



St Vincent de Paul Society  
NSW  
*good works*

SUMMER 2021  
ISSUE NO. 88

# Vision

## A SAFE SPACE TO GROW

**A WIN FOR  
SOCIAL HOUSING**

**BUSHFIRE COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT GRANTS**

**LOCALS SLEEP OUT  
ACROSS THE STATE**





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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear friends,

I hope this finds you well at the end of the longest year - a year that dragged us through shutdown and lockdown, forced us from family and friends, and uprooted our lives at study and work.

As you spend time with your loved ones this Christmas, I hope you have time to sit back and reflect on the good works illustrated through these pages. As you lead your way, consider the determined efforts to rebuild communities affected by bushfires (pg. 4-5), selfless services that give hope to people on the margins of society (pg. 20) and our fearless advocacy (pg. 23). Each of these stories – indeed each of your lives - illustrate God's hope and love made possible by your compassion and generous spirit as Vincentians.

These stories also show that we do more than just give a hand up. Pope Francis in his recent encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, reminds us "It is an act of charity to assist someone

suffering, but it is also an act of charity, even if we do not know that person, to work to change the social conditions that caused his or her suffering." The good works of our Society gives action to our faith in shaping a just and compassionate society.

I trust and pray that these stories and our own stories inspire us to start 2021 with a renewed resolve – in particular, to invite more new volunteers to join us in our great works of charity and justice.

To each of you who has supported our good works this year, I would extend my thanks on behalf of all involved; our members, our volunteers, our staff, and above all, the companions we assist and who themselves assist and bless us.

I wish you all the blessings of a happy and holy Christmas. May the grace of the New Year bless us all.

In Christ

Peter McNamara  
State President, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

## CEO'S MESSAGE



This past year has highlighted the absolutely necessity of the work we do at Vinnies.

For years we have worked to offer a hand up to those in need of assistance, call on the government to provide an adequate social safety net and take a proactive approach

towards ensuring everybody has the safety, security and stability of a place to call home.

In a year that has seen millions impacted by the coronavirus in a variety of ways, our good works and advocacy have provided support for people in their time of need. Christmas 2019 was a time when our skies were clearing bushfire smoke and we were on the cusp of a greater inferno covering the whole state. As we head towards Christmas 2020 it will be a time of uncertainty with the impact of the pandemic. It was disappointing to see the federal government overlook social housing and a permanent

increase to JobSeeker in the Budget. We will continue to advocate for both of these vital causes in the coming year.

To all our members, volunteers and staff, I thank you for your commitment and willingness to adapt during this difficult time. It is because of you that we are able to make such a meaningful difference to so many lives throughout the state.

As we look towards 2021 and the uncertainty that may come with it, I am heartened by the resilience and spirit shown by our people to know that whatever challenges may lay ahead, we are able to weather the storm and continue living out our mission of shaping a more just and compassionate society.

On behalf of the Society, I wish you and your loved ones a safe and merry Christmas.

Jack de Groot  
Chief Executive Officer, St Vincent de Paul Society NSW

Vinnies Hastings Regional Conference President Jeff Downie, social worker Sarah Mason, Acting Manager Community Participation NE/NW Anna Scott and Kempsey Conference President Gai Bradbury at the Bushfire Recovery Hub in Kempsey.

# Bushfire grant schemes help communities recover

**The bushfires that devastated east coast communities in late 2019-2020 impacted on residents in so many ways.** It was clear that the recovery process would be both complex and lengthy, but immediate needs had to be addressed. Vinnies was part of the response effort in supporting those affected by the disaster, helping with housing, food, drinking water, tanks, generators, fencing, and social connection.

In the second half of this year we have been actively helping residents in diverse locations to repair the damage and rebuild their lives.

One key has been the Vinnies NSW Bushfire Community Development Program, which began with placing our experienced community workers in areas judged to be most affected by the bushfires and most vulnerable to ongoing disadvantage.

Initially the program was based in the Mid North Coast town of Kempsey, surrounded by badly burnt hinterland. Collaborating with Council, the Department of Primary

Industries and NSW Health our social workers Sarah Mason and Anna Scott were based in the Macleay Valley hub and visited many fire-affected communities, consulting with residents, councils, businesses and organisations.

The team worked closely with locals, many of them living remotely, often 'off-grid', to develop a tailored plan for recovery.

"Our work was about filling the gaps, ensuring that anyone who has been overlooked or left behind was brought back into the fold," explains Niamh Mannion, Vinnies NSW Executive Director of Services.

"We don't want to replicate recovery work that is already being done by government or other organisations, but to complement their work so that everyone is catered for, and this community can recover as a whole."

We then launched the first round of the Community Bushfire Grants Program, funded by the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal, with applications encouraged from fire affected

communities across the state. The response was strong and proposed projects were highly diverse. When evaluation was completed the Society approved \$308,000 in grants (of up to \$20,000) to 18 community projects.

These included a proposal by Thungutti Local Aboriginal Land Council in the Macleay Valley to reduce fire hazards in a culturally empowering process, with training and hands-on experience. The aim is to create a walking trail through the Thungutti land and the adjoining Crown Lands tenure in order to encourage both Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members to engage in exercise, and to experience the stories and history of Thungutti country.

Quite different was the proposal by the Tumbarumba Community Church whose 'Recovering Together' project assists those affected by fires across the Snowy Valleys through the provision of chaplaincy support, firewood vouchers, and fuel and clothing vouchers.

The Willawarrin Hall Committee is able to upgrade a facility that became a relief centre during the devastating fires, while the REGROW project in Conjola on the South Coast, run by Convoy of Hope Australia, is distributing 10,000 tube-stock trees and supplies to schools in early 2021, partly at its own expense.

Along the Murray, the Ournie Rural Fire Brigade and the local community received a grant to purchase equipment for the community hall, a place for the community to gather, connect and continue their journey of recovery from the trauma of bushfire.

In the Southern Highlands the Bundanoon Club is being helped to install toilet facilities for members and visitors with a disability.

Vinnies NSW CEO, Jack de Groot, said, "We appreciate that the Black Summer bushfires affected each community differently, and local residents know their own needs better than anyone. That's why we are partnering with local organisations, as well as placing experienced workers in the hardest-hit communities so they can develop locally-tailored recovery projects."

All remaining appeal donations held by the Society in NSW have been allocated to these programs – fulfilling our promise to use every last dollar to support bushfire-affected communities.

The second round of the Community Bushfire Grants Program was launched in late July, with available funds totalling \$900,000 for registered community organisations wanting to lead their own local recovery projects.

Again, approved projects were diverse in nature and

location, with 23 grants ranging from the Upper Macleay District Rodeo Association's upgrade of cattle yards used by community groups through to the Nowra Youth Centre's Strong Women initiative; the Shed of Hope has purchased trailers and a mower for loan from its tool library, while the Ulladulla Youth Volunteering Initiative will deliver the accredited Rural Bushfire Fighter Training Course to 20 students in Year 10.

Amidst the tragedy, hope and practical initiatives have arisen thanks to Vinnies donors, whose generosity is helping communities working hard to get back on their feet.





## Labor launches Homelessness Week at MTH

**Federal Labor leader Anthony Albanese visited the Matthew Talbot Hostel in Sydney to launch Homelessness Week (2-8 August).**

Using the occasion to call for more investment in social housing, Mr Albanese was joined by Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Minister for Education and Training, and Jason Clare, Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness.

Jack de Groot, Vinnies NSW CEO, spoke on the Homelessness Week theme of 'Everybody Needs A Home' by calling on state and federal governments to invest in social housing as a means of reducing homelessness and helping the economy recover following COVID-19.

"Everybody needs a home. Having a safe and secure place to live is the first step to finding work, growing a family, and planning for the future," said Jack.

"Building social housing is an ideal stimulus to help our economy recover from coronavirus. It ticks all the boxes – it's good for our finances and good for our families."

The opportunity to launch Homelessness Week at the Matthew Talbot Hostel provided Mr Albanese with the chance to reflect on his own personal connection to the service, which has provided shelter and support for men experiencing homelessness for over 80 years.

"When I was a much-younger man going to school up the road here at St Mary's Cathedral, I and my fellow students used to volunteer here and help to do our bit. It was part of our commitment to Catholic Social Justice principles," said Mr Albanese.

## VINNIES RECOGNISES NAIDOC WEEK

**Vinnies members and staff celebrated the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples during NAIDOC Week (8-15 November).**

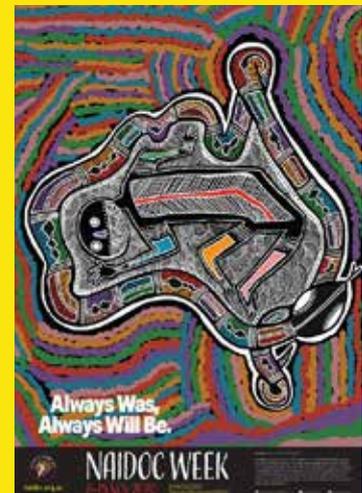
Originally scheduled for July prior to the disruption created by COVID-19, the theme of this year's event was 'Always Was, Always Will Be' in recognition of the enduring connection and care of traditional lands by Australia's First Peoples for over 65,000 years.

During the week, our Indigenous staff spoke about their Connection to Country with Rob Cohen, our Aboriginal Engagement partner, saying "Our Country is where our hearts and souls are... it's what connects us to our history, our cultural connections and our people'. Country gives us strength and fills our souls, enriching our identity and sense of belonging."

Our people were also encouraged to participate in local NAIDOC Week events, find out and use the traditional greeting word used by the people on whose land they live, and take part in the Connect to Country virtual event hosted by Closing the Gap.

As part of our ongoing commitment towards reconciliation across the Society, we have implemented several strategies over the past year as part of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), such as establishing

an Aboriginal Advisory Group, erecting plaques of acknowledgement at our shops and services throughout the state and developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention strategy to be implemented in the coming year.



# COVID-19 taught valuable lessons

**During the Christmas-New Year period it is timely to reflect on the disruptions of coronavirus, detected in Australia almost a year ago. Everyone has been impacted, and for Vinnies it meant adapting to new ways of working and delivering our vital services. It also taught us some valuable lessons.**

Our members, volunteers and staff rose to the many challenges of COVID-19, adopting strict hygiene guidelines while maintaining support for families, people in assisted accommodation and emergency shelters, and those relying on food and other help from our mobile vans and drop-in services.

This required great flexibility, underpinned by the compassion that has long been the guiding principle of the Society.

During this time of crisis we have received an increase in calls for assistance – many of whom have never sought help from a charity before. With restrictions on home visits to reduce the risk of spreading or contracting the virus, we have continued to provide assistance by dropping food parcels to doorsteps and checking in with people to ensure their wellbeing.

The COVID-19 Winter Appeal was a great success, reaching a total of \$2,066,522 in a difficult fundraising environment.

All of our 227 Vinnies Shops, obliged to close across the state for several months, have now re-opened with a range of precautions in place relating to customers, volunteers and staff, and the handling of stock.

Achieving financial sustainability is a key strategic goal and has become more urgent with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between April and June, the Society saw a \$15 million loss in revenue from the closure of our retail stores, the disruption of major fundraising events and an impact on our investments.

Our staff were also affected, with work-from-home requirements put in place where possible, and many offering to reduce their working hours to help address the financial challenge facing the Society.

From the outset our COVID-19 Recovery Planning team worked on ways to implement a safe and effective return to



work sites once the government advice allowed this to be considered. We continue to adhere to health authorities' directions to ensure a safe place for our staff, volunteers, members, customers and the people we serve.

The Society's four-month access to the Federal Government's JobKeeper support program expired at the end of September, creating more financial pressure, despite an overall improvement in our budget deficit of approximately \$10 million as a result of economy measures.

Moving into summer we can look back at what may be the most difficult year in our long history, a period where we were stretched to the limit, and yet came through with heads held high.

This is confirmed by the heart-warming feedback received from the people we serve – the families, many with young children, who struggle to put healthy food on the table, the locals to whom we have provided financial help in drought and bushfire affected areas as they continue to harbour memories of traumatic events and face the battle of rebuilding their lives.

## Vinnies featured in Filthy, Rich and Homeless

The latest season of SBS TV's *Filthy, Rich and Homeless* highlighted the struggles faced by more than 116,000 people experiencing homelessness every night in Australia.

Bringing together six well-known Australians, participants were given an insight into the harsh realities of sleeping rough, crisis accommodation and the insecurity faced by people unable to plan beyond one day at a time. Among those taking part, emergency doctor and television personality, Dr Andrew Rochford, spent two nights at John Purcell House in Nowra.

Reflecting on his time at the Vinnies service, which is the only crisis accommodation service available to single men in the NSW Shoalhaven region, Andrew was heartened by the support shown by our staff to people in need.



"From the moment I stepped through that door, I was treated with respect and care," Dr Rochford says, "It was a complete shock to find myself in such a safe and supportive environment after sleeping on the streets of Sydney."

Continuing to make an ongoing commitment to support people living without a safe and secure place to call home after seeing the life changing impact of our homelessness services firsthand, Dr. Rochford hosted the 2020 Vinnies CEO Sleepout which raised \$2.1 million in NSW.

**Season 3 of *Filthy, Rich and Homeless* is available to watch through SBS On Demand.**

## LOCAL HERO GIVES BACK TO VINNIES

Throughout NSW there are more than 4,100 Vinnies members helping out in their local communities every day.

From conducting home visits, volunteering in our shops and providing assistance through our network of Conferences, Vinnies members are the lifeblood of the Society.

One of our members who regularly goes above and beyond is Tony Cranney. Serving as the Oyster Bay Conference President, Sutherland Regional President and Sydney Archdiocese President, Tony has touched many hearts in his three decades with the Society, delivering food, collecting donations, and arranging for appliances to be delivered to people in need.

In acknowledgement of his work assisting communities devastated by bushfires, he was named a 'Have a Go Hero' winner by The Today Show. Upon receiving a \$10,000 cheque as recognition, Tony immediately donated the funds back to Vinnies.

"There's that many people at the moment requesting help... We do our normal stuff which is keeping food on the table and the lights on, but there's so many more requests now and they're much larger requests," said Tony.





## ‘Return & Earn’ tops 100 million mark

**The old saying “There’s money in muck” – or waste, if you will - holds as true today as it did a century ago when Vinnies founders in Sydney raised funds to help the poor by selling horse manure they collected from stables.**

Among today’s most common waste products are single-use beverage containers, which are both recyclable and worth money, especially if they number over 100 million.

Removing plastic and glass bottles and aluminium cans from the waste stream is another example of Vinnies’ commitment to good environmental practice – in the same way that our op shops give new life to unwanted clothing and household items. The Container Deposit Scheme is also a great fundraiser to support our community work with families and individuals struggling to make ends meet.

As 2020 ended Vinnies Return & Earn had clocked up more than 100 million bottles and cans whose retail price included a refundable 10c deposit. This aspect of our business has grown to become a significant commercial enterprise, with net profit in financial year 2019/20 totalling a healthy \$833,124.

The practical focus has moved towards large scale Return & Earn depots, and away from Over The Counter collection points previously located in a number of Vinnies Shops.

Revenue is generated through a government handling

fee per beverage container, as well as enabling members of the public and organisations to donate their 10c refund to charities such as Vinnies. Multiply that throughout NSW and the gains, economic and environmental, are immense. In October 2019 we opened our sixth Return & Earn depot, this time in Dubbo (after Penrith, Unanderra, South Nowra, Cardiff and Wagga Wagga).

The joint venture is with an Indigenous organisation, Regional Enterprise Development Institute (REDI.E), operating on Wiradjuri land. It is a strong demonstration of Vinnies’ commitment to its Reconciliation Action Plan and to developing practical relationships with Aboriginal partners.

The CEO of REDI.E Tracey Shillingsworth calls the initiative a win-win for the local economy and the Indigenous community, adding, “We are proud to be part of this initiative, which is an important step towards reducing litter, protecting our environment and building sustainable futures for our people.

“We know our communities are familiar with Vinnies and the incredible work they do. This joint venture represents our vision to be at the forefront of innovation and collaboration with other local organisations.”



## Fires sparked race-day panic

**Above left: Vinnies social worker Sarah Mason with Stephen and Helen Lynch and the vehicle donated to them by a local Vinnies benefactor.**

**Above right: The remains of Stephen and Helen Lynch's home, destroyed in the bushfires of 8 November 2019.**

The mid-north coast town of Kempsey is the home of the Akubra hat factory and the firm was proud to be sponsoring the highlight of the local racing calendar, the annual Kempsey Cup.

On 8 November 2019 thousands were enjoying the fine weather and the lead-up events, with 'fashions in the field' attracting hundreds of entrants. As the mounts were being readied for the big race the sky darkened and the course was enveloped in smoke and ash from bushfires that had erupted west and south of the town.

In attendance were Stephen and Helen Lynch who had moved up from Sydney in retirement eight years earlier. They bought a 126-acre property near Bellbrook, a timbered, hilly area west of Kempsey, and built a two-storey house, settling down with a 'family' of animals, including poultry and rescue dogs and cats.

"Embers began falling on the crowd, and horses and jockeys were struggling to breathe," Helen recalls, "it was terrifying".

The race meeting was cancelled and life changed for rural residents throughout the Shire and for many businesses in and around the town.

The Lynches rushed back, learning in Willawarrin, the

village before Bellbrook, that the fires were destroying everything. They managed to get home in a small car and collected a few possessions as well as their rescue goat before heading to safety.

By the time they returned home three weeks later, all the other animals had vanished except for a cat, named Wombat, that miraculously survived..

"Our beautiful home was completely destroyed," Stephen says, "but as we stood there in shock we heard a meowing and Wombat appeared. He was the only survivor, apart from us, and I reckon we were lucky to have been away at the races."

Since then the Lynches have returned to their land and are living in one of the 'pods' donated to those left homeless by Andrew 'Twiggy' Forest's Minderoo Foundation. They intend to rebuild, but the process is a slow one.

Vinnies has been helping Stephen and Helen Lynch, and many locals, with bushfire relief and recovery. Recently, we gave them a 4WD vehicle donated to us by an anonymous benefactor in the area.

"Vinnies has been excellent," Helen said, "we're very grateful for the help you've provided. A big 'thank you' from us, and many others in the area."



## More SAHF sites open throughout the state

**We have been making a difference to people in need of a place to call home through the NSW Government's Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF).**

With more than 51,000 applicants currently approved for social housing in NSW – including some who have been waiting upwards of 10 years – we have invested \$242 million in Society funds over the past three years to provide 502 units at 12 locations throughout the state.

As part of our commitment to provide ongoing support for people in need of housing, our SAHF sites also feature wrap-around support provided by the Vinnies Services team to help residents achieve their personal goals and be a part of a caring and supportive community.

Gareth Ward MP, NSW Minister for Communities and Justice, recently visited our newly opened Jordan Springs site which contains 36 brand-new units for people on low incomes.

With COVID-19 highlighting the necessity of everyone having access to safe and secure housing, we continue to advocate for more social housing, including further investment in regional areas where 40% of applicants are located.

**To find out more about SAHF, contact [sahf@amelie.org.au](mailto:sahf@amelie.org.au) or call 9890 6500.**

## Farewell to LAC and Access and Inclusion

After years of helping people access the NDIS and building inclusive and accessible communities for all, the Local Area Coordination (LAC) and Access and Inclusion programs have come to a close.



Since launching the Vinnies LAC Program in 2016, we have been able to successfully transition 49,000 participants to the NDIS across the state, allowing them to achieve their personal goals and aspirations.

"Whilst we are sad to say farewell to the LAC program, we are also immensely proud to have played our part... this program and Ability Links before it are the Society's legacy," said Niamh Mannion, Executive Director of Vinnies Services.

Following an unsuccessful tender earlier this year, our South West Sydney and Sydney Service LACs finished up at the end of September. Our LAC involvement in South East Sydney, Hunter New England and the Central Coast concluded at the end of the last financial year.

Formed following the closure of the Ability Links program in October 2019, the Access and Inclusion team have played a vital role in connecting with communities and developing key community capacity building projects.

During the past year they have continued the Beaches for Every Body project which has enabled thousands of people to enjoy the iconic Australian pastime of swimming in the ocean. The team also developed the Better Access Map, an app and website providing information on accessibility for local businesses and services to help foster awareness and more inclusive communities.

Vinnies remains committed to supporting people living with disability through specialist accommodation, day-to-day support, respite care, life skills and capacity-building, employment, and assistance to build relationships and lead safe, meaningful lives.

# Help to find a home...

More than a third of the people we assisted over the past year were aged over 50. With many in this age group finding it difficult to gain work, while being ineligible for the aged pension, the support provided by our members and Client Support Officers has had a life changing impact.

Two of the people we assisted over the past year, Russell and Scott, share their stories:



## Russell's story

**Russell never expected to fall into homelessness.**

Having worked his entire adult life only to become unemployed in his late 50s, the once-fiercely independent man soon found himself living day-to-day in fear for his safety and mental wellbeing.

Spending months withdrawing from friends and trying to navigate Centrelink for assistance, the support of Vinnies proved to be a turning point.

Russell met one of our members, Margaret, at the Northern Beaches Community Support Centre. She assisted Russell with food, but he found the greatest nourishment in being seen after spending months marginalised by society.

"She listened to my situation with interest and empathy. I had met someone who really did care and wanted to help me out of my dark situation," Russell said.

Continuing to visit the Brookvale office for assistance, a fateful call from Margaret led to a breakthrough Russell feared would never come.

"I needed a place to live and Margaret understood my immediate need. As an older single male, I wasn't a first

choice for tenancy. She went into bat for my character and ability to be a good tenant. No one else anywhere was going to do that!"

Moving into a social housing unit operated by Vinnies with nothing more than some clothes, Margaret and her husband, Tom, stepped up once again with a bed, fridge, and furniture to help him settle in.

Having gone through the hardest period of his life, Russell credits the support of Vinnies for bringing him back from the brink.

"Without Margaret and Vinnies, I wouldn't have survived – it's that simple and I am forever grateful for their wonderful work."

## Scott's story

**Scott is finding his feet after years of instability.**

Spending time in jail, a stint in hospital and losing his house in bushfires at the start of the year, the 55-year-old man is thankful for the support he had received from Vinnies.

Bouncing between couches and various short-term accommodations on the Central Coast earlier this year, Scott received the change in luck he was after when the Department of Housing prioritised his application for housing thanks to the support of Brad and Penny from our Client Support Office in Wyong.

Moving into a place of his own at Canton Beach in August, Vinnies has helped provide furniture, clothing and household items to turn the apartment into a home.

Continuing to gain on-going support with food and referrals through the Wyong office, Scott is grateful for the people who have helped him when he's needed it most.

"I wouldn't know where I'd be if it wasn't for the support of organisations [like Vinnies]," said Scott.





## Rapid response to a Lebanese family in need

**In a year marked by myriad disasters and darkened by the cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic, few events have been more tragic than the explosion of stored ammonium nitrate in the port area of Beirut, Lebanon's capital.** This catastrophe caused around 200 deaths, a vast array of injuries and an incredible damages bill of up to \$30 billion.

The 4 August explosion also left an estimated 300,000 people homeless, and among their number was a couple with two young children, a daughter of four years of age and a son of one, who arrived in Australia two weeks later. While the mother is an Australian citizen they arrived here with no belongings, no income, no housing and facing a 14-day COVID-19 quarantine period.

Not surprisingly they were distraught, as well as being traumatised by their experience in Beirut, and reached out to a government social worker who contacted Vinnies on day three of the family's isolation. We were told that the children were missing their grandparents back in Beirut and had no toys to distract them from their grief.

The call went around Vinnies Conferences in Sydney and multiple offers of help soon came in. The guardian angel doing the toy delivery was Jenny Cunningham, President of Waterloo Conference, who arrived at their lockdown hotel with donated dolls, toy cars and trucks, lots of books, a ball, puzzles, colouring books, pens, crayons, and plenty of paper.

When the mum was contacted the next day, she said the family was overjoyed by the Society's generosity and couldn't thank us enough. We were proud to have made a small and timely contribution to the life of a family that had experienced such a terrible event.

## A LIFELINE FOR THOSE LEFT BEHIND

**During the pandemic the St Louise Conference in Tamworth has stepped up to support students and workers unable to access government assistance.**

With temporary visa holders within the Armidale diocese ineligible for JobSeeker and experiencing a significant reduction in working hours, our members and Father Paul Aguilar of St Edward's Parish, South Tamworth partnered with other local organisation to create the Mother Teresa Pantry.

Providing assistance with food, clothing, bedding and personal care items, the initiative has been a much-needed lifeline for temporary residents in surrounding communities such as Barraba, Manilla, Gunnedah and Armidale, while gaining recognition from Kevin Anderson MP, Member for Tamworth.

*Dear Father Paul,*

*I hear you are doing wonderful things for our community, in particular those who have fallen upon hard times, by providing the 'sustenance of life' through creating the "Mother Teresa Pantry" in the Mary Help of Christians Church.*

*I applaud your commitment to our community today and every day!*

*Thank you and stay well,*

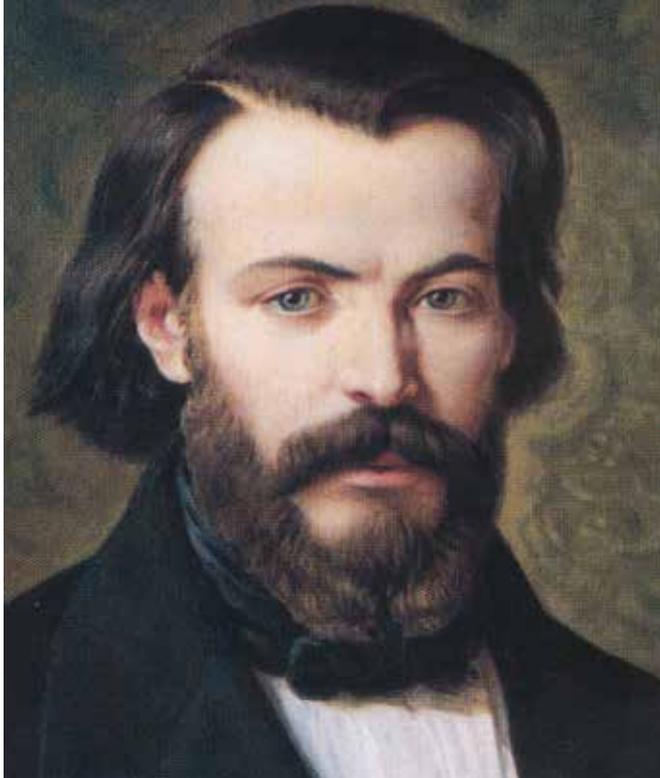
*Kevin Anderson MP*

*Member for Tamworth*

Just as our founder Frederic Ozanam sought to alleviate the suffering he saw around him two centuries ago, our members continue to honour his legacy by offering a hand up to people in their time of need.



## CELEBRATING FREDERIC'S FEAST DAY



The impact of COVID-19 brought about a change in celebrations for the feast of Blessed Frederic Ozanam this year. In breaking with tradition, people from across NSW gathered for online events commemorating the legacy of our founder.

Facilitated by the Mission, Spirituality and Pastoral Care Team, three sessions were held virtually on 9 September by well over 200 attendees including, Mini Vinnies students, High School Conferences, members, volunteers and employees.

It was a chance to learn about Frederic's history, what he achieved and stood for in post-revolution France, and why we see him as pivotal in our lives and in the Society today.

In his reflection on Frederic, Leo Tucker, Executive Director of Mission & Spirituality said, "Understanding the charisms of Frederic Ozanam is crucial in deepening our personal spirit. It will give us a more profound insight into the words of our mission and vision, as well as a deeper appreciation for our Society logo; of the hands receiving, assisting and blessing."

As part of the virtual sessions, smaller discussion groups provided attendees with the opportunity to share their thoughts on Frederic and the enduring impact he continues to have on Vinnies in the 21st century.

"We need to follow Frederic's way -- he stepped out into the unknown and was a doer"

The success of the event has now opened up great possibilities for other online events – stay tuned for future virtual gatherings. Watch the Frederic Ozanam Feast Day 2020 at <https://www.vinnies.org.au/FOFD20>

## Our sacred space

**Our Sacred Space is a new initiative of the Mission and Spirituality Team to move towards becoming One Society.**

It is an online prayer space for the Society in NSW, where we can remember and pray for our members, volunteers, people we serve and employees who have passed and experiencing illness.

Access this space through the MAVS website Spirituality tab or via this link: <https://mavs.vinnies.org.au/conferences/spirituality/sacred-space/>

To submit a name for inclusion please email [sacredspace@vinnies.org.au](mailto:sacredspace@vinnies.org.au). The lists are updated monthly.

The page also includes a link allowing anyone to light a virtual candle. We thank Brisbane Catholic Education for including us as a Candle Community.



# Thank you to our Corporate Partners and Sponsors

In the spirit of the season, we'd like to give thanks to the corporate partners who have supported our good works this year, including Abergeldie Complex Infrastructure, Australian Stockbrokers Foundation, IVE, Board Directions, Campbell Arnott's, CEO Institute, City of Fairfield RSL, Coca Cola Amatil, COS, Lyone Foundation, Festival Hire, Genworth, Grill'd, Grinders, Hilton Sydney, IGA, Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies, Lagardère Travel Retail, Mount Franklin, Channel Nine, Ooh! Media, Our Big Kitchen, Pin Stripe Media, Port Authority New South Wales, Rapid Relief Team, Sky News, Supre Foundation, The Australian, TVSN.

It's so important that businesses focus on people as well as profit and use their enormous power and influence to do good. We're so grateful to the many businesses that have taken up that responsibility in a year that has been challenging for all with the impacts of COVID-19 to help us to make a difference for people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and homelessness.

## ABERGELDIE

Since 2008, Abergeldie Complex Infrastructure has sponsored our Vinnies Vans in Parramatta and Mount Druitt. As long-standing partners of our good works, we are grateful for the on-going support they have shown, including their staff volunteering time each month to assist people in need of a meal and connection. A special mention also goes to Mick Boyle, Chairman of Abergeldie, for taking part in the NSW Vinnies Community Sleepout live-stream.

A heartfelt thanks to Abergeldie for supporting people in Western Sydney in need of assistance.

## GENWORTH

Extending their support of the V4You program offered at Vincentian House for a further year, Genworth's commitment will provide children, young people and families experiencing homelessness and hardship with the assistance needed to get back on their feet. In addition to supporting the V4You program since

2013, Genworth came on board as a dollar matching partner for the Vinnies CEO Sleepout this year, raising a further \$101,585.10 from their original \$15,000 investment.

We are so grateful for the on-going support Genworth have shown over the past seven years.

## JOHNSON & JOHNSON

For the past 3.5 years the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies have partnered with the V4You program to support children, young people and families facing hardship across NSW. Growing V4You to six sites throughout the state, the program has helped to encourage young people engage positively with education and find connections within their local communities. J&J also generously supported the Vinnies CEO Sleepout this year as a matched giving partner to help boost donations. Johnson & Johnson's investment of \$50,000 raised an astounding \$206,519.96 for Vinnies services.

We are able to change the lives of families in need thanks to the backing of Johnson & Johnson.

## COS / LYONE FOUNDATION

We are pleased to announce that the Lyone Foundation, the Philanthropic arm of COS®, have confirmed a three-year partnership with Vinnies to support the Sydney Night Patrol. With their support we will be able to continue providing food and companionship to people experiencing poverty and homelessness within inner-city Sydney.

We look forward to working with COS and their staff in the years to come.

*Thank you!*

## Sleeping out to support communities

**Locals from around the state united in a show of support for locals in need as part of the NSW Vinnies Community Sleepout in October.**

Designed to raise awareness of homelessness and disadvantage occurring in communities throughout NSW, the event raised close to \$157,000 for local Vinnies services and programs.

Unlike previous years where participants braved the cold for a night in large groups, the COVID-impacted event followed the format of the Vinnies CEO Sleepout back in June by taking place virtually in cars, couches and backyards around the state.

Western Sydney, Maitland, Tweed Heads, Wagga Wagga and Deniliquin returned after taking part last year, while Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Broken Hill, Central Coast, Murrumbidgee and Tamworth participated for the first time.

Nine and 2GB personality Deborah Knight hosted a live stream on the night which featured crosses to all areas of the state. Participants heard from people with lived experiences of homelessness and hardship, along with members and staff who provide a 'hand up' to people in need every day.

In addition to gaining a brief insight into the challenges faced by people living without a safe and secure home, participants were also provided with statistics on the number of people experiencing homelessness in NSW (37,000) and rough sleepers living outside of major cities (40%).

Thanks to the involvement of the 209 participants who took part in the event, Vinnies services such as Micah Hub in Wagga Wagga, Fred's Place in Tweed Heads and the Bishop Fox Meal Centre in Broken Hill will be able to continue offering a hand up to locals in need of assistance.

Vinnies members supported around 55,000 people in the past year with \$15.9 million in food, clothing, household bills and other forms of assistance.

Thank you to everyone involved in the 2020 NSW Vinnies Community Sleepouts – the efforts of participants, donors, supporters and sponsors have made a real difference to people experiencing hardship and disadvantage in communities around the state.



## COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING WEBSITE GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH



Earlier this year we launched our new Vinnies NSW Community Fundraising website.

We are so pleased to be collaborating with Conferences who have added online fundraising pages to their Appeals in response to the changed fundraising environment that we are currently working in.

A prime example is the Sydney Northern Suburbs Region Winter Appeal. Conference President Anne O'Driscoll set up an online fundraising page to support the region's 2020 Winter Appeal. Conference members worked hard to spread the word to parishioners and potential donors, encouraging them to visit the page and donate in absence of the envelope collections that would usually occur at church gatherings.

Through their hard work, \$8000 in online donations was raised and transferred back to the Conference allowing them to continue providing assistance to people seeking help from Vinnies across the Northern Suburbs region.

If you're interested in setting up an online fundraising page for your Conference, head over to <https://fundraise.vinniesnsw.org.au/fundraise-your-way/> to fill out the submission form and get your Conference fundraising page set up today!

## Supré foundation supports our domestic violence work

The Supré Foundation has generously donated \$15,000 to help us provide critical support to girls and women impacted by COVID-19.

During the pandemic there has been a surge in the number of domestic violence cases, leaving many people to seek refuge with services such as Vinnies, without the certainty of a place to live and minimal financial support. In recognition of our work supporting women and girls during this unprecedented moment in history, the Supré Foundation has included Vinnies as part of a partnership alongside Food Bank and Beyond Blue.

With 100% of proceeds from all Supré Foundation products sold from July until the end of the year, we have been able to make a difference to the lives of women and girls experiencing domestic violence during COVID-19.

"The rise in domestic violence cases has been a real concern over the past few months, especially with

working from home conditions putting vulnerable women and children at higher risk," said Niamh Mannion, Vinnies Services Executive Director. "We're pleased to have the support of the Supré Foundation so we can ensure people are safe during this turbulent time."

Throughout NSW, Vinnies operates several specialised domestic violence services that act as safe havens for people who have suffered relationship violence. With the care of our compassionate staff, people are able to gain support and rebuild their lives through short-term accommodation, counselling and help to transition into permanent housing.





# A Christmas like no other

## VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL

**Through our Christmas Appeal, we are sharing the story of David and his family, and asking the public to donate so that Vinnies can help more families impacted by the pandemic.**

David sees himself as a provider for his family. Hardworking, a rock of stability for his wife and three daughters to lean on, he never envisioned how suddenly his life would change when the pandemic hit.

“It was gut-wrenching,” he explains. “One day I had a job, then next day, it was gone. I lost 100% of my income.”

For the first time in his life, David experienced the heartache of poverty. Without a stable income to rely upon, the stability and purpose of being able to keep the lights on and put food on the table was gone.

Never needing to ask for help before, the advice of a friend led him to reach out to Vinnies for assistance. Unable to come into his local Vinnies office due to social distancing measures, David made a call that helped to alleviate his most immediate fears – “How can I feed my children? How do we live like this?”

Speaking with Donna, one of our Client Support Officers, David received a food hamper, petrol vouchers and blankets for his family. Most significantly, he received the support to know that he wasn't alone during one of the most traumatic moments of his life.

Thanks to the support of Vinnies, David and his family are finding their way back. With Christmas approaching he hopes to restore a sense of normalcy for his family, but in a year that has already provided so much uncertainty, he has come to expect the unexpected.

“I know the children are looking forward to Christmas, but to be honest, I'm scared. When they wake up in the morning, what will be under the tree?”

Please help us spread the word about our Christmas Appeal. The festive season is a crucial time for our fundraising, bringing in vital funds that support families like David's during a Christmas like no other.



## IGA CHRISTMAS APPEAL

**IGA is once again partnering with Vinnies** this Christmas to support people in local communities that have been impacted economically and emotionally by COVID-19. With over 700,000 Australians predicted to be unemployed by Christmas, we expect to see a significant increase in the number of people seeking assistance.

To ensure we are able to be there for thousands of Australians during this time, the support of our National Partner, IGA, will allow us to help households pay their bills, rent and keep food on the table over the Festive Season. Head into your local IGA store this November and December to help spread the joy of Christmas by purchasing a Locals in Need Appeal token or products with a Community Chest ticket.

## CHANNEL NINE SUPPORTS OUR GOOD WORKS

**Channel Nine has been extremely supportive** this year and will continue to aid our good works by broadcasting our Christmas Appeal TV commercial from November to January.

Coming on board as a Strategic Partner earlier this year by promoting the Vinnies Bushfire Appeal, Channel Nine broadcast the Vinnies Winter Appeal TV commercial between June and August, while providing additional digital advertising for each of these appeals.

A sincere thanks to Channel Nine for going above and beyond this year!



## RAISING FUNDS AND AWARENESS WITH OOH! MEDIA

**oOh! Media has provided an exceptional amount** of advertising to support the Vinnies Winter COVID campaign and the Christmas Appeal with outdoor advertising across a large range of sites valued at over \$1.5 million nationally.

These advertising campaigns assist Vinnies in raising funds as well as building our brand profile with the general public. We are so thankful to have oOh! Media's support and look forward to working with them in 2021.

## HOW TO DONATE TO THE VINNIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL

- Visit [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)
- Call 13 18 12

# A SAFE SPACE TO GROW



**When people fall on hard times, Vinnies services are there to get them back on their feet.**

In the heart of Sydney, the Matthew Talbot Hostel (MTH) serves as a beacon of hope for men experiencing homelessness. Next door, the Ozanam Learning Centre (OLC) provides disadvantaged members of society with a safe space to belong and gain skills.

Connecting the two iconic services in Woolloomooloo is a rooftop garden where MTH residents tend to a range of fresh produce used by the OLC to enable education and living skills programs.

With some of the many challenges facing people experiencing homelessness being poor nutrition and an inability to afford fresh produce, the services offered through

the MTH rooftop garden help to reduce that disadvantage.

For Laura Frangelli, our Community Inclusion Leader based at the OLC, the chance to put her background in permaculture and sustainable agriculture to use helped to turn a skyline view into a vibrant haven for people on the margins.

“When I started at the OLC about three years ago, I noticed that there were a number of large planter boxes on the MTH rooftop that were unused, un-kept and in dire need of love and attention,” explains Laura.

“When I raised the idea of revitalising the space it was received with a mix of excitement and hesitation. There were thriving gardens in the past, but there were concerns over the space it was going to take up.”



Replicating the gardening program run by the nearby Bourke Street Community Garden to the MTH rooftop, in the space of three months a cast of 50 residents and service users helped to develop an edible garden that formed the basis for something larger.

“Over time people embraced the change and came to appreciate the beauty and opportunities it could provide.”

Expanding to a vegetable and fruit garden midway through last year, aspiring gardeners have been provided with employment pathways as part of the TAFE Horticulture course, while OLC patrons are able to make use of the fresh produce during weekly cooking classes.

“There are usually two garden sessions a week – garden group and Introduction to Horticulture run through TAFE. Outside of those times there are a number of engaged people who manage the maintenance and watering of the garden.

“The garden supplies a bounty of fresh fruit and vegies every week for the cooking and baking classes to make use of. There’s also the opportunity to learn about food and where it comes from, as well as a deeper connection to nature and what we put into our bodies.”

Having been involved with Vinnies from her days as a teenage volunteer, Laura continues to support our good works by bringing people together through food.

“It has been incredible watching people’s faces light up as they see how a broccoli grows for the first time or the pride people display when the food they grew is being eaten and enjoyed by a group of people.

“One of the most beautiful garden moments was last Christmas when we harvested mounds of fresh corn, zucchini, tomatoes, basil and so much more and the cooking class members cooked an incredible feast for 70 people!”



## Shane's Story

**Shane had been a regular at the Ozanam Learning Centre for nearly ten years.**

Initially reluctant to engage in social programs, he developed a rapport with our Community Inclusion Leader, Laura Frangelli, which led him to take part in the Friday cooking class. While hesitant at first, Shane became a regular member of the class and began to interact better with others, challenge himself and gain new skills.

Buoyed by the newfound confidence he became involved in the gardening program to the extent of maintaining the garden in his own time – watering, weeding, harvesting on a regular basis and introducing others to the joys of the garden.

With COVID causing the temporary closure of the Ozanam Learning Centre, Shane took the skills gained to the nearby Bourke Street Community Garden Sunday Working Bee.

Shane plans to enrol in the TAFE Introduction to Horticulture course offered at the OLC and after a long period of unemployment hopes to enter a new career in horticulture.





## CONNECTING THROUGH CREATIVITY

**Along with providing people with a place to sleep, regular meals and medical treatment through our various Vinnies Services across the state, we also offer a range of programs allowing people to find and share their voice through creativity.**

One such service is Creative Space Southern Highlands in Bowral. Opening in late 2017 as an initiative of the former Ability Links program to promote community inclusion, Creative Space is a welcoming and accessible environment for everyone to come together through a shared love of creativity and art making.

Bringing together people of all abilities to build confidence, share their knowledge and gain new skills, the service supported in excess of 110 people, who refer to themselves as Makers, over the past year. A unique partnership with TAFE has also been established with three accredited courses and one pathways course offered through the service.

For Tania McInnes, Creative Space Art Coordinator, the service is much more than its name suggests.

“Creating a place of welcome is key,” explains Tania.

“People with lived experience guide what we offer and the nature of the space.”

With the impact of COVID-19 preventing people from attending regular workshops and classes in person, Tania has worked to keep the spirit of Creative Space alive by producing creativity packs available for contactless pick-up or delivery.

Catering to individual’s creative preferences and interests, packs range from ceramic and wooden items to decorate, pre-stamped canvas postcards to send to ‘someone who needs to hear from you’, drawing and painting supplies, craft, clay and small sculpture resources.

The sense of community has also been maintained with Makers sharing photos of their latest creations through phone and online messaging, while participating in Afternoon Chill Sessions, held virtually via the Ozanam Learning Centre in Woolloomooloo, to encourage mindfulness.

“We have tried to be as responsive as possible to continue providing social connection and a strong sense that we are here operating.

“Many Makers were unable to leave their homes or couldn’t afford to purchase materials they’d like to use, so it’s wonderful for us to be able to continue to answer that call.”

Creative Space also focuses on opening doors to access professional arts experiences and opportunities. Makers have the opportunity to showcase their wares regularly at local events, such as the annual Southern Highlands ARTS Trail, where artists based at local studios exhibit and even sell their work with a small commission going back to the service.

To learn more about the Creative Space Southern Highlands, contact Tania at [Tania.McInnes@vinnies.org.au](mailto:Tania.McInnes@vinnies.org.au)





## Build homes, build hope petition achieves 10,000 signatures

**Our members and volunteers recorded a major win in the lead up to the State Budget with the Build Homes, Build Hope petition achieving the required 10,000 signatures to be tabled in NSW Parliament.**

Jack de Groot, Vinnies NSW CEO, and Brooke Simmons, Vice President - Social Justice, delivered the 10,000 signatures to Alex Greenwich MP, Member for Sydney, outside NSW Parliament House in October.

The Build Home, Build Hope campaign was launched at the Social Justice Forum in September last year in an effort to increase amount of social housing by an additional 5,000 new homes each year for the next ten years to meet the demand of the social housing waiting list.

With more than 100,000 people waiting for a place to live, including some who have been approved for over 10 years, our members and volunteers have been hard at work collecting signatures, meeting with their local MPs and raising awareness of the urgent need for everyone to have a safe place to live.

Jack de Groot, Vinnies NSW CEO, urged the government to heed the call for more social housing ahead of the State Budget on 17 November.

“The NSW Government has the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of thousands of people by providing the safety, security and stability of a place to call home,”

said Jack de Groot, Vinnies NSW CEO.

“Having a home is the foundation from which people are able to plan beyond one day at a time. Without a secure place to live, it is incredibly difficult for people to live healthy lives in the present, let alone plan for the future.”

Alex Greenwich MP and Brooke Simmons paid tribute to our members and volunteers for their efforts in gathering the required number of signatures.

“Vinnies members and volunteers live and work in communities throughout NSW. They understand the needs of people who are struggling to get by and know that having a place to live is one way we can make a meaningful difference to improve lives,” said Mr Greenwich.

“I want to thank everyone who has supported the Build Homes, Build Hope petition over the past year,” said Ms Simmons. “When we launched the petition in September last year, we knew it was an ambitious target, but one that was essential to ensuring everyone was able to live with the safety and security of a place to call home.

We are so grateful for the time and effort put in by all our members and volunteers to collect the 10,000 signatures over the past year. This achievement highlights the collective power we have to bring about change and shape a more just and compassionate world.

We would also like to pay special mention to the Social Justice Team of Rhiannon Cook, Mark Ludbrook and Sarah Boyle for keeping track of the signatures and engaging with Alex Greenwich MP to have the petition tabled in NSW Parliament in the lead up to the State Budget.

If you would like to receive the latest information on Vinnies’ campaigns for a more equitable NSW, sign up to our monthly Social Justice e-Newsletter at <http://bit.ly/VinniesSJnews> or contact [social.justice@vinnies.org.au](mailto:social.justice@vinnies.org.au)

## Rosalie Rendu Forum 2020

The 2020 Rosalie Rendu Forum brought together an outstanding collection of women to discuss how the disruption created by the pandemic and other recent crises could be used as an opportunity to bring about a more just and compassionate society.

In breaking with the tradition of previous years, the event took place virtually in accordance with social distancing measures brought on by COVID-19.

Beginning with a Welcome to Country from Yvonne Weldon of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, host Geraldine Doogue (ABC Radio National) introduced the theme of Reimagining the Future: Can we create more equitable communities post pandemic?

Brooke Simmons, NSW Vice President for Social Justice, delivered a spiritual reflection on the history of Sister Rosalie Rendu who worked to alleviate the suffering of those around her and spread a message of compassion - "Be kind and love, for love is your gift to the poor."

The three key speakers on the evening were Nicki Hutley, Partner at Deloitte Access Economics; Jody Broun, CEO of the Aboriginal Housing Office and Group Deputy Secretary, Aboriginal Outcomes; and Kirsty Robertson, CEO of Caritas Australia.

Drawing on her experience in economics, Nicki stressed the importance of considering the social, environmental and the economic impacts together and the consequences of inaction.

"What are the costs of failing to act on these issues?"

As a proud Yindjibarndi woman with family connections in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, Jody noted the increased empathy displayed as a result of the pandemic and the effectiveness of Australia's response.

"We can respond really quickly. We need to bring that same attitude to how we respond to other issues, like homelessness."

For Kirsty, the concurrent issues raised by climate change and Black Lives Matter reinforced that the pandemic is not alone in building impetus for change.

"The pandemic has created a sense of urgency and a renewed commitment to solidarity."



Jack de Groot, Vinnies NSW CEO, asked the panellist what the Society could do to as part of the recovery with responses including increased female participation in the workforce, working to bring about justice reform, and involving marginalised groups to take an active role in policy making.

During the Q&A section of the panel, Nicki spoke of possibilities such as a Universal Basic Income or Universal Service Guarantees, highlighting the many benefits that have resulted from the effective doubling of the JobSeeker payment through the coronavirus supplement. She also stressed the need for government to play an active role in dealing with the housing crisis and addressing the inequalities in access to services experienced by people in regional and remote areas compared with their metropolitan counterparts.

The Q&A discussion also dealt with the importance of housing in remote communities, the long-term benefits of investing in social housing and child care, and improved decision-making from people in positions of leadership.

Vinnies would like to thank Nicki, Jody, Kirsty, Geraldine, Yvonne, Brooke and the Social Justice Team for their involvement in another tremendous Rosalie Rendu Forum. We look forward to playing our part in creating a more equitable future.

**To view the 2020 Rosalie Rendu Forum, contact [social.justice@vinnies.org.au](mailto:social.justice@vinnies.org.au) to access a recording of the event.**

# BROOKE'S SOCIAL JUSTICE MISSION



**“I’m working for a fairer world for people impacted by social injustices.”**

Over the past 12 years Brooke Simmons has been committed to living out the Vincentian ethos. Beginning her association with the Society by preparing meals and taking part in fundraisers through her school, she has gone on to volunteer with the Night Patrol Van and act as a leader at Broken Bay Kids Camps.

Taking part in the Emerging Young Vincentian Leaders Development Programme, the skills and knowledge gained led her to become a Social Justice Youth Representative before reaching her current role as Vice President, Social Justice on the NSW State Council.

Brooke spoke to Vision about social justice, the impact of COVID-19 and provided an insight into her life away from Vinnies.

**Why is social justice important to you? Was there a specific moment that made you stand up and want to bring about change?**

My high school was very passionate about social justice, so that’s where my awareness probably began. In more than 12 years of volunteering with the Society I’ve heard many stories from companions I’ve met along the way - from young children on carers respite camps to older men waiting for the Night Patrol food van - I’ve found that meeting people

who are directly impacted is eye-opening. I’m working for a fairer world for people impacted by social injustices.

**What are the social justice priorities you hope to focus on in your current role?**

The Build Homes, Build Hope campaign is a key priority at the moment. There is an incredibly high need for more social housing in many parts of the state already and that is set to worsen with on-going economic impacts of the pandemic. I also think that the cost of living and mental health and wellbeing are going to be key issues as we try and recover from the many challenges that 2020 has thrown at our communities.

**How has COVID-19 impacted the way you view social justice and the work done by Vinnies?**

As Pope Francis recently outlined, COVID-19 has really highlighted some of the ills of the world today. I’m looking at this moment as an opportunity for social justice. The pandemic has caused so much disruption to the way Australian society operates and everyone has had to adapt. It has presented us with the opportunity to influence, educate and to shape a more just community for all. I think the work done by Vinnies is going to be vital to supporting people through some really tough times ahead, especially as JobKeeper and JobSeeker get reduced.

**Away from Vinnies, can you tell me about yourself?**

I work full time in Sydney as a Senior Structural Engineer. Most recently I’ve been working on the refurbishment of a heritage government office building to turn it into a six star hotel and this has been keeping me very busy this year as construction pushed on through the shutdown. Outside of work, I play netball and touch football, enjoy cooking and baking, and often spend my weekends driving across Sydney to sport or to catch up with family and friends.



## Celebrating the service of Yvonne Burke

**Vision is delighted to join St Therese Conference Bathurst and the other Conferences she has served in celebrating the dedication of Yvonne Burke over the past 30 years.** Yvonne, who retired from active duties in late 2019, is a person of the highest integrity and a shining example of selflessness, in the spirit of Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

Yvonne joined the Society after moving to Mudgee in 1989 with her husband Ted. She soon began Conference work, and in 1990, became president of St Mary's Conference Mudgee. Under Yvonne's guidance the Micah House care and support facility opened in 1991. She was President of the Management Committee and involved in the day to day, later establishing a second Conference in Mudgee to support Micah House.

Yvonne was President of the Advisory Committee to State Council for Family Services until 1994. She represented the Society at seminars on rural recession, drought and violence within families. Following Ted's death Yvonne moved to the Central Coast and joined St Brendan's Lake Munmorah Conference, becoming President in 1994 and President of the Wyong Region in 2004.

Yvonne was part of a steering committee to establish Louise House, a family care and support service at Gorokan. In 2006 she became involved in a Compeer program and was one of the team to establish Compeer at Louise House.

Yvonne chaired the Support and Advisory Committee of the Society's new aged care complex Our Lady of Loreto Gardens at Hamlyn Terrace. In 2008 she moved to Bathurst, settled in Kelso and joined the St Therese Conference.

In 2011 Yvonne became Evans Regional President and worked tirelessly to represent, support and encourage the Conference Presidents, members and volunteers. From 2014 Yvonne was Vice President of the Conference, stepping into the role of Acting President as required until late 2018.

Arranging the Western Sydney Disability Services visit in December each year was one of her special interests. The group prepared 100 beautifully wrapped shoe boxes containing individual gifts to be distributed by the Society at Christmas time.

Her knowledge of housing, accommodation issues, Centrelink, mental health, and financial and management matters, combined with her natural interviewing manner, helped her focus on helping meet people's needs while preserving their personal dignity. Her rapport with people throughout the community gained her respect and helped form close relationships.

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW sincerely thanks Yvonne Burke for her outstanding contributions. She is a wonderful example of a Member dedicated to sharing Christ's love for the most vulnerable in our communities.



**If you have stories to share about the Society's good works in your community, contact [media.nsw@vinnies.org.au](mailto:media.nsw@vinnies.org.au)**

**We love to hear about our amazing members and the difference they make to people in need.**

## Longevity a service tradition in Wilcannia Forbes

**70 years' service for the Society is a remarkable achievement.** Even more remarkable is that Patrick (Pat) Ticehurst, Condobolin Member/Volunteer, has become the fourth member in Wilcannia Forbes Central Council to achieve this incredible milestone.

Serving as both a Member and a Volunteer, Pat has been located at Condobolin's St Joseph's Conference and Vinnies Shop, deriving satisfaction from helping others in need in both capacities: "I have always been a "people person", Pat says, "and very much enjoy visitation and conversing with others and hearing their stories."

Until recently, he was rag-cutting for the Shop, a humble task made more enjoyable through knowing that it was helping to provide funds for client assistance in the Conference.

"Being able to use my communication skills, mixing with others and knowing I am making a difference to someone's life and sharing a laugh with others," he says, his face lit up with a characteristic smile.



## 'Sr Kath' is a recognised 'Lifer'

Offering congratulations were (l-r) Kelly Morgan, Regional Director-West, Holy Family Parish priest Fr Barry Dwyer, Sr Kath Barker and Barbara Scott, Shop Day Organiser (former Retail Team Leader).

A much-loved member of the Parkes community in central western NSW, Sr Kathleen Barker has volunteered in the local Vinnies shop for 35 years.

At a recent Mass 'Sr Kath' was surprised to receive a Life Service Award for her long and selfless dedication to the Society.

Sr Kath started off her shop volunteering at the retail front counter, recently taking on the important task of sorting donated clothes and other goods, although she has been unable to do so for the last few months due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Sr Kath is a stickler for neatness, often found at quiet moments on her rostered day circling the front of the shop, picking up fallen clothes and replacing them on their hangers and generally keeping everything in order.

While on these missions, Sr Kath often picks out and purchases an item of clothing for herself and according to her fellow volunteers, she is always beautifully turned out.

Sr Kath is also known for her beautiful smile and the genuine way that she greets her Vinnies colleagues and visitors to the shop.

## EXCITING START TO THE MINI VINNIES FORMATION PROGRAM

The Metropolitan Schools Engagement Team has launched a brand-new social justice program for primary school students. The Mini Vinnies Formation Program is a free and exciting extracurricular course for students in Year 4 to 6.

Students will learn about the Vincentian spirit on a personal, local, environmental and global level and be inspired to “see, think, and do” in their local community.

From exploring the role of the Blessed Frederic Ozanam in starting the St Vincent de Paul Society as a 20-year-old student in Paris to learning about Vinnies Reconciliation Action Plan and exploring key world events, the program will provide students with an in-depth experience of social justice to complement their learning at school.

It has been exciting to see the response from families

across the Metropolitan Region (Sydney, Parramatta, and Broken Bay). So far more than 85 students have registered to take in this new initiative.

To learn more about the Mini Vinnies Formation Program, contact [formationprogram@vinnies.org.au](mailto:formationprogram@vinnies.org.au) for more information.



## Container Drive supports Return and Earn scheme

St Brigid’s Catholic Parish Primary School in Gwynneville recently held a container drive where more than 2,000 recyclable drink containers were collected and deposited to the Vinnies Return and Earn depot in Unanderra.

As a result, 8.6 cubic metres of waste was saved from ending up in landfill!

“The Student Representative Council thought it would be a great idea to have a special drive held between our three sporting houses,” said Kathy Uroda, Principal of St Brigid’s.

“We have 185 students from kinder to year six, so it was awesome to see students and their families get behind the drive and collect 2,234 containers.

Container drives are one of many ways schools, such as St Brigid’s, support Vinnies, along with volunteering to prepare meals for our Vinnies Vans, contributing to Winter and Christmas Appeals, and donating food and toiletries to people in need.

The Return and Earn scheme is one of many ways Vinnies is able to assist people experiencing hardship, while helping to reduce the amount of waste ending up in landfill every year.

Since the Return and Earn scheme was launched by the NSW Government three years ago, we have established bulk collection sites throughout the state in Cardiff, Dubbo, Penrith, South Nowra, Unanderra and Wagga Wagga, along with various over the counter drop-off points in select Vinnies Shops.



**TO GET INVOLVED WITH VINNIES’ YOUTH INITIATIVES OR FIND OUT MORE,** please contact Courtney Deighton, State Youth Engagement Coordinator at [courtney.deighton@vinnies.org.au](mailto:courtney.deighton@vinnies.org.au).



## Parramatta Central Council visit Auburn Distribution Centre

A group of members and staff from the Parramatta Central Council recently visited the Auburn Distribution Centre to see how items generously donated by the public end up in our 227 Vinnies Shops located throughout the state.

Once donations are collected from our shops or donation bins, they are transported to the Auburn site to be isolated for 48 hours before being sorted.

On an average week the sorting staff work through 45 tonnes of textiles to determine what is suitable for sale. Each week, 1,700 boxes of quality clothing are packaged up for stores to order.



Josephine & Alenepi Seupule, Lauraine Steward, Martin Pottage, Gayl Purchase, Anne Stanfield, Pamela Nash, Ron Horne.

The remaining textiles that aren't fit for sale are put aside for our Vinnies Textile Recycling enterprises. These items are sold and repurposed for new items as part of our goal of having minimal or no textile waste in landfill by 2022.

Vinnies Shops produced \$54 million in essential funds over the past financial year which help fund our programs and services for people in need of assistance.

## New re/CYCLE range available at Vinnies shops

A new range of homewares made from recycled textiles is being released to Vinnies Shops throughout the state in time for Christmas.

After a successful debut earlier this year at shops in Brookvale, Sutherland, Nowra and Lavington, the re/CYCLE range is being expanded to a further 13 sites where customers can purchase environmentally sustainable rugs, towels, door mats and other home furnishings.

All items are made from goods that are unable to be sold in our stores, which are sent to our ethical overseas partners to be repurposed into beautiful, quality items.

With nearly 6,000 kilograms of clothing and textile waste ending up in landfill every 10 minutes in Australia, the re/CYCLE range is one of many ways Vinnies is committed to having minimal impact on the environment.



"By purchasing the beautiful homewares from the re/CYCLE range, shoppers will be able to financially support our charity work while saving fabrics from landfill," said Yolanda Saiz, Vinnies NSW Executive Director of Commercial Enterprise, Fundraising and Communications.

You can purchase the re/CYCLE range of homewares at Vinnies Shops in Moss Vale, Albury, Berry, Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo, Armidale, Tamworth, Tamworth South, Mudgee, Glen Innes, Forbes Brookvale, Sutherland, Nowra and Lavington.



## We are One Society

**In our world of fear in global pandemic, budget deficits, financial sustainability, restructures and services reviews, our Society seems to be taking hits from everywhere and I hear and know we are hurting.** Our most pressing need is the ability to accept crucial change for our mission to flourish, to understand the need for this change and the will to continue with our work with the same dedication and perseverance to meet all the challenges facing us.

At the beginning of this year, I shared these words of scripture, from the gospel of Mark, and I think more than ever we need to reflect on them again today, for this is our pilgrim journey together...

*Jesus reminded his disciples; "No one pours new wine into old wineskins as the wine will burst the skins...No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."*

Over this time and in some spaces, this new wine has not been easy to palate, it has at times been bitter, unpleasant and uncomfortable. In other spaces this new wine has breathed new life into hearts and souls, lifting tired ways of doing things and empowered new creativity and hope especially for those we serve. Either way our new wine continues to mature. The bitterness will give way to optimism for the future for the past is not where we live.

Our Strategic Plan states, "We are spiritual and connected. Our spirituality espouses the ministry of Jesus (and that was not just wandering around aimlessly saying nice things and being kind to people) it was a ministry of – radical inclusivity (a virtue worth striving closer to), it was a ministry of restoration (of transforming broken lives, hearts and souls) and it was a ministry of accompaniment (walking in empathy, non-judging and profoundly pastoral). We advocate a contemporary spirit of faith (not just the Catholic faith traditions that our Society was founded on but all faith and spiritual experiences of hope) and it is this in action for a more just and compassionate society. We are One Society..."

A mission of inclusivity, restoration and accompaniment, is a shared story of our living traditions, it is a contemporary expression of a revelation of love, respect, faith, justice, forgiveness, hope and joy for today's world. It is a story which is spirit filled, refounding, changing, adapting and being open to the signs of our present todays and tomorrows. How vitally important is this, for our mission is only effective today if we reflect on it with this critical contemporary vision, for only then will our mission which each of us strive toward each day, give new life to those we accompany and support and serve.

This mission, inspired by our founders, is not only responding to the imperatives of the gospels, and giving voice to the principles of our Catholic Social traditions, but also is empowering a response to; "for I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me something to drink".

Advent, in the Christian tradition, is a time of longing and hope. Our continued dedication as individuals, Conferences and Councils, members, staff and volunteers is so needed in these COVID to post-COVID times as we head toward the Christmas season, through Advent. Sharing our presence, our human connectiveness is sharing in this hope and longing with others. This may still be difficult but a thoughtful letter, phone call or conversation through social media helps to warm and transform someone else's life. This "being with others" is similar to our Vincentian spirit of "being for others".

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 the Christ child continue to bless us.

# Escapee from racism was Australia's gain

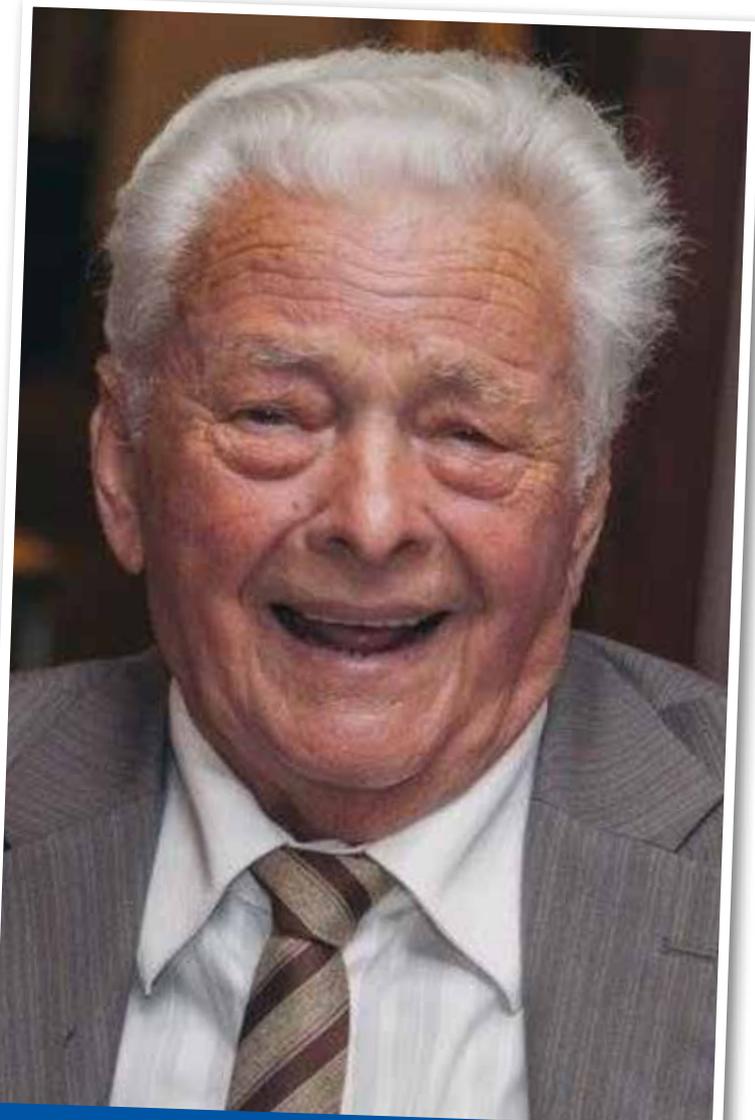
The real estate listing said the “sprawling property” in Riverstone, western Sydney, built in 1985, had never been on the market before, and was run as a community centre by the Saint Mary of Cherso (SMOC) Association. This non-profit, the ads explained, was dedicated to giving European immigrants, mostly from Italy and Croatia, a place to socialise, adding that the proceeds of the sale would be donated to a mix of charities and other organisations, including St Vincent de Paul Society NSW. In mid-2019, the social club was sold and, when the legalities were concluded, the Society learnt that the SMOC Association would be passing on a donation totalling \$100,000 in the memory of Daniele Velcich, their president from 1966-2018, who had recently passed away. Many years earlier, he had ensured that no member would profit from the association, and that all funds would be donated to charity when it closed.

Half of this generous gift was earmarked for the Vinnies Van, the balance would be allocated to other good works undertaken by the Society.

The late Daniele Velcich was born into an Italian family in Cherso (or Cres), Croatia in 1931, fleeing by boat at the age of 18 because of the Yugoslavian president Tito's discrimination against Italians. From Venice, he began a series of transfers to refugee camps before finally being approved for Australia. He arrived in March 1950 on what he called “a beautiful sunny Sydney day.”

Daniele would go on to live what his daughter Linda calls “a life of service and being charitable”, which began with organising a dance in a local hall and donating the profits to the local hospital. He was a parishioner at several local churches, including St Patrick's at Blacktown, St Andrew the Apostle Catholic Parish at Marayong and the Croatian Church at Blacktown. He assisted members of the community with visits to the hospital, transport and conversing with family members overseas

Daniele Velcich established the vibrant, well-appointed club, which ran many functions and events, bringing migrants together to celebrate their culture. A picturesque 1402 chapel near the Adriatic island town of his birth is



**Daniele Velcich OAM**  
(1931-2019)

also named in honour of St Maria Magdalena of Cherso.

Following the 88-year-old's death, the decision was made to wind up the Association and the property was sold. To date, around \$1.4M has been donated to charities across Australia. In the 2020 Australia Day awards, his adopted country honoured Daniele Velcich with the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division (OAM).

While the honour was posthumous, this extraordinary migrant would, as his daughter says, have been incredibly proud to know that his community efforts were appreciated and that the proceeds of the club's sale would be used to help so many worthwhile causes.

Losing my job was  
gut wrenching.  
I don't know how we're  
going to live like this.

**AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES  
ARE AT BREAKING POINT.**

You can provide food and financial assistance to the millions  
of Australians who will spend Christmas in poverty.

**DONATE NOW**

Please call 13 18 12 or visit [vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au)



**Vinnies Christmas Appeal**



St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*