.*"

Our faith in action, which is at the heart of the St Vincent de Paul Society, engages us in a service of love, hope, justice and compassion. Poverty or "the poor" embraces so much for us today.

There are three aspects that I hear Pope Francis calling us in the Society today. One, is to "understand and welcome those we serve"; second, is that we need to go out to those in disadvantage – not wait for them to come to us; and thirdly, is to deeply listen to the signs of the times and new models of poverty.

I think one of Frederic Ozanam most renowned sayings and one that draws us, as Vincentians, into some practical realities in listening and understanding need; "Knowledge of the poor and needy is not gained by pouring over books...it is by visiting the slums where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel and learning from their own lips the causes of their woes." In these words, Frederic, like Francis, is calling to each of us, that to draw close to those in need, going out to them in solidarity, listening deeply, to understand and feel what their journey is, will always draw us closer to the very heart of God.

Living as a Good Samaritan – remembering Joan Nolan

“When he saw him, he was moved with compassion... and took care of him.”

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a well-known example of living out the golden rule of showing love and mercy to others.

For Joan Nolan, these values were integral to an accomplished life and a legacy that will extend into the future through a generous gift to the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW.

Joan was born in 1928 and raised in the NSW Blue Mountains’ town of Wentworth Falls as the descendant of one of the original freehold families to settle in the area from Ireland. She was instilled with a strong sense of showing compassion to others by her parents, Marjorie and Michael Nolan, who offered accommodation and hospitality to visitors at the start of the 20th century. Joan had three siblings, Brian, Frank and Don and shared a loving bond that lasted to the very end.

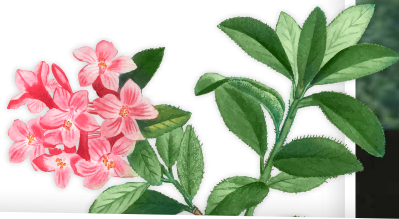
Joan studied education at Sydney University and resided at Sancta Sophia College, before taking up a teaching post in Canowindra, a vocational shift followed when she joined the Good Samaritan religious order. Drawing on the example set by her mother and putting her faith into action, Joan’s dedication to the parable of the Good Samaritan was regarded by those who knew her as an inspiration.

Drawing on her teaching qualifications, which were furthered through Master Degrees in Education as well as Arts, Joan travelled the world to seek innovations in the field of education and played an important role in expanding the programs offered by the Good Samaritan Teachers College in Glebe to lay students.

Joan’s work also saw her reach out to First Nations communities at Tranby Aboriginal College in Glebe, and a teacher exchange program with PNG. She also initiated an outreach program for migrants to develop English skills and co-founded the Primary English Teachers Association as a means of sharing her love of English.

This love of learning, building community through hospitality and spreading educational opportunities were the tenets of every program throughout Joan’s life. Her financial expertise and environmental awareness can be seen in the many structures built to facilitate the educational projects during her leadership.





Joan spent the last 19 years of her professional life as a lay person where she lived in her beloved Blue Mountains while continuing her dedication to educational needs. She was prominently involved in PATH Inc, a community-based information and advocacy service for parents of children with disabilities, a forerunner of the NDIS; this advocacy continued until she retired aged 80.

Living out her days at home in Wentworth Falls, Joan continued to offer hospitality and friendship to her numerous friends before moving to a nursing home as her mobility declined, Joan passed away peacefully 12th March 2022 at the age of 93.

She lived a life summed up as such: Joan Estelle Margaret Nolan, a Good Samaritan for the Modern Age.

Joan was part of a deputation to then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and Education Minister Kim Beasley in 1975 that expanded student services in Teacher Education and Post Graduate studies. She also set up a program for students of all ages and backgrounds, including the elderly, which served as a forerunner to the University of the Third Age.

Joan received an honorary doctorate in education, for her services to the foundation of the Australian Catholic University. She served on the Youth Advisory Committee of the ABC for many years, and provided educational and environmental experiences for under privileged city children in the Blue Mountains. Joan had a passionate interest in Intellectual Disability Education and spent three years as the Director of Mater Dei, Camden.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW will use the bequest as requested by Joan to go towards the Matthew Talbot Homeless Service which provides vital care, accommodation and case management to men at risk and experiencing homelessness. This will continue her legacy of showing compassion and care towards others.

We thank Joan for her generosity and extend our sympathy to her loved ones for their loss.

If you're interested in leaving a bequest to the Society, please contact our Bequest Manager, Cherie McKenna. Phone: (02) 8622 0387 or Email: cherie.mckenna@vinnies.org.au

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