



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

WINTER 2016
ISSUE NO. 79

Vision

VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT

**SHOPS GET
CONNECT-ED**

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TARGET

COMPEER CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

ST AUGUSTINE'S CHAPEL





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We'd love to hear what the Society is doing in your area.

Send us an email, or call with an idea for a story or news piece:

phyllis.sakinofsky@vinnies.org.au or
02 9568 0293.

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear friends

It is with great pleasure that I present the Winter 2016 edition of Vision. Synonymous with this time of year is our Winter Appeal and I know our members and volunteers are in the midst of fundraising for this year's appeal. We have many weeks left before the temperatures begin to climb.

Financial donations are crucial because they allow us to assist each family or individual with exactly what they require. People turn to the Society for the most basic of needs such as food, assistance with paying their rent and energy bills and to provide a temporary roof over their heads.

Over 105,000 Australians do not have a place to call home. While many are living in improvised dwellings like tents or sleeping on the streets, on farms or under bridges, homelessness, as our members and volunteers know only too well, also takes on more invisible forms. Across Australia too many people are living in inadequate housing with insecure tenancies, others are couch surfing or staying in boarding

houses, refuges and crisis centres.

These people too are in dire need of support and many of them seek our assistance through our shops and centres. If we can assist them early, if we are able to find more secure housing and link them to services, we are better able to improve their physical and mental health and enable them to remain in more stable accommodation.

Our visits to people across NSW, in urban centres and remote towns, in homes, hospitals, nursing homes and prisons, make a difference but can't be sustained without the financial support of our generous donors. That is why the Winter Appeal is so important and I thank you all for going the extra yard – knocking on doors, organising community events and reaching out to your fellow parishioners – to ensure we raise the vital funds we need to operate effectively.

Yours faithfully

Denis Walsh
State President,
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

CEO'S MESSAGE



Dear friends

Welcome to the Winter issue of Vision. So much has happened since the beginning of the year.

Our new CEO Jack de Groot joined us on 1 August and I know that he will be a great asset to the Society and I trust that you welcome him into the Vinnies family. I am looking forward to my new role as Deputy CEO. I'd like to thank the members, volunteers and staff for their amazing support and assistance while I led the Society through a time of rapid change.

The recent achievement of which we should all be most proud is our appointment by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to provide essential Local Area Coordination services to tens of thousands of National Disability Insurance Scheme participants and their families from now until June 2018. We are already well underway recruiting over 500 people to join us. They will be helping people living with disability transition into the Scheme. (See p.10)

The year-long roll-out of Connect, our new retail

point of sale system, is well underway, and should be completed by end-October. It is proving to be very popular – read more about it on p.16.

Compeer celebrated its 20th anniversary with a spectacular lunch attended by over 100 friends and volunteers. The program matches volunteers in a one-to-one friendship with people who have become socially isolated due to mental illness. The warmth and laughter shared at the lunch is a clear indication of how effective the program is (See p.26).

In May and June we hosted our two biggest fundraisers – the Vinnies CEO Sleepout and Hotels Have Hearts. Both were enormously successful and this is due to the hard work of our staff and volunteers.

There is plenty more in this issue of Vision to keep you informed about what members, volunteers and staff are doing across the state. Thank you all for your contribution.

Dianne Lucas
Acting Chief Executive Officer
St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

Commissioning Masses



DENIS WALSH
NSW, STATE PRESIDENT,
GAYNOR MASON
WOLLONGONG CENTRAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Denis Walsh was officially commissioned into his new role of NSW State President at a Commissioning Mass at St Francis Xavier Catholic Cathedral in Wollongong on 27 February. It was led by Most Rev. Peter Ingham DD, Bishop of Wollongong.

After 11 years as a member of the Society in Wollongong and a six year term on the Central Council and three years as President, Denis moved to his new role.

Mr Walsh said he was honoured to have been elected to the role of State President and would take much of what he had learned and experienced in Wollongong to assist him in his new role.

His position as Wollongong Central Council President was filled by Gaynor Mason. She too was commissioned into her new role at the Mass.

Gaynor has been a Vincentian for the last 17 years and on Wollongong Central Council since 2003.

Credit photo: Giovanni Portelli, Catholic Weekly

MAURIE RYAN
BATHURST CENTRAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT

A Commissioning ceremony was held for Maurie Ryan in April at St Mary's Church, Orange. Maurie was commissioned as the new Bathurst Central Council President. Fr Garry McKeown celebrated the mass and current members also renewed their commitment to the

Society. The celebration was attended by Denis Walsh (NSW State President), Bev Kerr (NSW State Vice President), Don Jones (Wagga Wagga Central Council President), Jill Messenger (Orange Regional President), Christine O'Mahony (Evans Regional President), Bob Lulham (previous Central Council President), Errol McCann (President Holy Family Conference Orange), Members of the three Orange Conferences, Ellen Sharp (Bathurst Central Council Executive Officer) and Central Council Office Staff. The event was enjoyed by all, including the St Mary's parish parishioners.

YVONNE WYNEN
LISMORE CENTRAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT

A Commissioning Ceremony was held for Yvonne Wynen, President at the Lismore Central Council in April. The commissioning took place at St Carthage's Cathedral in Lismore and was presided over by the Most Reverend Geoffrey Jarrett DD (Bishop of Lismore) and was overseen by Bev Kerr, State Council Vice President for Support Services. Peter Fishlock, President of the Maitland/Newcastle Central Council was also in attendance, along with many local members and volunteers.

"The ceremony was a lovely way to formally welcome Yvonne as President of the Lismore Diocese," said Michael Timbrell, Executive Officer at the Lismore Central Council.



BRING YOUR BILLS DAYS SPREADING ACROSS BROKEN BAY

Gosford Conference hosted its third Bring Your Bills Day in April to help support people experiencing trouble with their finances.

It was a free event coordinated by the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON), in partnership with other organisations.

Bruce Dent, Gosford Conference President, says this event is about enabling financially vulnerable people to find savings and reduce the risks they face.

"We wanted to encourage people to come along and chat to EWON. There are many concessions available that can reduce your electricity bill which we just don't know exist and which could save you a proportion of your bill," said Bruce.

70 year celebration for Pat Leonard, Broken Hill

Pat Leonard celebrated 70 years of Conference membership in February.

He joined the Society as a member of the Marist Brothers Junior conference in Broken Hill on 6 February 1946 and has remained an active member ever since.

He has held every management position locally, and has represented the Society interstate and has chaired a Society State meeting. Pat has been on the organising committee for the Meal Centre since its inception in 1973. Last year Pat was presented with a Life Membership award in Broken Hill.

A large gathering of members and friends celebrated this milestone with Pat in February. Leo Woodman, Broken Hill Regional President, believes 70 years' service could be a first for the State and probably Australia.



The rising cost of living and the deregulation of the energy market means people have to be more financially savvy when it comes to shopping around for their energy providers.

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Energy Price Report (July 2015) highlights how customers switching from the worst electricity offer to the best market can save between \$550-\$1050 per annum depending on their local network area.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW, Janine Young, encourages people to take advantage of the help available to them.

"There is a lot to get your head around when it comes to energy and water consumer issues, but you don't have to make sense of it on your own. If you have a question you need answered or there's an issue you'd like explained, you can talk to EWON staff at the Bring Your Bills Days," Ms Young said.

Bruce invited other services to participate, including NSW Fair Trading, Legal Aid, Ability Links, Housing NSW and Centrelink.

"The State Debt Recovery Office was also represented. Again, most people don't know that they can pay off their fines through community service. For many, that saving could be the difference between being able to pay rent or being forced into homelessness," said Bruce.

Three more were being planned for July/August in Chatswood, Woy Woy and Niagara Park.

Bruce is happy to speak to other Conferences about these events because he is keen to see more of them across NSW.

CANOWINDRA RECEIVES AUSTRALIA DAY COMMUNITY GROUP AWARD

The Society in Canowindra received the 'Community Group of The Year Award' on Australia Day.

Deborah Rutter, President St Edwards Conference, said the award recognised the ongoing cooperation of Vincentians and others in the community.

"It is the faith that draws us together, the friendship, camaraderie and the unspoken pledge of support given for one another and those whom we assist, that join us through the message of Christ, the spirit of hope and the hand of giving."

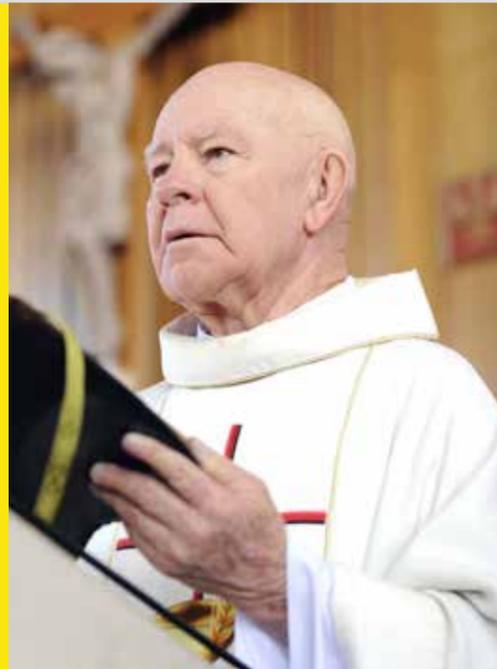
Thank you Father Mac

After almost 40 years Father Patrick McAuliffe has retired as spiritual adviser to the Liverpool Regional Council. In his words, "you need to get a younger bloke". Throughout those 40 years Father has attended almost every monthly regional council meeting, festivals and special Vinnies occasions.

Father Mac was a man of the people and understood the situations Vincentians faced when doing their work. He was able to tie together God's Will and Vincentian work but if he thought members were getting too over-involved in their Vincentian work he would remind them of their priorities: family, work and then Vinnies.

Liverpool Regional Council has been truly blessed to have had the guidance and support of Father Mac from its humble beginnings in the Bigge Street Centre where mass was celebrated in the lunch and sorting room between bales of clothes, to the Mt Prichard Centre, once referred to as the Vinnies Taj Mahal.

His guidance and support over 40 years will be missed.



Lismore caseworker recognised at Community Sector Awards

A very special congratulations to Alysia Hopkins, case worker at Fred's Place, who was recently awarded runner-up in the Social Justice Champion category at the 2015 Summerland Credit Union Community Sector Award.



The Social Justice Champion award recognises frontline staff who provide the day-to-day support for service users who have demonstrated exceptional commitment, dedication and passion within the community sector.

Jason McDonald, Service Manager at Fred's Place, said Alysia's positive and accepting attitude contributed greatly to the welcoming, homely environment created at Fred's Place.

"Through her outstanding work and ability to advocate strongly for the marginalised, around 150 people – including many children – have been housed or relocated back to family or friends throughout Australia over the past year.

"Every day, Alysia goes above and beyond to create positive, life-changing outcomes for the community's most vulnerable people," Jason added.

Portland Conference commemorates 90 years

St Vincent's Conference Portland commemorated its 90 year anniversary in May, with a mass and hugely enjoyable luncheon. The mass was celebrated by Fr Owen Gibbons with Maurie Ryan (Bathurst Central Council President), Christine O'Mahony (Evans Regional President) plus many current and past Vincentian members from the region as well as Portland parishioners.

Around 50 people attended the luncheon afterwards at the Portland RSL Sport and Recreation Club. Years of service badges were presented to all current Conference members. A big thank you must go to John Kearns (President of St Vincent's Conference) and his helpers for their tireless efforts in organising the festivities.



L to R: Christine O'Mahony (Evans Regional President), John Kearns (President St Vincent's Conference), Maurie Ryan (President Bathurst Central Council) and Fr Owen Gibbons.

SHARING A HAND: Collaboration between members and volunteers

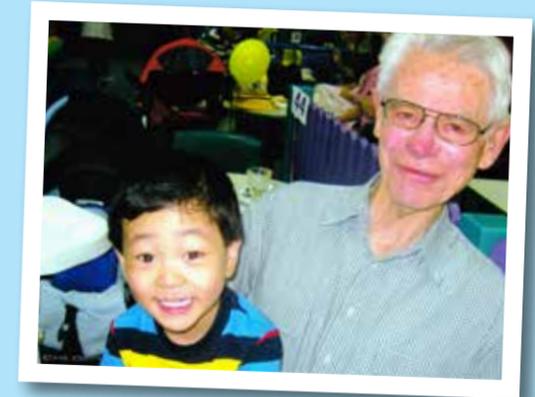
National Volunteer Week provided a time for reflection on the wonderful camaraderie, friendship and common sense of purpose shared between our Conference members and centre volunteers. In Wilcannia/Forbes, the majority of our Conferences operate out of the Vinnies Centres, where members and volunteers work closely together to achieve the Society's mission.

They share their experiences, resources, challenges, successes and celebrations, particularly over tea or lunch. They help one another out: it is not uncommon for a centre volunteer to sit in on an interview with a member when a second person is needed or, in quiet times, members may stroll out to the centre and help with sorting.

Members and volunteers held joint events to celebrate National Volunteer Week in May and also came together for a Christmas celebration. Each region holds quarterly meetings when centres and Conferences meet, again sharing a meal. Together they listen to the Centre and Conference President's report and discussions on matters relevant to the Conferences and Centres. This way they are all informed and can understand and appreciate each other's priorities and challenges.

Recruitment within our Central Council is usually undertaken as a joint venture between our centres and Conferences. We advertise generally for volunteers and when we meet we explain the work of the centre and the conference to ascertain where their interests lie and where they may fit in best. Training is often undertaken as a combined program for our members and volunteers. Central Council President, Jim Rogers, rolled out a "Back to Basics" program across the Central Council for all members and volunteers. In these sessions, they were able to share their thoughts and ideas on why we are here, our strengths and weaknesses and future directions.

**Kelly Morgan, Executive Officer
Wilcannia/Forbes Central Council**



Vale Dr Trevor Brown

With the passing of Dr Trevor Brown in April, the St Vincent de Paul Society Lane Cove Parish lost a member who had served the Society and those in need for over fifty years.

Born and educated in Sydney he had worked as doctor at the Mater Hospital and overseas as a new graduate. Returning to Australia he and his wife Joan moved to the towns of Young and Grenfell. While in Grenfell he joined the Society and was a member there for 16 years. When the family moved back to Sydney in 1969 Trevor joined the Lane Cove Conference and was active until 2005 when he retired from the Society. During his time he served for a term as President.

To show their respect, a guard of honour was formed, comprising past and present members of the Lane Cove Conference. Trevor's coffin passed through the guard of honour as it left St Michael's Church following a Requiem Mass.

BROKEN HILL REACHES OUT TO THE PHILIPPINES

Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Conference, Broken Hill is twinned with Holy Infant Jesus Conference in the Philippines. Funds are used to run an outreach program every Christmas for the poor, sick or isolated.

Last Christmas Eve they visited a home for grandmothers at Tanuan Batangas. They played games, chatted and shared a meal, showing the women they were not alone, that they were still very important and blessed. In a letter they thanked Broken Hill for its support:

"It is a very happy and memorable outreach program with our grandmothers. When we see their smiles, it is a very good feeling and an accomplishment for all of us."



GIVE HAPPY LIVE HAPPY



That was the theme for this year's National Volunteer Week (NVW), celebrated at activities across NSW between May 9 –15. The Policy and Member and Volunteer Services (MAVS) team were out and about in Sydney, Parramatta, Wollongong Central Councils offering the Society's appreciation for the fantastic contribution that members and volunteers make. At these gatherings – teas, barbecues and lunches – employees, members and volunteers shared stories of the many ways we support those who are struggling.

Peter Bonwick and Claire Mercer from MAVS joined with Gay Mason, Wollongong Central Council President, staff, and members and volunteers in Picton for a barbecue. Gay Mason said they planned to offer this every year at different venues in Wollongong. "Thanks to all for making this occasion very special," she said.

Caroline Chisholm Centre for Social Justice in Parramatta Central Council also brought together employees, members and volunteers for a special morning tea. Danielle Deas said: "This was an excellent opportunity for the Caroline Chisholm Centre team to get to know some of the Conference members who come in to support the Mt Druitt community. The tea also opened discussions about greater collaboration with members in the future."

Sydney Archdiocesan Central Council held celebrations in their Centres to thank their many volunteers.

In Broken Hill members and volunteers enjoyed a lunch at the Mulga Hotel.

Parkes Centre volunteers and Conference members celebrated both NVW and their work on the complete refurbishment of the Parkes Centre. Judith Kinsela was awarded with her 30 years' service badge by Christine Cox, Parkes Centre President.

Newspapers around NSW also covered NVW. The *Forbes Advocate* recognised the role of volunteers and Frances Scurfield wrote a letter to the editor of the *Parkes Champion Post* to thank the volunteers for their tireless efforts. In Armidale Alison Brown thanked volunteers. "It makes you feel a part of a family," she said.

Glenn Bailey told the *Southern Highland News*, Bowral, that his volunteers enjoyed a positive social environment.



HAVING FUN WHILE RAISING FUNDS

Many weekends you might spot the Vinnies volunteer team sweating over a hot barbecue outside Bunnings in Chatswood, Artarmon or Belrose.

They are Barry's Pet Finches, because 10 years ago Barry had the vision of selling sausages to raise funds. Last year they raised \$22,000 toward Assist a Student, St Lucy's School for Special Needs Children, Broken Bay's student camps and supporting Aboriginal students at ACU.

Many of Barry's Pet Finches have migrated to Broken Bay from Asia, Europe and USA.

Thanks to Bakers Delight Forestville and Forestville Bakeries for bread and Coles for discounted sausages.

Volunteering – being part of the community

Deborah Hudgell has volunteered at Louise House since 2013.



"My favourite part is helping people in need and feeling like part of the community," Deborah said.

"Seeing a client leave smiling and feeling cared about and helped is always good.

"Everyone's story is unique. We should never judge a book by its cover. Everyone is fighting their own personal battle." Deborah has a personal connection with Vinnies: "Vinnies helped us with furniture after my father left when I was 10. "I keep coming back because of the people I meet and my fellow volunteers."

She says to anyone considering volunteering: "Give it a go. You have nothing to lose and lots to gain."

40 years on, Mary's still got a spring in her step

Mary Coleman hasn't looked back since she began volunteering with Vinnies 40 years ago.

As Centre President at the Ballina Centre, Mary is one of 60 volunteers who generously contribute their time, skills and passion to help keep the shop running like clockwork, raising much-needed funds.

"I like walking so I decided that I would walk to and from Vinnies. That was 40 years ago and I'm still walking to the shop today.

"It's so special to know that as part of the Vinnies team, we are making a real difference to the lives of people in need."



L-R: Maureen Jones, Mary Coleman, Carmel McInerney, Pauline Shay.

A HUMBLING EXPERIENCE

Angela, a corporate volunteer, spent a day at Ozanam Industries West Ryde Work Centre.

"Thank you for organising one of the most awe-inspiring days I've ever enjoyed in my working life. Working alongside such wonderful people provided many insights into what most 'normal' people like myself take for granted. To me it is a little shameful and ignorant that when you pick up something in the mail that is easily discarded as junk you don't give a thought to the fact that someone has painstakingly but lovingly put their whole world into folding, sticking and pasting it into a fine work of art so others may benefit or enjoy. I shall never look at another mailout or showbag in the same way again!

"My experience was a humbling one and the people I met so friendly, kind, funny and so helpful."



Providing essential services to tens of thousands of NDIS participants

In January the Society was appointed by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to play a major role in the once-in-a-generation social change that is the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

We have been commissioned to provide essential Local Area Coordination (LAC) services to tens of thousands of NDIS participants and their families from now until June 2018.

The NDIS launched in July 2016, following years of discussion about the need for a major reform of disability services in Australia. It is a new way of providing individualised support for eligible people with permanent and significant disability, their families and carers.

Local Area Coordination involves building community awareness and engagement, helping people transition into the NDIS, and then providing them with support to implement their personal plans. These plans give more choice and control over how, when and where support services are delivered.

It was the Society's many decades of experience and extensive community outreach and engagement networks throughout the state, our success with government funded programs (including recent programs like Going Home Staying Home and Ability Links) and our housing company (Amelie Housing) that brought us to the attention of the NDIA.

Over the next two years the Society's LAC team will grow to more than 500 people across NSW and help

more than 65,000 people living with disability transition into the NDIS.

The Society has created a separate division for the LAC, with its own executives, governance and accountability structures, all fully funded by the NDIA. The project is led by Executive Officer Katrina Armstrong who has nearly 30 years' experience in the disability sector.

The Society's LAC program has responsibility for the Hunter New England, Central Coast and South Western Sydney areas of NSW. In 2017 it takes on Sydney and South Eastern Sydney as well as the existing NDIS trial sites of Newcastle, Maitland and Lake Macquarie.

The LAC project in no way affects the Society's vital advocacy role, which is at the very heart of our mission and our work. That freedom to advocate remains strong and essential. We see a great opportunity to help shape the NDIS for the future and will be providing regular feedback from our experience working with people with disability.

Undoubtedly this is a huge undertaking but it fits perfectly with our mission to offer a hand up to people in need. Frankly, the question is not "why did we take this on?" but instead "how could we not?"

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.vinnies.org.au/page/Find_Help/NSW/Disability_Employment/Local_Area_Coordination_for_the_NDIS_Rollout/



CELEBRATING JOYFUL SERVICE AT THE BROKEN BAY FESTIVAL

A full day festival was held in Pennant Hills in March where members, volunteers and staff shared their insights and experiences during a series of workshops.

One of the highlights was the session 'Good News Stories from the Regions' where initiatives were showcased that were successful in enriching Vinnies' services and engaging new people.

Robert Fitzgerald AM, keynote speaker, discussed 'Good Governance and Good Works – How can good governance and structures enable the best support and hand up to people we assist?'

There were eight workshops:

- Leading Joyfully: A workshop for Presidents
- Valuing the Role of Treasurer
- Spirituality: Growing in faithful service
- Growing our Membership
- Appreciating our Retail Centres
- Social Justice in Action
- Year of Mercy and Resources for Faith Formation
- Raise our Voice with our Young People

The Bishop of Broken Bay, Peter Comensoli, offered his encouragement to the members and their work in parishes and local communities.

The Festival Day wrapped up with vibrant discussions in Regional Council groups about the ideas, learning and initiatives they'd like to share with other members. Just prior to the Festival Day the Regional Presidents had participated in a round table discussion where they discussed ideas for recruitment and renewal. The Regional Presidents and some members who were inspired by the Festival Day are now considering opportunities to put some of these great renewal ideas into action.



VINNIES WELCOMES NEW CEO



Jack de Groot joins as our new Chief Executive Officer on 1 August 2016.

Denis Walsh, President, is looking forward to introducing Jack to members across the state in the near future.

"With his extensive experience in mission growth and development, we know that Jack will be of great value to the Society," said Denis.

Jack is an experienced senior executive in the not-for-profit sector and was a senior executive with one of Australia's largest not-for-profit providers of health and aged care services. Prior to this Jack was the Australian-based CEO for Caritas.

Denis thanked Dianne Lucas, who has been Acting CEO since October last year.

"Dianne has done an amazing job and has been promoted to a newly created senior executive role in the Society," he said.

New Member and Volunteer resources platform

Mavs.vinnies.org.au is a new resource for members and volunteers.



When you type mavs.vinnies.org.au into your browser you will find a page with headings containing news, resources, and upcoming events. It also contains a printable e-newsletter which is also emailed to members and volunteers. To subscribe contact volunteer@vinnies.org.au.

Check in regularly to see what's new, to leave comments and share ideas. Send us your news or events you would like to share. This is not a public site, so if you search for it, it will not come up. We welcome your ideas about what you'd like to see and how we can improve the platform.

Contact: Kate Scholl (02) 9568 0209 or volunteer@vinnies.org.au

Target for Affordable Housing still not on the table



The Society has been very active this year in social justice, particularly around housing affordability, especially in the lead-up to the federal election.

A federal \$10 billion social and affordable housing fund was the key plank in the Society's recent *The Ache for Home* plan to reduce chronic homelessness and housing affordability. The plan was launched in Canberra at Parliament House by Dr John Falzon, CEO, National Council, in March. Other measures in the plan are:

- Increasing Commonwealth rent assistance
- Adopting changes to negative gearing and capital gains tax rules, which have benefited investors to the detriment of those who simply need a home to live in
- Making sure housing is considered a human right that the Government must guarantee to all Australian residents.

Also at a national level, the Society joined with other non-profits in the lead-up to the election urging all political parties to commit to halving homelessness by 2025 and to develop a national plan to meet this target.

In NSW, on 4 June, around 200 members, volunteers and staff from as far afield as Lismore and Wagga Wagga braved the Sydney storms to create a state-wide roadmap for advocacy at our Social Justice Workshop.

Lots of thinking, sharing and planning took place during stimulating workshops and joint sessions around our social justice priority areas:

- 1. Affordable Housing and Homelessness**
- 2. Energy Affordability and Cost of Living Pressures**
- 3. Refugees and Asylum Seekers.**

All left with a clearer plan about taking action after defining our issues and our roles.

Soon after the workshop was the Affordable Housing Forum at Parliament House, organised by the Sydney Archdiocese Central Council.

It provided a platform for the major parties to lay out their positions and join in the conversation about finding solutions to the widespread problem of the affordable housing shortfall.

All political parties were invited to send a representative. Speakers were:

- Associate Professor Kurt Iveson, Urban Geography, University of Sydney
- Reverend Bill Crews, Exodus Foundation
- Hon. Michael Daley, Member for Maroubra, Shadow Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Deputy Leader NSW Opposition
- Jamie Parker, Member for Balmain, The Greens
- Paul Green, MLC, Christian Democratic Party
- Cr Linda Scott, City of Sydney
- Claire Johnstone, Sydney Youth representative, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW
- Peter McNamara, Vice President for Social Justice, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW
- Denis Walsh, President, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW
- MC: Paul Murray, Sky News.

The lack of affordable housing has reached crisis proportions and is making it impossible for working people on low incomes – childcare workers, nurses, teachers – to find homes close to where they work. Workers have longer and more expensive commutes, travelling from as far as Lithgow to their jobs in Sydney.

The overwhelming view of researchers and organisations working in the housing sector is that a target is required. The Society would like to see the construction of at least 25,000 new social housing dwellings in 10 years and also the requirement that all new residential developments include at least 15 per cent of affordable housing.

Our frontline staff, members and volunteers are witnessing firsthand the profound impact that the lack of adequate affordable housing across NSW is having on people's lives. Peter McNamara, Vice President for Social Justice, said the panellists and questions from the floor were thought-provoking. He stressed the need for immediate action.

"This should start at a grassroots level, which organisations like the Society can lead. By holding regular forums and hearing the groundswell of community concerns, a change may happen.

"More homes, built sustainably to ensure lower energy costs, is one way to reduce the scourge of poverty and homelessness in Australia, one of the world's wealthiest nations."

TO FIND OUT MORE AND TO WATCH THE FORUM
www.vinnies.org.au/page/Our_Impact/Housing_for_all/Housing_crisis_in_NSW/





Wilcannia/Forbes Social Justice Forum

'Consolidate and activate' was the theme of a social justice meeting held over a weekend in March in Cobar. Michael Lynch, Central Council Social Justice representative, hosted the five regions of the Central Council of Wilcannia/Forbes. From State Support Office were Marc Rerceretnam and Lukas Rajnoch. The meeting was of great benefit to all present and gave the representatives greater insight into their role. Michael said that in addition to developing an understanding of social justice, based on the spirituality of St Vincent de Paul and the philosophy of Frederic Ozanam and his companions, they looked at the role of the

Regional Social Justice Representative.

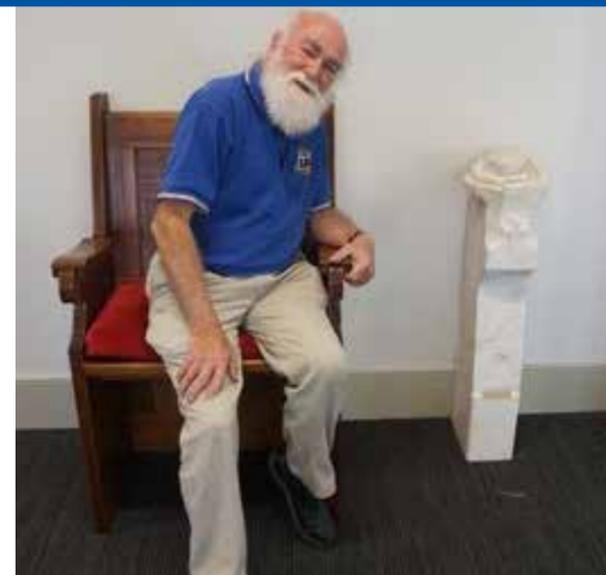
"The key to this role is that we are not alone. We agreed that a complex role like this one is made easier by involving all Vincentians and the other welfare agencies in the area," Michael said.

Together they worked through the main issues of concern in the area which were varied and plenty.

"In the end we reduced our list to three: housing, distance and Newstart applications/benefits. We then discussed how we could address these three issues.

"We realised the importance of having accurate local statistics. Out west, the perennial problem is one of distance, particularly when your local representative does not live in your area. We explored how the role of the social justice representative could address the challenges through two pillars of social justice – 'hands up' and 'raise your voices'. We agreed that while sometimes the problem can be resolved within the home environment, other times, representation may have to be made elsewhere."

Michael Lynch was thanked for his dedication and commitment in organising and running this event because he had come out of hospital just the day before.



ST AUGUSTINE'S CHAPEL AT FREEMAN HOUSE IN ARMIDALE

Freeman House has come a long way since 1979 and has a bright future under the direction of Support Services and ongoing spiritual guidance of St Augustine's Conference.

St. Augustine's Conference was formed and aggregated in 1979 as a Special Works Conference attached to the Armidale Regional Council to alleviate the effects of alcoholism. A rundown guesthouse was purchased where people who would otherwise have spent the night in a police cell could seek refuge. The service evolved from overnight rehabilitation to longer-term respite, the introduction of the Alcoholics Anonymous twelve-step program and the eventual resumption of life within the community.

By 1985 through the hard work of local members and volunteers, Freeman House, a 26-bed residential rehabilitation centre was constructed, funded by donations and grants, and a live-in manager was employed. Since then there has seldom been a vacancy.

In 2008 Freeman House was transferred to State Council as a Special Work and operated under the umbrella of Matthew Talbot Homelessness Services, now Support Services. In 2010 a decision was made by State Council to demolish and rebuild Freeman House, using Society and Government funding. Only the heritage part of the complex remained and as part of the redevelopment, St Augustine's Chapel was incorporated, in recognition of the great work of the Conference.

The Chapel is a place of quiet meditation open to the people we assist, staff and Conference members. Mass is celebrated on special occasions such as the feast days and birthdays of St. Vincent de Paul, Rosalie Rendu and Frederic Ozanam.

Local Armidale sculptors Carl Merton and Joan Relke were commissioned by the Conference to sculpt The Stations of the Cross.

The artists say: "The work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and the commitment to the ideals of Frederic Ozanam, is referenced in the first, seventh and tenth Station. The use of wood and clay symbolises the value of simple materials and shared responsibility of conserving natural resources. Most importantly, these Stations of the Cross may offer, during quiet moments in the chapel, a positive, life changing insight into the human condition."

The Holy Water Font is carved from a block of marble by Carl Merton. He gifted it to the Society in memory of his daughter Miriam who died from substance abuse in 2013, recognising the work of w members in rehabilitating those suffering from addiction. The bowl is supported by the three hands of the Society logo: the hand that gives, the hand that receives and the hand that blesses.

Today Freeman House is a professional health facility able to provide high levels of care and medical assistance to people dealing with addictions but it has maintained its strong connections with the Conference that set it up close to four decades ago.

A more responsive, flexible and welcoming Society

State Support Office's Policy and Member and Volunteer Services Department has recently gone through some exciting changes.

Formerly Member and Volunteer Engagement (MAVE), the new format should enhance the strong working partnership with Central Councils.

There are three new teams:

- **Policy and New Initiatives Team** creating frameworks and monitoring/measuring processes to support and develop members and volunteers
- **Engagement and Support Team** actively engaging and communicating with leaders, members, volunteers and staff to provide responsive support and advice
- **Training and Development Team** delivering learning opportunities for members and volunteers to build capacity and advance the Society's work.

During the rollout of the new Department, team members will be making contact across the state to map out meaningful partnerships – what our priorities are and how we can work best together.

Chris Wilborn, Department Head, is happy to answer your queries: 0447 712 299 or christopher.wilborn@vinnies.org.au.

Our new flagship initiatives are:

VALUING YOUTH: Developing new pathways or models for participating in the Society's work that bring together members and volunteers of all ages (Contact: Sarah Lentern 8622 0306, sarah.lentern@vinnies.org.au).

RENEWAL OUTREACH: Supporting innovative recruitment and renewal initiatives and exploring new outreach Conference activities that are responsive to community needs (Contact: Lukas Rajnoch 9568 0279, lukas.rajnoch@vinnies.org.au).

UNLOCKING LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL: Offering leadership conversations to share and harness our Regional Council Presidents' collective knowledge for current and future generations of Society leaders (Contact: Janice Jones 9568 0257, janice.jones@vinnies.org.au).

CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT: Supporting Central Councils as they proactively prepare and respond to sensitive situations (Contact: Chris Wilborn 9568 0201, christopher.wilborn@vinnies.org.au).

VOLUNTEER MAPPING: Deepening the relationship with the Society's 15,000+ volunteer-base and offering a range of pathways of services (Contact: Margarita Rivera, 9568 0250, margarita.rivera@vinnies.org.au).

Vinnies Shops are getting Connect-ed!



"We have jumped into the future" Vinnies volunteer, Orange

The rollout of Connect, the new point of sale system for our NSW Vinnies shops, is well underway, and proving to be a great success.

Beginning in October 2015 with North Parramatta, Connect has now been implemented in 103 Vinnies shops across five Central Councils – Parramatta, Broken Bay, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst and Lismore. This brings the total number of "Connect-ed" shops to 103. The Connect team is now planning for the rollout in Vinnies shops in the Armidale Central Council. The implementation is due to be completed by the end of October.

Prior to the rollout in each Central Council a team of four Connect Trainers facilitate group training sessions for a period of two weeks. During the implementation the trainers are on hand in the shops helping volunteers use

Connect on the first day.

So far over 1,500 volunteers and staff have been trained, and the feedback from those using Connect couldn't be more positive. Connect is easy to navigate with brightly coloured department icons and a brand new touch screen that makes ringing up a sale very simple.

For those who are a little nervous about using the new system for the first time, the Connect Helpdesk is helpful and friendly. Feedback from the shops is overwhelmingly positive, with one volunteer from Marayong going so far as to say that "the 1300 Helpdesk is a Godsend".

In our Molong shop the comments about Connect were extremely positive. "The system is simple", said one volunteer. In Windsor, one volunteer commented: "I was initially scared of it but now finding it quite good".

Virginia, an area manager from Parramatta Central Council says: "We have found the shops are happy with Connect. It was introduced when I was on leave and some of the volunteers enjoy teaching me how it works!"

Look out for Connect in a Vinnies Shop near you.



Minister visits Baulkham Hills shop to reduce dumping

Mark Speakman, NSW Environment Minister, visited the Baulkham Hills shop in May to announce a new Environment Protection Authority (EPA) scheme to deter dumping.

The new Reducing Dumping on Charitable Recyclers project offers charities grants of up to \$7000 each to install surveillance equipment, lighting, fencing and gates to encourage donors not to leave their goods outside shops, exposed to the weather and theft.

It costs all op shops millions of dollars and thousands of volunteer hours a year to dispose of unusable goods that have been dumped.

Nationally charities receive an estimated two billion items or 300,000 tonnes of goods each year. Forty per cent has to be disposed of because it is unusable. This equates to 120,000 tonnes of waste and costs up to \$7 million a year. Almost 50 per cent of funding for our works in local communities is generated by the sale of donations

through our shops but the cost of sorting and disposing unusable goods makes a big dent in the profits.

Susan Goldie, Executive Officer Parramatta Central Council, was at the announcement with Min. Speakman. "We are very grateful to the generous public who donate good quality items. However, our hardworking volunteers are faced with sorting through, and disposing of, wet and damaged goods that have been left outside bins or shop fronts overnight, over weekends and during holidays," Susan said.



Dungog centre – new local icon

Dungog volunteers and customers had to wait almost two years for their new Vinnies Centre so when it finally opened on Monday 9 May a large crowd of customers attended.

A huge amount of work and tireless effort by the dedicated Dungog team, as well as volunteers from other centres, ensured the centre was ready on time. Dungog's longest serving volunteer Val Preece cut the blue ribbon and customers and volunteers all indulged in the special sponge cake baked by a local baker.



A special mass, the singing of Auld Lang Syne and a cake with 37 candles were all part of a special evening to farewell the Brookvale Centre in April.

Over 80 people – from Northern Beaches Region's (NBR) 11 Conferences, ex-members, staff, executives and volunteers attended a Special Festival Mass in the upstairs Chapel celebrated by Fr David Taylor.

Janet Chivers, Dee Why Conference, was commissioned into the Society and Steve Hills created a display in the foyer, with memorabilia spanning the 37 years. He spoke about Brookvale's history and everyone had the opportunity to reminisce.

Peter Kelly, NBR President said: "It was a fitting farewell to a building that served us well."

SOUTH NOWRA STORE OPENED IN MAY

A new shop and warehouse opened at in South Nowra. The official opening including a blessing by Fr Patrick Faherty and a morning tea for local volunteers, members, customers and guests. It is the seventh shop in the Shoalhaven.

Fay Brandon, Nowra Vinnies volunteer for 30 years, offered her top tips for op shopping. "If you see something, grab it, don't come back later thinking it will be there. And be prepared to look around. Treasures turn up," she said.



New Vinnies store rises out of the ashes

Four years after the Vinnies shop burnt down in April 2012, the new shop and offices opened on an adjacent site, marking the completion of a long-standing commitment.

It was opened by Denis Walsh, State President, and blessed by Bishop of Wagga Wagga, Most Reverend Bishop Gerard Hanna.

"When we acquired the land next to our old site it felt like Vinnies was coming home," said Don Jones, Wagga Wagga Central Council President.

Nearly all carpentry, electrical work, paintwork and fit-out was carried out by local firms and tradespeople.

"We wanted to give something back to the community by ensuring local tradies were involved. Thanks to everyone involved with the design, development and construction of this new addition to our city."





Sleepout tops \$2 million to support our services

The Vinnies CEO Sleepout had another successful year with 1400 CEOs raising over \$5.9 million nationally, for Vinnies homeless services. In NSW, three Sleepouts were held on Thursday 23 June, with 390 CEOs raising over \$2.1 million in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.

Nicholas Gray, CEO of *The Australian* was the top fundraiser in Sydney, raising close to \$130,000. He was followed by Michael Boyle, CEO of Abergeldie Infrastructure, who raised over \$68,000, and Alison Watkins, CEO of Coca Cola Amatil, who raised close to \$42,000. Newcastle's top fundraiser was Adam Boyle, CEO of Pegasus, who raised over \$7,000, and Wollongong's Daniel Munk, CEO of the Aster Group, was their top fundraiser, raising over \$25,000.

The focus of this year's Sleepout was highlighting importance of early intervention by asking CEOs to "rethink, relate and respond to homelessness differently". By reaching out to vulnerable people early, when their risk is lower, we have the strongest chance of making a

difference to our shocking homelessness statistics.

CEOs were given a glimpse of the harsh realities that have driven some of our clients into homelessness by 'Walking a Mile in Their Shoes'. On this journey, CEOs assumed the life of one of three possible identities of a disadvantaged Australian and had to resolve a critical problem or find housing. This was an eye-opening experience, as they very quickly found that accessing basic health or housing services is a difficult task for the people we assist, sometimes revisiting the same service multiple times. This task was designed not only to educate the CEOs on the plight of the people we assist, but also to allow them to reflect on how they could support vulnerable people – including their own staff – beyond the Sleepout. Its success was in no small part due to the Support Services staff who were there to guide them on this confronting journey.

The CEOs slept out, and battled the cold, when the temperature dropped to 13°C. They were provided with only one coupon for a hot meal, a hot drink and a piece of cardboard. However, they were reminded by Acting CEO



Dianne Lucas how lucky they were to avoid the pending cold snap while "those who are forced to sleep rough will have felt the full impact of the weekend's low temperatures". This year's Sleepout also saw a record number of female CEOs taking part – more than double last year's, to up to a third of participants. Dianne Lucas contrasted this with the high number of women and girls seeking specialist homeless services: almost 60 per cent.

"Sadly, women and children are some of the most vulnerable people we see," she said. "The number one reason why women and children seek support from Vinnies and other specialist homeless services is domestic and family violence. Last year, 25 per cent of those who received support were children and women fleeing domestic and family violence."

Australia still lacks a coherent national strategy for more affordable housing, so CEOs, as opinion leaders, were encouraged to support the Vote Home online initiative that seeks reform. They were also encouraged to lobby state and local governments for a 15 per cent target for affordable housing in all new developments. As Dianne said in her address, CEOs are now "better equipped to take action in whatever industry or sector they come from to reduce homelessness and increase the stock of affordable housing".

A big thank you goes to all the national partners, sponsors, staff and volunteers who made the night possible.

FOR MORE INFORMATION 
www.ceosleepout.org.au



TRAVELLERS' CHANGE HELPS MAKE CHANGE THIS WINTER

Lagardère Travel Retail is again raising much-needed funds for the Society in collections in the months of June, July and August. Through the use of collection boxes throughout their Newslink newsagent outlets and Relay Book stores in domestic and international airports around Australia they raised funds towards their CEO Mathieu Mercier's Vinnies CEO Sleepout fundraising efforts as well as the 2016 Vinnies Winter Appeal – overall he raised more than \$3000. We thank Lagardère Travel for their ongoing commitment to helping people experiencing disadvantage and homelessness through their partnership.



AGL supports the Winter Appeal by hosting a bbq at Matthew Talbot Hostel

National energy partner AGL is providing support for the Vinnies Winter Appeal. In addition to providing financial support to people across Australia experiencing hardship in the form of energy vouchers, AGL is profiling our Winter Appeal on their energy bills to their customer base in NSW, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. In May the AGL executive team, including new CEO Andy Vesey, hosted a barbecue on the rooftop of the Matthew Talbot Hostel (MTH). Together they served over 200 people who attend MTH daily for lunch. After touring MTH and adjacent Ozanam Learning Centre they gained a greater appreciation for the frontline work of the Society helping those doing it tough.



Sydney Airport's lost property auction finds \$136,000 for KEEP

This year Sydney Airport has become a major partner after \$136,000 was donated from their 2015 lost property auction. The grant will go towards funding the rollout of Kids Engaged in Education Program (KEEP), which was piloted at Vincentian House. KEEP is based on research, evidence and best practice and uses education and case management to support children remain engaged in their education while experiencing homelessness.

By rolling out this program we will be expanding the reach of KEEP. With 100 children already participating in the program each year, the Sydney Airport donation will allow a full time program manager to scope and manage the expansion of the program more widely across the Society. KEEP addresses the complex needs of children and young people. By intervening early to improve health and wellbeing, the risks of longer term issues are reduced. At the same time, by supporting children's educational needs and enabling them to remain in the education system longer, the cycle of disadvantage in which they find themselves can be broken.

In April Sydney Airport and the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW hosted an event at Vincentian House in inner city Sydney, including an official cheque presentation ceremony.

Gresham Partners second year SPARK agreement greeted with great delight

The Society is very appreciative of the Gresham Partners and Gresham Charitable Giving Committee for committing to a second year of funding for SPARK. Our refugee and asylum seeker suite of programs support parents and children on their journey to settle into the Australian community and be better equipped to transition into our education system. It addresses a critical need within our community. The second year of the agreement between the Society and Gresham Partners is valued at \$11,400. Without funding from organisations like Gresham Partners we would not be able to continue to deliver the SPARK program to the number of children we reach in Western Sydney.



SUTHERLAND GALA A HUGE SUCCESS

Over \$50,000 was raised at a community gala fundraising dinner and auction hosted by Sutherland Regional Council at the Sutherland Entertainment Centre in April.

Frank Tierney, Chairman of the Events Organising Committee and Vice President of the Sutherland Regional Council said: "We are very conscious of the increase in need among the people in the Shire. The Gala was our first ever fundraising event and we were overwhelmed by the response, with 295 guests. The support we received from the local community, which included shops and individuals for the auction, was amazing."

The St Patrick's College School Band and MC Mike Bailey, a former ABC TV personality, entertained the crowd through the night.

The proceeds raised on the night will be entirely spent on the needs of the people we assist in the Sutherland Shire.

VINNIES COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL SLEEPOUTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE THIS WINTER

Schools and community groups make a difference each winter by hosting Vinnies Sleepouts to raise awareness about the issues people experiencing homelessness face and provide participants with a glimpse of the realities faced by people 'sleeping rough'. Are you interested in raising critical funds and shaping awareness of homelessness in your community? Contact Zan Schmidt to find out how at zan.schmidt@vinnies.org.au or (02) 9568 0211.



Vietnamese communities generously support Vinnies good works

There has been a longstanding connection between Vinnies and Vietnamese communities in Australia since Vietnamese refugees began arriving in the late 1970s in the wake of the war. Vinnies members were often the first point of contact for recently arrived Vietnamese families and played a crucial role supporting Vietnamese with food, clothing and accommodation assistance. Vietnamese communities still remember Vinnies' kindness and have a strong commitment to financially supporting Vinnies.

Over the last 18 months the Vietnamese Catholic community based in Revesby supported Vinnies good works through two successful Vinnies Community Sleepout events raising over \$38,000.

In March the Cabramatta Vietnamese community held a fundraising dinner attracting 450 guests and raised almost \$13,000 for Vinnies. We acknowledge the resilient spirit and ongoing generosity of our Vietnamese supporters in NSW.



TEAM VINNIES TAKES ON CITY2SURF

A team of 125 ran and walked under the Team Vinnies banner at Sydney's favourite fun run, City2Surf, on

Sunday 14 August from Hyde Park to Bondi Beach.

The runners prepared by joining our special fitness program from F45 Training Glebe. They may not have broken records but they had fun and made a real difference by raising critical funds and awareness. It's not too late to donate – contact Zan Schmidt zan.schmidt@vinnies.org.au or 9568 0211.



Community fundraisers get creative

Vinnies is grateful to community members and organisations who use their time and talents to make a difference to people experiencing disadvantage.

The Anawim Society raised over \$3,000 for Matthew Talbot Hostel at their March luncheon.

Joshna Bhana launched her Feast for the Heart campaign and raised over \$3,000 by hosting a workplace morning tea. Joshna went further by cooking a meal at the Sydney Night Patrol kitchen for everyone fed by the Patrol that night. Serving her meal in Martin Place was "one of the most powerful nights I've ever had. Speaking to people was grounding and humbling".

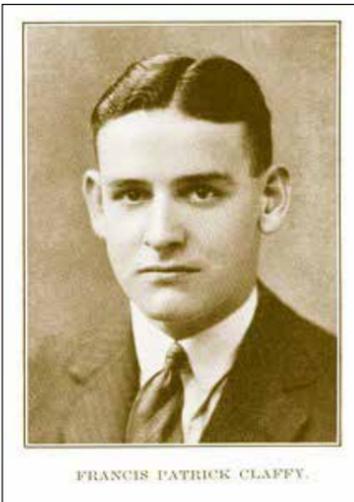
The Newtown Rugby League Football Club, home of the Newtown Jets, dedicated its Ladies Day game to Elsie's Refuge, crisis accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence, and raised \$700.



FRANCIS PATRICK CLAFFY - HIS LEGACY LIVES ON

Since the generous bequest of Dr Francis (Frank) Patrick Claffy, made in 1979, the Society in NSW has received \$5,587,381 from the Claffy Foundation.

In the last financial year more than 20 of the Society's Special Works received funding from the Claffy Foundation, with projects ranging from assisting special needs students with mentoring, meals, uniforms, textbooks and excursion funds, to providing internet access for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.



Frank Claffy was born in Sydney the only child of James and Margaret Claffy. Soon after graduating as a doctor in 1933, Frank took up an appointment at the Sydney Eye Hospital and began the field of work that was to remain his life-long interest.

At the outbreak of World War Two, Frank, commissioned as Major, was posted to Malaya. In 1942, his unit was captured by the Japanese and he became a prisoner of war in Changi Prison Camp for nearly four years. His professional work with prisoners is reported to be "legendary". While there he wrote a thesis on the effects of nutritional diseases on the eye.

After the war, he returned to the Sydney Eye Hospital and quickly re-established himself. Frank was fully committed to the hospital as a teaching centre and in 1964 was appointed as the first Director of the Department of Clinical Ophthalmology and Eye Health at the University of Sydney.

Never married, Frank and his mother bequeathed their estates to the Claffy Foundation. He nominated the Society and Sydney University, to undertake research at the Eye Hospital, as beneficiaries.

His generous donation to the Society has led to countless relief works across the state.



Hotels Have Hearts raises record-breaking \$600,000 for homelessness

The sparkling Hotels Have Hearts (HHH) gala dinner in May raised a record \$600,000 for Matthew Talbot Homeless Services, bringing the total amount raised to over \$3.8 million since the event started in 2002.

Brother Dan Stafford OAM forged the relationship between HHH and the Society in 2001 and since then they have hosted a fundraising evening every two years, with fabulous items being auctioned. Br Dan continues as an active member of the HHH committee, a group of generous hoteliers.

HHH is supported by the Australian Hotels Association New South Wales (AHA NSW). Kim Maloney, HHH Chairman and AHA NSW Vice President, was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in January 2015 in recognition of his outstanding efforts in raising millions of dollars for the Society over the years.

The money has gone towards improving the Matthew Talbot Hostel Clinic, including medical consultation rooms and equipment.

The funds have also been used for the Ozanam Learning Centre's music studio, art studio and to run other new programs and towards refurbishing Vincentian House's recreation and garden space for women and families.

The glittering affair was held at the Hilton Sydney, our

generous venue sponsor, with MC Vince Sorrenti and special guests including former Governor General, Sir William Deane AC KBE (Patron for Matthew Talbot Homeless Services), and NSW Deputy Premier Troy Grant.

In his speech, AHA NSW president Scott Leach said: "The NSW hotel industry believes in a society where those with much will help those with little.

"The true value, and magnificent contribution, St Vincent de Paul Society Homeless Services provide to our city is hard to describe.

"They are the ones who reach out to those that others step over, they offer these forgotten people shelter, comfort and a pathway back to society."



Ability Links – building strengths and skills

Ability Links supports people with disability, along with their families and carers, so they can be active and equal participants within their community, able to access mainstream supports and build on their strengths and skills.

Ability Links NSW was launched in the Hunter area as a pilot in July 2013 with the Society as the provider. It has now expanded so families in every part of NSW have access to a Linker. Of the 16 providers across NSW, the Society manages Ability Links in Hunter New England and Central Coast districts and, in partnership with Settlement Services International, in South Western Sydney, Sydney and South Eastern Sydney Districts.

Our Linkers support people with disability and their families and carers plan for their future and develop networks in their communities so they can reach goals and lead fulfilling, good lives.

"We can learn so much by being open and accepting of everyone. The community that includes people living with



Photo by Gratia

disability is truly enriched," said Michael Lawson, Ability Links Area Coordinator Sydney City and Inner West. Ability Links Inner West organised for 19-year-old Australian pro wheelchair motocross (WCMX) rider Tim Lachlan to come from the Gold Coast to participate in an extreme event. It was part of Marrickville Council's Youth Week activities in April that also featured skating, scooter and BMX demonstrations and competitions.

Ann Chantiri, Ability Links Inner West, explained the importance of including people living with disability in mainstream events.

"Ability Links aims to assist people with disability to be valued and equal members of their communities and to help build a society where people with disability enjoy inclusive lives in all spheres. The young people who saw what Tim could achieve in a chair will have their perceptions and prejudices changed forever."

In May, more than 170 people attended a free Mental Health and Wellbeing Workshop in Sydney organised by community organisation Orana Inc. and the support of Ability Links NSW - Sutherland Shire.

Linkers from three teams joined an interactive, participatory workshop in May with Goldele from Milk Crate Theatre.

The workshop included fun icebreakers, games and creating visual imagery with our bodies. These accessible exercises help stimulate engaging ideas for connecting and working with marginalised groups in the community.

Rafia Marsh, Linker with the Campbelltown team, contacted the defence force to introduce them to Ability Links. She finally had a breakthrough when she connected with the manager of Defence Care (RSL) who said Ability Links would be a great support for troops and their families, as they often relocate and find it difficult to connect with their new communities.

The Sydney City team has been working with a Surry Hills café Gratia for a couple of months, having discussions with staff members around how to deepen the café's accessibility for people with a disability. They identified various strategies to achieve the goal of having the café become a community leader so far as inclusion of people with a disability. They created a 'Customer Profile' section on their social media, starting with the profile of a customer who has a physical disability. This allowed the café to publicise the fact that they have a portable access ramp, as well as reinforcing the café's ethos around social inclusion for all members of the community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.vinnies.org.au/page/Find_Help/NSW/Disability_Employment/Ability_Links/



Stronger Together through preparing and selling Kolety Delights

Selling home cooked chutney is how Stronger Together members are learning to sustain a healthy, independent lifestyle.

As part of her role, Sally Wright, Coordinator/Facilitator for Vinnies Services Deniliquin, has worked closely with case managers and other agencies to deliver a range of tailored programs and workshops for local clients and the wider community.

One of the programs she has established in September 2015 is Stronger Together. The central theme for Stronger Together is to build strength and resilience through the development of life skills like goal setting, communication and problem solving. The group learnt how to develop a business plan and decided to focus on food preparation, cooking and sales.

To help them achieve their goals, Sally collaborated with Intereach, the Salvation Army Moneycare agency, VisAttak, a local graphic design company, the Naponda community store and other volunteers who provided the necessary skills and services required.

For their first cooking demonstration, IGA in Deniliquin donated produce and ingredients. Supervised by Connie Ciccald, a volunteer for Naponda, they learnt how to make tomato and chilli chutney, with the aim of producing it in bulk and selling it.

The chutney was delicious and so began their venture Kolety Delights. Kolety is the Koori name for Deniliquin's Edward River. The central focus is that the group runs every aspect of Kolety Delights, based on their business plan: production, sales and financials.

After VisAttak designed their logo and created all their branding – labels, banner, tablecloth, signs – they were ready for business.

Their first opportunity to trial the chutney was for a Biggest Morning Tea in May. It was a sell-out. Then in July they officially launched their produce at the Naponda Farmers Market. The freezing weather didn't deter them. Again, they sold all their stock.

According to Sally, collaboration with other agencies has been the key component of the group's development and success. The group is ongoing and open to all community members, not only people being assisted by Vinnies.

Sally has great expectations for the future of Kolety Delights. They are preparing new recipes for the August market: Granny Smith apple and ginger cordial and beetroot relish scented with orange and rosemary.



L-R: Lynnene Wiltshire, Leslee Tutaki, Vicky Higgins and Stephanie Fisher.



COMPEER CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

Compeer celebrated its 20th anniversary in Australia on Saturday with a lunch in Lidcombe during National Volunteer Week. Friends and volunteers had a great time catching up, taking whacky photos, sharing good food and a special birthday cake.

An international award-winning program within the Society, Compeer helps adults with a diagnosed mental illness overcome the effects of their illness and improve their quality of life and self-esteem, based on the power of friendship. Volunteers are matched in a one-to-one friendship with people who have become socially isolated due to mental illness.

Denis Walsh, State President, recognised how Compeer volunteers make a difference in the lives of others.

"Compeer has been hugely successful in combatting social isolation, a significant concern for people living with mental illness," he said.

"We chose to celebrate the 20-year milestone during National Volunteer Week because Compeer relies on the commitment and passion of its volunteers."

Dianne Lucas, Acting CEO, noted how the program has flourished over the 20 years.

"Our first friendship matches in Australia took place in 1997 when we set up 10 friendships," she said.

"Right now we have 190 friendship pairs, plus 155 individuals in the Alumni Program across Sydney."

Mental health professionals have reported the positive effects of Compeer: clients with a Compeer friend –

someone to trust and who listens to them – feel important and validated and have changed their outlook on life.

The guest speaker proved to be very popular: Bradley Foxlewin, Deputy Commissioner of NSW Mental Health Commission, travelled from Canberra that morning but when his flight was cancelled had to use all his powers of persuasion to get a seat on the next flight. He stayed on, dancing the afternoon away with the guests.

Brian from Greenwich was also there. He has been a volunteer partner with Max* since the beginning of the program. He says they have become firm friends and enjoy meeting up regularly.

"I have gained so much from our friendship and have been able to make a worthwhile contribution to someone else," says Brian.

"We have done an almost endless number of activities together – learning surfboarding, going to movies, the zoo, museums, bush and beach walks, Sculpture by the Sea. We've also attended many Compeer picnics, Christmas lunches and annual dinners together.

"Max often reminds me that I am his only 'normal' friend. Through him I have learned how hard it is to live on the pension, how hard it can be for some people to deal with the basics of life and how very simple things can bring so much pleasure.

"And Max has also been exposed to places and ideas for the first time, such as discovering the Art Gallery. He is now interested in experimenting with painting."

Another volunteer commented that Compeer changed his life for better, widening his narrow world view and introducing him to the real meaning of empathy.

Compeer is run in Illawarra Shoalhaven, Macarthur Wingecarribee, Hunter and Sydney – City, South East, West and North. For more information or if you are interested in volunteering contact (02) 9568 0295 or compeer@vinnies.org.au.

*Max is not his real name

TO FIND OUT MORE
www.vinnies.org.au/findhelp/view/113



A client's journey through art therapy

Every week, the Caroline Chisholm Centre for Social Justice art therapists look forward to working with Doug. At first, he only used colouring-in pages to express his love for art, entertaining himself drawing lines and creating patterns.

Over a year the art therapists have watched his art and confidence grow immensely.

Ruth Neech, art therapist at Caroline Chisholm, said that because Doug did not use verbal communication, the art therapists believed that some of his art was coded as a form of language he had developed over time.

Everyone was thrilled when his art was displayed at the See Me, Hear Me Exhibition at Holroyd Council Chambers.

All the artworks featured were created by people living with a mental illness, enabling them to be seen and heard in the community. It also provided the artists an opportunity to share the challenges and joys in their daily lives.

"Doug's art work was very beautiful and made a very strong impression on the visitors and the Citizen Advocacy Western Sydney purchased a piece for their office," said Ruth.

"It is an honour and a privilege to work with Doug and a joy to see his work and life expand and deepen," said Ruth.

"We are all very proud of Doug for his amazing achievement and are honoured to have him coming to our Centre."



For decades members of Ulladulla/Milton and Berry/Gerringong Conferences have offered holiday flats for people we assist who are in urgent need of respite or a vacation.

Priority is given to Conference member referrals across NSW. Any Conference member who feels the people they are assisting would benefit from or need a holiday can make a booking through the Booking Officer.

Conference members, volunteers and staff can also book a holiday but different rates apply and this is strictly outside of peak times and when there is a vacancy or cancellation.

Mollymook holiday flats (Ulladulla/Milton Conferences)

- Three x two bedroom flats (sleep four people)
- Fully equipped kitchen, TV/DVD unit, indoor bathroom and separate locked garage with laundry
- Short walk to Mollymook beach and 10 minute drive to Ulladulla.

Guests can stay for up to two weeks and families have priority booking in the school holidays.

Further information and to book: Booking Officer (02) 4455 5666 weekdays 10am-3pm.

Tom McGee Holiday Flats, Gerroa (Gerringong and Berry Conferences).

- Three flats accommodating up to six people each
- Fully equipped kitchen, indoor bathroom, TV and external shared laundry
- short walk to Seven Mile Beach.

Holidays are strictly for a one week period during the NSW school holidays to ensure more families have access to a holiday during peak times. Outside of school holidays families are welcome to stay for a maximum of two weeks. Members of local Conference can provide assistance and support to guests if required.

Further information and to book: Booking Officer (02) 4627 9299.

PRIMARY SCHOOL DONATES TO REFUGEES

St Aidan's Primary School in Maroubra conducted an appeal to assist refugees coming to Australia.

They collected just under \$4,000 which they donated to the Maroubra Junction Conference.

Conference member Christine McFadyn attended a school assembly in June and presented the school captains with a Certificate of Appreciation to recognise their fundraising efforts.



KATOOMBA CONFERENCE GREAT SUPPORT FROM SMALL SCHOOL

St Canice's Catholic Primary School in Katoomba in the Blue Mountains, has around 122 students. Even so, over the years students, staff, parents and friends have been generous supporters of the Katoomba Conference. In the last three years they have raised and donated in the region of \$10,000 through the efforts of its Mini Vinnies – a small but vibrant group of dedicated young people with an astonishing commitment to disadvantaged people in the local area.

At Christmas, they support the Christmas hamper program, which would not be possible without their donations.

This is a small school but their dedication and commitment to providing help where it is most needed within their community illustrates the very best of the "good works".

McCosker House Holiday Club brightens the lives of children facing homelessness

A McCosker House Holiday Club held during the Easter school holidays has brightened the lives of 15 children facing homelessness.

Sarah Mason, Youth Coordinator (South) at the Lismore Central Council said the McCosker House Holiday Club was a uniquely designed partnership between the Lismore Central Council's Youth & Young Adults team and Hastings Accommodation Solutions (HAS) – an accommodation support service of the Society (formerly known as McCosker House).

"Through this special partnership, we are able to take a holistic approach to address the impacts of homelessness and poverty on children," said Sarah.

"Many of the families who reside at HAS are experiencing or at risk of homelessness so they are not in a position to be able to afford these kinds of holiday

experiences for their children.

"As part of the McCosker House Holiday Club, children are able to enjoy a free, fun day out with volunteer mentors where they can develop new friendships, build resilience, increase their confidence and build feelings of self-worth.

"The children visited the Billabong Zoo and were able to see penguins, koalas, monkeys, meerkats, snow leopards, crocodiles, red pandas and cheetahs.

"For many of the children, this was the first time they had been to a zoo, so it was really special to see how excited they were to get up close to the animals."



Mini Vinnies, Holy Family Parkes

Mini Vinnies students from Holy Family Parkes had an excursion to the Parkes Centre and Conference where they experienced first-hand what volunteers and members do.

They were hosted by Conference President Laurie Keane and Central Council President Jim Rogers. They watched a Society DVD, toured the centre and had a turn at sorting items. They learnt about the Conference work by watching Conference members do a mock client interview. Some of them then had the opportunity to participate in a mock interview, in which they did a wonderful job. They definitely showed potential to one day become wonderful adult members and volunteers. Many of the Parkes members and volunteers did a great job helping out on the day. Thanks to Chris Kupkee, Holy Family Mini Vinnies Coordinator, for organising for the students to attend the Centre. Hopefully the students got as much out of this as the volunteers and members did.



The first half of the year has been massive thanks to fabulous volunteers giving of themselves to three Buddies' Days, one Teen Day Out, four Homework Help Tutoring programs, one Homework Help Club, six Green Team projects and two Street Retreats. That's 56 young adults supporting 65 children and families.

They also support the work of Regional Councils and their colleagues in their service to families such as Community Support Services staff and Client Support Officers.

The Sydney Uni, UNSW and Sydney Youth Conferences have continued their involvement in the Brekky Van and other programs. Sydney Youth also welcomed the UTS Catholic Youth group.

This year they have trained and welcomed 72 new volunteers for its programs.

Many young adult volunteers and members have been with them for up to five years which translates into greater involvement with adult Conferences by adding diversity.

Their growing commitment to Vinnies and a feeling of belonging is apparent, while they hone valuable skills.

A number of Sydney Youth Conference members have been active in the area of social justice. They attended the statewide Social Justice workshop in June as well as the Affordable Housing Forum at Parliament House, where Claire Johnstone, Sydney Youth representative, addressed the audience.



Bishop Terry Brady presided at the interment, coordinated by Patricia Thomas of Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria, and also attended by Denis Walsh, Bev Kerr and other directors of the Society, Peter O'Meara, CEO of Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria, along with other staff from Catholic Cemeteries and the Society.

I was able to share something of the lives of these men and Mark Gerhard of Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria gave a touching tribute to the two men:

"We never met you; never looked into your eyes, shook your hand, smiled, laughed or cried with you. We never knew you...but we know you.

"We know that you once laughed, dreamed, hoped and sought love. We know that you felt success and achievement, loss and failure. We know that you were hurt and that you probably hurt others on occasion as well. You probably loved ice cream and hated vegetables. Enjoyed a beer or two, a chat, a good yarn and a joke.

"We hope that in your life you were loved by someone special to you. That you were held, shown off and boasted about by proud parents or grandparents. We hope that a wounded knee or heart was met with love, care, hugs and understanding. We hope that you found true love and were truly loved in return.

"Whatever the specifics of your lives which we do not know, we know you. You are us and we are you. Our humanity has bound us from time immemorial and will bind us forever more; in pain, in suffering, in hope, in love in truth and in life."

Our ability to bury the dead with dignity and respect is possible through the support of WN Bull Funerals, Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria and the wider St Vincent de Paul Society.

Elizabeth Lee, Matthew Talbot Hostel Pastoral Care Officer

DIGNITY in Life and Death

At Matthew Talbot Hostel (MTH) and across the Society we respond to many of the corporal works of mercy including feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick and visit the imprisoned. However, what about to bury the dead? If everyone is made in the image and likeness of God and if it is our mission to serve Christ in the poor, treating them with love and respect, how do we do this when a homeless and destitute person dies with no family or friends to bury them?

Recently one young man knocked on my door and asked: "What will happen when I die? My parents are both passed and I have no contact with my brother". I was able to assure him that we at MTH could and would treat him with dignity both in life and death.

And we have done just that for two long term guests of MTH. Following their deaths we held simple yet moving memorial services in the Matthew Talbot Chapel and then on 27 April



their ashes were the first to be interred in the recently opened Charles O'Neill Memorial Walkway at Rookwood Cemetery.

A PASTORAL APPROACH

In March this year I attended the Festival Day in the Broken Bay Central Council. It was an excellent day attended by about 80 members and staff. There were two keynote presentations by Robert Fitzgerald AM and our NSW State President, Denis Walsh.

Robert took us on a journey through the world of good governance for faith-based charities. He mentioned that governance objectives for the Society are (i) safeguarding the identity; (ii) promoting the Mission; (iii) embedding core values; (iv) developing 'right relationships' based on trust and respect and (v) delivering best interest outcomes. These perspectives were good to hear as they encapsulate our purpose and life, especially that purpose and life in a secular world.

Denis spoke on governance for Good Works in context of our Society. He offered the gathered an overview of the size of the Society in NSW and the structures of the organisation. He spoke of the importance of how we are different to any other charity and quoted Pope Francis in that the Society is more than a compassionate NGO. He said what is crucially significant is that Society members attend to those we meet through a pastoral approach. This pastoral position is expressed in our prayerfulness, reflections and conversations.

Pastoral care is an essential aspect to our work. In its simplest form it is an approach of being present to another. In broad terms, I believe, it is the telling and reflection of life stories, understanding them as presented and discerning them in the light of a spiritual journey believed, proclaimed, celebrated and lived to its full. It offers little instruction or advice but hears someone's story with empathic listening. It is a taxing role especially when we are time poor living very busy lives.

Similar tensions are expressed in the gospel story of Mary and Martha. Martha's 'way' of presence is by fulfilling the need to do something. In fact the gospel tells us that she "was distracted with all the serving". Mary's 'way' is very different as it is much about nothing apart from being with Jesus sitting at his feet. There is a tension between the 'ways'. The nature of a pastoral approach is reflection on



this tension, for to grow as Christians we need to find that place which is open to the good works of Martha and the contemplative attitude of Mary.

A pastoral approach is marked in the expression of Blessed Rosalie: "Be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor. If you have nothing to give, give yourself." In this we continue to show a spirituality which is being present to those we meet offering a spirit that is practical, engaging, relational and always responding in love.

Lord, may we continue to be one for another; present in our conversations, reflective in our thoughts and prayerful in our lives.

May the Peace and Spirit of Christ continue to bless us.

Leo Tucker
State Council Spiritual Advisor

Trek the **Great Wall of China** as part of the

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